YOUTH ARTS NOW

REPORT 2022

Researcher John O'Brien

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The research is commissioned by the local authority Arts Services of Kilkenny, Carlow, Wexford and Waterford together with Creative Ireland Waterford and facilitated by Waterford Youth Arts.

The Youth Arts Now project dates from early 2018 when Waterford Youth Arts submitted an application for Youth Arts Now in response to a Creative Ireland call for ideas and submissions on the creative potential for young people in Ireland. The aim is to hold conferences, create a network, and ultimately change the landscape for youth arts in Ireland – leading to a National Youth Arts Policy, A Youth Arts Funding Stream, and A Youth Arts Network.

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John O'Brien

john@johnobrien.org | 086 8177060

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Section One: Introduction

Introduction

Youth Arts is a relatively new concept - at least in policy terms. Many of the people interviewed during this research have either played a major part in the development of the current Youth Arts infrastructure, or they have seen the sector develop and change over the course of their lifetime.

The value of Youth Arts resides in the people - young people, youth arts facilitators, artists, and youth workers - who constitute the sector. It is their passion, skills, values, and behaviours that are the "change mechanisms" that drive the valued outcomes of the work.

The evidence of their work on the ground is there in the, at least, 429 projects identified across the country in the course of this research.[1]

The impact of their work over the last 30 - 40 years can be felt in the considerable shift in the policy language of the last decade: the calls for public celebration of creativity and young people, the commitment to creativity as a core component of education, and the belief that creativity is a necessary wellbeing practice in an increasingly complex and secular world.

However, the development of strategic support organisations, the increases in funding, and the shift in policy have yet to change the working experience of the people at the heart of this achievement. As the NYCI report, *Arts Mapping: Mapping Youth Arts Provision in Youth Work Settings* put it, the youth arts sector is still working with

> "Inadequate, inconsistent, and piecemeal funding for youth arts provision, set within an under-resourced youth work sector;"

And yet there is more profile and more partnership - and certainly more policy - in these sectors than ever before2. Therefore, there appears to be a schism between what is happening at the policy level and what is happening at the coalface; an implementation gap between the rhetoric of policy and the delivery mechanisms. If we are to make practical and meaningful recommendations around youth arts practice, policy, and funding, if we are to lobby and advocate effectively at both a national and a local level it is vital that we understand what this gap is and why it persists.

The development of Youth Arts over the last thirty to forty years has been driven by people who have given their time, energy, and imagination to work with young people for very little gain or reward other than the satisfaction of the work and witnessing the impact of that work. They have delivered the work because they believe in the need for it, they have experienced its impact, and they have responded to the demand for it. They have worked within and between two historically underfunded sectors (youth and arts), both noted for precarious employment, low pay, and high levels of emotional labour. This is not a sustainable practice, as energy and good will eventually exhaust themselves.

The policy and funding environment is changing, and this is an opportune moment for the wider youth arts sector to drive the development of a National Policy that recognises the

1 This number is based on based on available funding data, and on available current research. It is probable that here are more projects not funded, or funded under different headings

2 Arts Funding has increased significantly in recent years, however funding for youth work has not returned to pre-crash levels

artistic, personal, and social value of the work, acknowledges the economic value of the time invested, the outcomes achieved and the associated opportunity cost to the practitioners, and delivers a funding structure that can create sustainable and scalable organisations and careers.

Executive Summary

What we have tried to do in this report is to answer the questions: in the face of its achievements over the last forty years, why is the sector under-resourced and underfunded? Why is there such a gap between the rhetoric of policy and the delivery mechanisms? and how might we change the situation?

This research explores youth arts policy at a national level and the associated structure of funding into youth arts in Ireland. It aims to respond to the following research questions:

1. What are we talking about when we talk about Youth Arts?
2. What is the current shape of policy relevant to Youth Arts in Ireland?
3. How has the current policy environment developed?
4. What are the institutional ideas and narratives underpinning policy and funding actions?
5. How is national policy developed?
6. What is the structure of youth arts funding?
7. What are the levels of funding?
8. What are the different models of delivery?

The questions were informed by the findings of the Molumby report, commissioned by Youth Arts Now, and by the National Youth Council of Ireland's report *Mapping Youth Arts Provision in Youth Work Settings* published in 2021, and further refined in the course of the research.

We have tried where possible to build on existing research and not to repeat research questions or conduct qualitative or quantitative analysis that exists elsewhere, so our focus is not primarily on mapping the activity in the sector, or on demonstrating the value of the work, but on mapping the structure of institutional ideas and narratives that underpin the current policy and funding structures.

Report structure

Section 2 of the report outlines the research strategy and methodology used to address the research questions set out above.

Section 3 summarises the previous work commissioned by Youth Arts Now, addresses the fluid nature of the definitions of youth arts, the policy implications of that fluid definition, and the policy challenges presented by the spectrum of youth arts activity. It explores the tension between the professionalisation of youth arts and the cultural legacy of volunteerism. It explores the history of national policy around the concepts of youth and arts in an effort to understand the context in which current funding structures and policy positions have emerged. It explores the process of policy development at national level to understand how we are where we are, and how a new policy position could be developed.

Section 4 is an attempt to map, evaluate, and compare the myriad sources of funding into Youth Arts to see what that map tells us about the deep institutional ideas and assumptions informing youth arts policy.

Section 5 Presents and discusses the recommendations based on the research findings.

Case Studies There are five case studies distributed throughout the report. The studies illustrate different models of delivery, funding, and policy development.

Summary of Findings

Youth Arts exists along a wide spectrum of activity and sites, from focused Youth Arts groups and organisations, through occasional arts projects for young people, and onto arts projects in youth work settings.

This spread of activity across a range of sites means:

- That the definition of Youth Arts tends to be fluid and is dependent on where we are on the spectrum.
- That national policy is distributed across these many policy sites (education, culture, youth, health, inclusion etc. as well as arts), and each site has priorities and outcomes peculiar to itself. Consequently, youth arts as a stand-alone practice can fall between the policy cracks.
- Youth Arts is treated as an input into other policy objectives and not a "sector" in its own right. There is little priority given, at a national policy level, to the idea of young people as artists. The emphasis falls on personal, social, and economic outcomes.
- The relationship between the Youth Arts sector and the sustainability of the wider professional arts sector, culture and creative industries, and events sector is weak, with youth arts neither viewed or funded as a key resource for the billion-euro arts culture and creative sector.
- There is a policy tendency within wider youth policy toward targeted supports for marginalised or at-risk groups, identifying youth arts as a welfare and/or well-being intervention.
- The culture of policy development in Ireland is built on a legacy of voluntary delivery of work across the wider youth and social sector, and this legacy is impacting on funding tools, rates of pay, professional status, the prevalence of partial volunteerism etc.
- As well as the tension between Youth Arts as a professional or voluntary practice, there is a tension between the idea of Young People *as* artists and young people *working with* artists.
- The development of policy at a national level is driven primarily by deep "institutional ideas", as opposed to research data.
- Youth arts is not a singular policy object or budget line item, consequently there is a challenge identifying precise levels of investment in Youth Arts, particularly at a departmental or local authority level. This is partially a result of fluid definitions, and partly a result of its use as a tool in other policy objectives.

- Funding enters the sector from multiple sources, with different criteria

- Funding tends to be small, project focused and not guaranteed across time, creating a dependency on volunteerism (or partial volunteerism, i.e. additional hours worked outside contact hours and additional emotional labour) at the point of delivery. This level of funding positions youth arts as a non-professional practice outside of the area of state responsibility and into the voluntary sector.

- Levels of funding vary widely from county to county, so access to youth arts is heavily geographically dependent.

- Focusing on just combined arts council and local authority spend on youth arts it appears that the range of per capita spend across local authority areas in 2019 was between €1.05 and €33.99 per annum.

- There appears to be an inverse relationship between budget allocations and population size. Youth arts appears to account for approximately 4% of combined Arts Council and local authority budgets, but young people (aged 10 -24) account for approximately 20% of the population.

- 2019 figures suggest that the total investment from all sources into arts for children and young people (using a wide definition in terms of age, site and practice) was approximately €17,274,026, equating to an average per capita spend of €19.28. (this is an estimate with a wide margin of error, as there are challenges identifying specific amounts)

- Approximately half of the 2019 total was accounted for by a single art form

- Funding at this level, and structured in this way, cannot support sustainable, professional, universal provision, nor can it support scale.

- Policy – and related funding – decisions appear to be susceptible to and shaped by philanthropic interventions.

- Funding is increasingly outcome driven as opposed to rights based, with a particular emphasis on improvements in individual well-being, and tending toward targeted as opposed to universal provision and access

Recommendations

Based on the interviews conducted, recommendations proposed in previous research, the analysis of funding structures and patterns, the history of policy in this area, feedback on the initial draft analysis, and the findings listed above the following recommendations have emerged:

- The national strategic youth arts organisations and those working in the delivery of youth arts must collaborate on a framework national youth arts policy built on a sector wide agreed definition of youth arts, and a vision for the development of youth arts.

- This network must collaborate on the development of a draft implementation plan (including proposed costings, and funding models)

- This network must issue a manifesto that positions the practice of youth arts as both a distinct and professional practice, *and* as a professional service that supports other policy outcomes and therefore must be priced accordingly.

- This network should conduct or commission a time use survey of practitioners in youth arts organisations of all sizes to identify the total time invested and the corresponding value of that time.

- This network should collaborate with tertiary educational providers in each regions (e.g. ETB and SETU) to develop professional training and accreditation for youth arts professionals in both an academic and apprenticeship model.

- Greater detail is required in the accounting of youth arts spend across departments and local authorities, and so youth arts needs to be a specific budget line item, or at the very least local authorities and departments need to identify youth arts specific allocations.

- Local authorities, relevant agencies and departments, should be tasked to make both policy and budget commitments (e.g. 10% + of total arts programme budget) to developing and supporting a universal model of youth arts provision.

- The Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media; Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Department of Education; and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment must acknowledge the direct relationship between youth arts and the wider professional arts culture and creative sector, as a developer of skills, a producer of quality art, and a significant training site and produce an investment plan commensurate with the value created and with the value of the input.

- The promised independent review and evaluation of LCYPs needs to be completed and published prior to nationwide roll-out.

- All Youth Arts policy and funding must be based on a universal model of access, in acknowledgement of the creative and cultural rights of all citizens.

The policy and funding environment is changing, and now is an opportune moment for the wider youth arts sector to drive the development of a National Policy that recognises the intrinsic value of the art created by young people, the invaluable contribution of the youth arts sector to the growth and development of the wider arts, culture and creative sector, as well as the personal and social value of the work; a policy that acknowledges the economic value of the time committed, the outcomes achieved, and the associated opportunity cost of the practitioners, and delivers a funding structure that can create sustainable and scalable organisations and careers.

Methodology

This report was developed through:

1. Desk Research including
    a. Existing reports and research
    b. Publicly available policy documents in the areas of youth and arts
    c. Published research on the history of policy development in the relevant areas
2. A series of semi structured interviews. 81 Respondents were contacted ranging from agency and department officials, youth workers, youth arts practitioners, artists, international organisations etc. Approximately half responded, and 25 were interviewed. The interviews were confidential and semi-structured. They were transcribed and thematically coded
3. Two workshops with youth leaders and young people. One facilitated by the author and one by Waterford Youth Arts. (This work was constrained by ongoing Covid related issues).
4. A quantitative analysis of funding through the arts council, local authorities, and Government Departments, and the publicly available accounts and annual reports of Case Study organisations where relevant

Research Challenges

Several research challenges presented themselves:

- Quantitative data can be difficult to identify as funding that finds its way into the youth arts sector is not always identified as "youth arts" funding.
- In the absence of a single national policy on youth arts, policy positions that underpin the youth arts sector are distributed across multiple sites (Youth, education, arts, health, etc.).
- The relationship between policies and research is not straightforward, so not only is current policy distributed across multiple sites and documents, but it is also driven as much by deep institutional ideas and received narratives as by data.
- Youth arts is a complex sector.

Missing Data

As the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) report put it, much youth arts practice is in danger of falling into a "liminal space" (Hogan, E. et.al. 2021). It's not always clear what is and is not youth arts.

This condition of existing in a liminal policy space has been well researched in recent years, both by the National Youth Council of Ireland's 2021 report mentioned above, and by the Molumby report commissioned by Youth Arts Now. These reports have surveyed participants and stakeholders, captured the voice of young people, and mapped the activity on the ground. In addition the NYCI, The Arts Council, various Local Authorities, YTI, YIFM are all engaged in surveying their communities, in ongoing data collection, in building networks, that can address this 'liminal space' challenge.

For this research we asked, is it possible to validate the conceptual argument by analysing the quantitative data that we could capture. If we view the funding levels and the funding structures as representations of policy and of the deep institutional ideas that underpin it, what do we learn? To put it another way, what could the numbers tell us about the institutional ideas and received narratives that are informing policy and strategy in the field of youth arts?

One of the key findings from this piece of work - established initially in Molumby's work - is that it is difficult to capture an exact amount spent on Youth Arts. There are many reasons for this: not all funding applications identify themselves as "youth arts"; for example, youth theatres can be identified as "youth clubs", specific arts projects in youth work settings can be funded under "mental health" or "inclusion" depending on the available funding; local authorities may fund art centres or production companies which in turn run or support youth arts organisations and projects

Finding detailed numerical data was challenging. Requests made for granular data (details behind budget top lines) were met with the response that the information was not collated or easily available, that allocations were not categorised in that way, or with no response at all.

Multiple Policy Sites

Youth arts activities, projects and organisations depend on irregular funding from multiple sources (Hogan et.al. 2021). What this multiple-source funding model illustrates is that "youth arts" is not understood or perceived as a stand-alone policy/budget category at a national level. Given the conceptual complexity of youth arts this is not surprising.

It would appear, however, that youth arts is valued at a national policy level as an input into other policy outcomes. It is important to point out that this instrumentalism is not always found as we get close to the point of delivery. The instrumentalism at national policy level suggests that youth arts is funded, or to be more precise its services are purchased, to address issues such as social exclusion, marginalisation, general notions of well-being, curriculum deficiencies, job creation etc. It is not clear if a fair price is being paid to youth arts practitioners for these services, or if youth arts by itself can effectively ameliorate the problems that cause and emerge from these wider social issues.

Understanding Policy

The central purpose of this piece of work was to provide evidence for and make recommendations toward a youth arts policy which would in turn lead to a dedicated funding strand. Unfortunately 'Policy' is one of those words – like Culture – that is often used but difficult to define. The policy scholar Paul Cairney suggests that we can define it as "… the sum total of government action, from signals of intent to the final outcomes" (Cairney, 2019, pg.18)

'Policy' can be a label for an area of activity (e.g. Youth Arts); it can be an expression of intent (e.g. 'we will create a dedicated funding strand for youth arts'); it can be specific proposals (e.g. a Youth Arts Manifesto); it can be decisions of government and the formal authorization of decisions (e.g. legislation); it can be a programme, or package of legislation, staffing, and funding; intermediate and ultimate outputs (e.g. youth arts workers, better youth arts practice); outcomes, or what is actually achieved (better societal health, quality art created by young people); and it can be a process and series of decisions, not an event and single decision (Hogwood and Gunn in Ham, 1986)

In other words, policy can be "…a statement of intent, an aim, a decision, or an outcome', and it can be silence. The apparent absence of policy is itself, policy.

Within this nuanced understanding the idea that there is a direct, linear connection between evidence and policy formation and outcome appears to be mistaken. It is customary for reports to capture anecdotal evidence via interview and survey and to present the testimony in a compelling way. For example, youth arts is good for you. The people working in it say so, and the participants say so. There is academic research to support these contentions. Therefore there should be more of it. We can then feed all this into the policy machine and expect an outcome in terms of a document, a series of actions, and funding.

However, as Cairney points out, policymakers "limit their attention to information, to help them make decisions quickly." The reality seems to be that policy is driven not by evidence but beliefs "…about how the world works and should work – expressed as ideology or moral values" (op.cit.) added to emotions, gut instincts, habits, and personal experiences.

With this understanding in mind we have attempted in this report to describe the current national youth arts policy by analysing the 'signals of intent' and the 'final outcomes' across this complex and extensive landscape.

In tactical terms, changing an existing complex policy framework depends on how effective the challenge to the existing framework is, how compelling the proposed new framework is, and whether or not influential audiences and champions with an interest in these new ways of thinking can be found.

Complexity

The youth arts sector is complex in the systems[3] sense of the word, and it is a research challenge to hold this complexity and not seek simple answers or actions.

Many characteristics of the sector are deep rooted and "cultural" in nature. They stem on the one hand from a general confusion around the object of policy and funding (is this youth work? education? Is it general or targeted? Is it art?), from a growing proliferation of stakeholders, each of them seeing "youth arts" as a valuable input into their own high level policy objectives, and from a deep seated, bureaucratic belief in a small state relying on voluntary and charitable provision to fulfil the welfare function (the idea of "subsidiarity"). In such a crowded policy space policy can end up being about something other than the people it is intended to serve, and interagency collaboration can end up focusing on the collaboration as opposed to the purpose of the collaboration.

At all levels in the system there is a greyness around whether it is the 'art' or the 'facilitation' that is having the impact and creating the much-vaunted outcomes, and around whether it is the art that young people create that is valuable, or the engagement and process of creating it. There is an ideological fascination with "Wellbeing" as a personal (as opposed to a social) responsibility, and a belief that mastering a creative practice will allow us to mind our "wellbeing". Indeed, it feels like "wellbeing" is replacing activism and social engagement in the discourse of youth and arts work. Arguably it is the relationship between the young person, the art form and the adult facilitators in the space (artists/youth workers/youth arts facilitators etc.) that drive the positive outcomes. In such a framework it is the facilitators – and the skill of the facilitators – who are responsible for managing the relationship and driving the outcomes.

Within this complex system informal networks exist - people talk, they ask for advice, they swap techniques and stories, they share best practice. What will be gained by formalising such networks? And who benefits from the formalisation? And who will be responsible for tending the formal network. This is not to suggest formal networks are bad ideas, but as Mark Zuckerberg allegedly once said when asked how to create a community like Facebook, "communities already exist. All we can do is make a platform for them to play on".

3 A complex system can be defined as one that emerges organically as a result of the behaviours of the components within it, rather than because of a predetermined plan. "A complex system is an ensemble of many elements which are interacting in a disordered way, resulting in robust organisation and memory" (Ladyman, Lambert and Wiesner, 2012)


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Section Two: The Current Context

The Current Context

The work was conducted in a period of extraordinary change in terms of the policy and funding framework around arts, young people, and creativity. In 2021 The Arts Council received the single greatest increase in its budget allocation, to €130 million. The Arts Council's Young People, Children and Education (YPCE) budget has likewise increased from just over €3 million in 2017 to €9.4 million in 2021 (including the Creative Schools budget). In response to the impact of the pandemic on the wider culture sector the Department has launched a pilot Basic Income for Artists programme with the potential to challenge long standing assumptions about the relationship between the state and its citizens, and the intrinsic value of public goods. Music Generation have achieved a near national rollout of their music programme, and Youth Theatre Ireland reported in 2019 that there are 55 youth theatres in 24 counties, boasting 2,663 youth theatre members regularly engaging in youth theatre activities (Centre Stage +20, 2019, pg. 30). Young Irish Film Makers are positioning themselves as a key strategic organisation and building a national network of youth film makers, there is a burgeoning youth dance sector developing through platforms such as Irish Youth Dance Festival and South Dublin County Council NOISEmoves, and the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras represents six national and regional ensembles, and over 5,000 young musicians in 108 youth orchestras in all parts of the country.

At the same time the policy language around arts has changed significantly. "The arts" as a policy category have been subsumed under the umbrella of Culture and Creativity and identified as key inputs into the process of national "wellbeing"; the relationship between Creativity and Young people has been prioritised in the policy rhetoric.

Creative Ireland's Creative Youth programme has brought additional funding into the sector, driven closer collaboration between sector stakeholders, delivered on the Creative Schools programme (now managed by the Arts Council) and piloted the Local Creative Youth Partnerships (LCYPs).

The National Youth Council of Ireland produced a significant report in 2021, Arts Mapping: *Mapping Youth Arts Provision in Youth Work Settings*, reviewing policy, practice, and provision nationwide.

All these developments, each in their own ways remarkable, mark the achievement of the first generation of youth arts practitioners. The Youth Arts sector is only 40 years old, approximately. There are people leading the major youth arts organisations today, and others working at the point of delivery with young people, who have literally grown up with this sector, and spent their working lives building it.

In the light of all this work, and amid this period of change, what can an additional piece of research bring to the table? What new questions can we ask or what new data can be captured that can move the conversation around youth arts forward?

The approach to these questions was informed by comments from two reports thirty years apart:

> "Youth work in the Irish context is a relatively new discipline both in theoretical and practical terms and its development on the ground has been severely hindered by "the

erratic and fitful evolution of policies - insecure employment conditions, inadequate resources and a constant search for funding from a bewildering array of sources" (Gilligan 1991 p.89, quoted by Jenkinson, 2000, p.106).

"Inadequate, inconsistent, and piecemeal funding for youth arts provision, set within an under-resourced youth work sector;" (Hogan et.al., 2021, p. 10)

Placed side by side we can see that despite the growth and professionalisation of youth work, the emergence and growth of strategic youth arts organisations such as Waterford Youth Arts, Young Irish Film Makers, Youth Theatre Ireland, Irish National Youth Ballet, Dublin Youth Dance Company, the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras, Music Generation, and others; despite the enactment of legislation, the reshuffling of departments and various committees, the shift in policy language toward the cultural and creative industries model, the emergence of Creative Ireland, etc. the situation on the ground does not appear to have changed significantly in a structural sense in over thirty years.

Why, given the strength of the work, the depth of the qualitative evidence available, the prioritisation of youth and creativity in national policy, the emergence of new agencies, the reports and research conducted over the course of those thirty years, can the sector still be described as labouring under "Inadequate, inconsistent, and piecemeal funding for youth arts provision".

The answer appears to five-fold:

Youth Arts is hard to define
Youth Arts is a fluid concept and difficult to define from a policy perspective. Is it Youth Work? Is it Art Work? Is it process or product? How much of it is "good for you"? Is it for everybody or is it a targeted intervention? Is it what we do or how we do it?

Youth Arts is treated as an input into other policy objectives and not a "sector" in its own right
National youth arts policy is essentially distributed across multiple policy "sites". Consequently, it is viewed as an input into these other policies: as a support for mental health, wellbeing, job creation, social cohesion, inequality, etc. Youth arts policy is dependent on what site we are viewing it from. As one respondent phrased it "We strive to find the hard-to-reach young person, those who do not have access to cultural provision on a regular basis due to issues of poverty, ethnicity, disability, migrant status and/or rural peripherality". It is also true to say that from the practitioner's perspective this inclusion is a key value of youth arts practice, and this targeting is driven by a belief in equity of access to arts/culture and that all young people should have an opportunity to participate in youth arts. However, from a national policy perspective targeted provision does not guarantee equity or inclusion, nor does it necessarily address imbalances in either of these.

The welfare and provision of public services, including youth arts, is not the primary responsibility of the State
Social Policy in Ireland is still shaped by the Catholic principle of "subsidiarity" which states that the role of the state is secondary in the provision of social services. The primary providers of social services should be families, communities, and their

voluntary associations. Subsidiarity assumes that philanthropy, volunteerism, and community action will be the primary providers of social services (Powell, 2017). Once we understand and accept this then both the level and structure of funding in youth work and the arts – and other areas of the public good - make complete sense.

Welfare and the provision of public goods, including youth arts, is primarily a voluntary, non-professional activity

The principle of subsidiarity undermines the idea of professionalism (and the recognition, pay, and terms and conditions that go with it) in the delivery of services. An activity is voluntary precisely because it is deemed to have no economic value within a very specific economic framework or boundary.

Government Policy development is not driven by data but by deep "institutional ideas"

Government Policy Development is not data driven. Despite various reports, consultations, and impact analyses conducted over the years, and the compelling anecdotal evidence for the value of youth arts to the participants, the reality appears to be that policy is driven by institutional ideas and received narratives around the limits of state provision and responsibility, and the relationship between formal and informal education. This phenomenon is not unique to the youth work or youth arts sectors, rather it is a part of the culture of public policy making.

To test these answers, we asked: are these assumptions validated by the level, structure, and distribution patterns of the current funding of youth arts?

Youth Arts practice currently can be funded from a wide range of sources. This makes complete sense as youth arts can be viewed, from a policy perspective, as a tool or input that can address a wide range of other policy outcomes (wellbeing, mental health, identity, inclusion, equality, citizenship, employability, etc.) The arguments for supporting youth arts are frequently based on its alleged capacity to deal with a wide range of social and personal issues.

A per capita analysis of the funding in 2019 suggests that the level of funding nationwide is insufficient to develop scale or sustainability at the point of delivery, that it responds to activity rather than initiates it, and that it tends to be targeted (as opposed to universal), and is fixed at a level that requires significant additional personal investment in terms of time and opportunity cost (a kind of mandatory volunteerism), and either philanthropic or parental contributions.

- The range of combined funding into youth arts by both local authorities and the arts council is wide, from approximately €2 per capita in some locations to circa €55 per capita at the top end (2019 figures)
- The wide range of funding level by region indicates an "institutional idea" that funding should respond to activity on the ground, as opposed to providing that activity
- Even at the top end of €55 per capita per annum, it simply cannot provide for everybody, therefore, it must be targeted.

- Funding at this level cannot provide sustainability, implying an intrinsic dependence on voluntarism and philanthropy for sustainable delivery

- Funding at this level cannot support scale

- Funding at this level cannot support career professionalism.

Even at the highest level of funding (circa €55 per capita), we must remember that this is an annual figure that can be expressed as 15 cents a day. If we think of statutory funding as another form of purchasing power, then it's evident that 15 cents a day will not allow a young person to buy an awful lot of "youth arts". The funding level is intrinsically exclusive, it supports activity but does not initiate it or sustain it, and is predicated on the notions of volunteerism, family and community support, and philanthropy,

None of the above appear to be the result of deliberate, conscious policies (which is itself part of the challenge), but is driven by deep, inherited, institutional ideas and understandings that continue to define the ways in which policy goals are delivered, even as the rhetoric of policy changes.

Art for Art's Sake, Money for...Specific Social Outcomes

The Spectrum of Youth Arts Practice

Youth arts spans a wide spectrum of practice and delivery – from the single purpose, single artform local youth theatre or dance company or circus club or film making club meeting regularly throughout the year through to dedicated multi art form organisations, to occasional youth arts projects initiated by arts organisations, to youth arts in youth work settings and in targeted youth settings. Arguably, youth arts overlaps in some instances with formal educational settings as well.

This spectrum of activity creates both policy and research challenges. For example, reporting from local authorities can bundle together initiatives in primary schools (arts in education practice), dedicated youth led youth arts focused practice , "wellbeing and creativity" initiatives, and arts in a youth work setting. There is also a flexibility around the categories of 'children' and 'youth'. This bundling creates challenges in teasing out the local authority investment in local Youth Arts initiatives from other funding sources such as the ETB, Creative Ireland, and the Arts Council, and in separating out funding supporting young people making art, from funding that supports children's projects, arts in education, youth work etc.

The focus of the work shifts as we move across the spectrum from the arts focused youth arts practice to the youth work focused youth arts practice.

It shifts from an intrinsic value, rights based, universalist model (everybody has a right to make art in response to their life experiences) to an instrumentalist and targeted support model (art and creativity can help specific groups achieve certain policy outcomes – integration, inclusion, "wellbeing" employability etc.).

In this spectrum of activity we can lose sight of the young person as artist, turning up week after week, working with other young people to create original and powerful work, to develop their talent and skills over years of engagement. In losing sight of the young person as artist the risk is that all youth arts practice is viewed as an "intervention" designed to produce outcomes other than the art created by young artists.

Not every young person who engages in youth arts grows up to become an artist or work in the arts – but some do. No longitudinal study has been carried out to track this development, but anecdotally the youth arts sector is a key site in the development of talent for the wider arts, culture, creative and event sectors. This outcome appears to have little influence on policy or funding.

In a 2021 research article in Youth and Policy Sinead McMahon argued that work with young people continues to be framed as 'problematic' at a National Policy level, and the wider sector is constructed as being "...in need of 'ongoing' reform with a 'much sharper focus on quality, outcomes and evidence-based practice' starting with 'progressing value for money reviews of youth work funding' (Fitzgerald, 2012)." She argues that this 'problematising' of work with young people is 'constructed' by "...the choices made by Irish policy makers to solely apply an economic oriented, value for money approach to the evaluation of youth

work funding schemes". She references the need for UBU applicants to meet 7 specific outcomes. One of these outcomes is

> "Creativity and imagination – related to resilience and wellbeing. Creativity can have a positive impact on both self-esteem and overall achievement" (UBU Your Place Your Space policy and operating rules, p. 17)

The idea that Creativity and Imagination have value not in themselves but in terms of their outcomes (which are in need of further clarification; what, for example, is meant by achievement?) can be felt across policy sites.

For example the Arts in Education Charter contains an indication of a possible institutional assumption that impacts Youth Arts policy at a national level.

> "Continue to support the arts as one of the key components of a holistic education, in particular, in Early Years, Primary and Junior Cycle and Transition Year before students begin to specialise in subjects at Senior Cycle" (Dept. Arts Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht/Dept. Education and Skills, 2012 p19)

The statement suggests that those specialist subjects at senior cycle will not include the arts. Which is interesting as it begs the questions, is the practice of an art not a specialist subject? How will the existing arts and culture industry be refreshed if ambition in the formal education sector is constrained and redirected? Creative practice tends to be a lifelong pursuit – visual art, animation, music, dance, performance, writing, film making, etc all start at a young age and continue through adolescence. Very few people come to it suddenly on reaching maturity. This development is supported almost exclusively through the non-formal Youth Arts sector. It is a key resource for the development of our wider arts, culture, creative and events sector.

The National Culture Policy acknowledges that "arts, culture and heritage" are of value to "our lives and communities", and that "creativity" is of value to "individual and collective wellbeing".

Creative Ireland's Creative Youth programme aims to "...give every child practical access to tuition, experience and participation in art, music, drama and coding by 2022". The programme aims to "influence public policy around creativity in both formal education and out-of-school settings. We want to create a place where knowledge and creativity are equal partners in the formation of our young people, giving them an opportunity to become creative, active citizens". Again, with the best will in the world, the language places the policy focus on the outcomes, on the idea of using creative practice to produce "creative, active citizens", as opposed to supporting the artistic impulses and ambitions of young people to create powerful and impactful artistic work. From a national policy perspective it is a challenge to find a balance between the young people as practicing artists, and young people practicing art in the interests of other outcomes.

Youth arts Organisation are already places "where knowledge and creativity are equal partners". The policy problem may not be the absence of these places, but that the existing places continue to be underfunded and underacknowledged.

If we look at the youth population in 2019 there were 959,400 young people between the ages of 10 and 24, representing 19.4% of the population. (Under the legislation this is the age range that defines the category of youth).

In 2019 the Arts Council received €75million and allocated €3,253,912 on its YPCE programme or 4.3% % of its total, or €3.39 per capita.

In the same year the total local authority arts spend on their arts programmes was €72,911,677. Based on our sample response it is probable the total local authority youth arts spend in 2019 was €2,993,878 or 4.1%, or €3.12 per capita.

In 2021 there were 987,600 young people between the ages of 10 and 24, accounting for 19.5% of the population.

The arts council received €130 million and allocated €9,415,770 to its YPCE programme or 7.24% of the total budget, or €9.53 per capita.

The estimated combined arts programme budgets across all local authorities was €78,520,2744. Using the sample based average spend on youth arts it is probable the total local authority youth arts spend in 2021 was approximately €3,107,198 or 3.96% or €3.15 per capita.

The per capita figures are annual amounts, so on average in 2021 every young person in Ireland had €12.68 worth of youth arts provided for the entire year. Another way of thinking about this is that, on average, every young person could purchase €12.68 worth of youth arts throughout 2021.

At this rate the sector can only be sustained by significant investments from other sources including voluntary time, effort and resources.

	2019	**2021**
Total Arts Council Budget	€75,000,000	€130,000,000
Total Local Authority (estimate)	€72,911,677	€78,520,274
Youth Population	959400	987600
Arts Councll YPCE	€3,253,912.00	€9,415,770.00
YPCE percentage of total AC Budget	4.34%	7.24%
YPCE Per Capita	€3.39	€9.53
LA estimate of Youth Arts	€2,993,879	€3,107,198
Youth Arts estimate as percentage of total Local Authoroity Arts Programme Budget	4.11%	3.96%
Local Authority Youth Arts estimate Per Capita	€3.12	€3.15

4 The source data for local authority expenditure in 2021 is not as detailed as other years. The estimate is based on a mid-point in the trend in the data from 2020 to 2022.

The arts council provide detailed data on their allocations, so we can establish the average size of grants awarded. In 2019 the average arts council grant was €47,852, and the in 2021 it was €29,424. The 2021 figures are deceptive, as the arts council took responsibility for the Creative Schools programme in that year and awarded 187 €4,000 grants to schools participating in the programme. If we adjust the 2021 figures by removing the Creative Schools funding the average size of grants was €65,635.

However, if we look at both the median amount (the number at the midpoint of all awards) and the mode (the most frequently occurring amount) a slightly different picture emerges. In 2019 the median was €10,000 and the mode was €10,000. In 2021 the median was €20,000 and the mode was €20,000. The average can be skewed upward by a small number of high-value awards (mostly toward the strategic organisations), so the median and modal numbers are a better indication of the size of the awards.

These numbers are trending upwards at a significant rate (as we would expect given the significant increase in overall arts council funding), which is positive, but in absolute and per capita terms they remain low.

Again, because similar details are not available from other funding sources we cannot categorically say that that all grants follow a similar pattern. However, anecdotally it would seem that the Arts Council median and modal numbers are at the higher end of the scale.

Given that precise data is difficult to find in Youth Arts, these numbers are interesting for the story they tell. At the most basic level of interpretation, young people between the ages of 10 and 24 account for almost 20% of the population in both of the above years, but receive under 10% of the available spend for their art. Without any additional refinement, and bearing in mind that the probability is there that these numbers are inflated, it seems there is a significant imbalance between population size and budget allocation from these two sources.

It can be argued that to calculate on the basis of the entire youth population is unrealistic, because not everybody has an interest in the arts. There is a truth in this, although why this is, is not self-evident.

We can run an experiment on these numbers as follows. If we take the figures from Growing up in Ireland (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2018) for young people who have, or acquire, an interest in the arts early in life, and if we take the lower number of 20% of, then the figures look like this:

	2019	**2021**
Youth Population @20% participation	191880	197520
YPCE Per Capita	€16.96	€47.67
Local Authority Youth Arts estimate Per Capita	€15.60	€15.73

The per-capita figures obviously improve if we exclude the 80% who – for various reasons – may not be predisposed to, actively interested in, or have access to the arts, but the usefulness of the amounts is questionable. In 2021 20% of young people on average had €62.40 invested in their art. This is an annual figure that equates to €1.24 per week. Again, even if we consider 20% of the youth population as actual participants, the sector can only

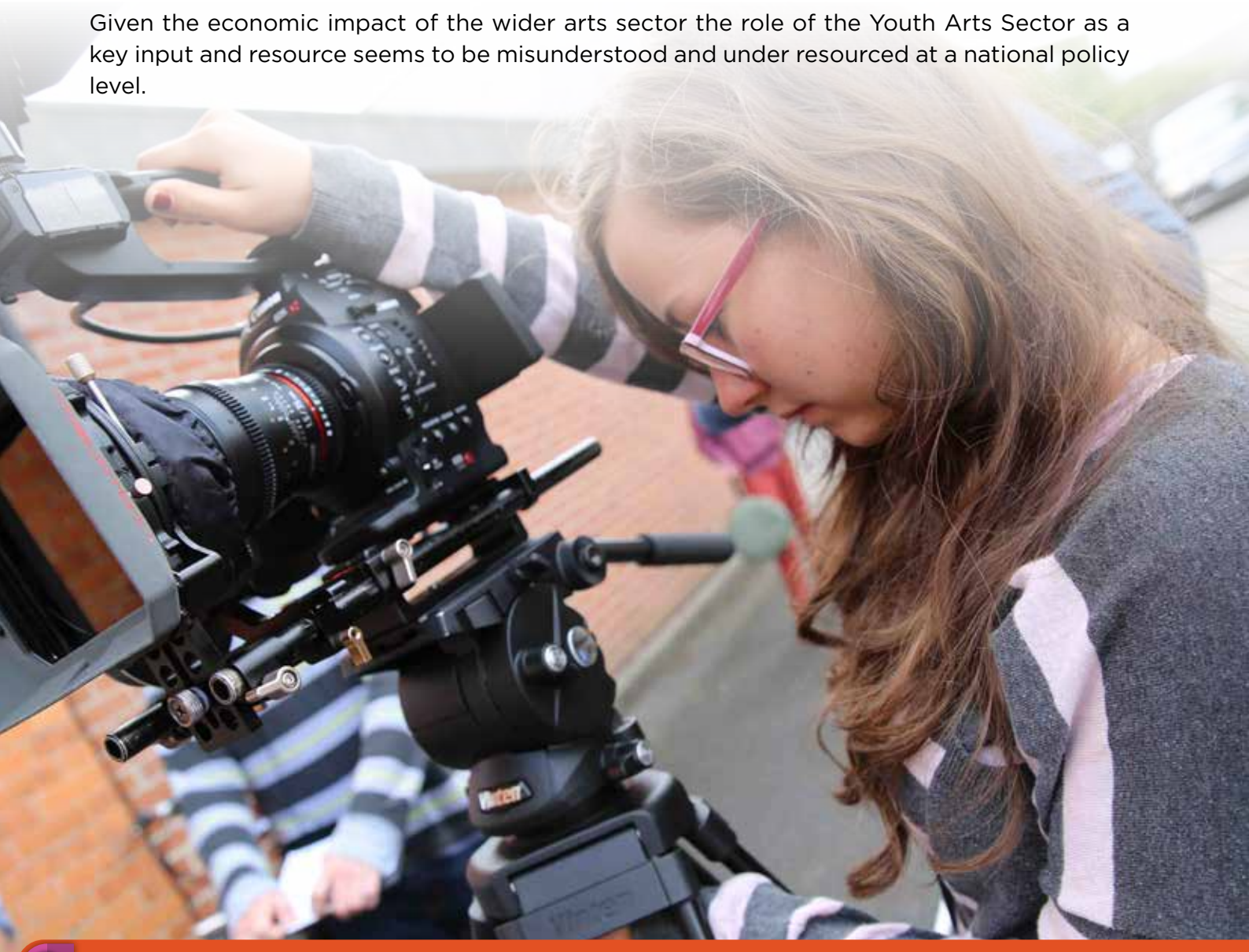
be sustained by significant investments from other sources including voluntary time, effort and resources.

If we accept that the development of creative practice is a lifelong activity, then much of the artistic training and development of emerging generations of artists and arts workers takes place in non-formal, youth arts settings. Not every young person who spends their teenage years in a youth theatre, or dance company, or orchestra, or film club will grow up to be professional artist, or producer, or arts manager – but many will.

The Youth Arts sector therefore is an essential resource and input to "the wider arts sector.... (which) contributes directly to the wider economy. In Q4 2019, this sector contributed over €1.16bn in GVA, directly supporting almost 55,000 jobs. The wider Arts sector is two times more job-intensive than the average sector in Ireland. Public investment in this sector is particularly relevant in the fight against unemployment" (The Arts Council/Ernst & Young 2020)

The arts sector is "...essential to the development of other sectors of the economy, in particular tourism. Arts and events attract tourists from all over the world. The number of overseas visitors coming to Ireland to attend a festival was projected to reach 300,000 by 2022 according to Fáilte Ireland"(op.cit.)

Given the economic impact of the wider arts sector the role of the Youth Arts Sector as a key input and resource seems to be misunderstood and under resourced at a national policy level.



The Molumby Report

In 2019 Waterford Youth Arts commissioned Mollie Molumby to undertake an initial stage of research. This was funded by the Arts Offices of Waterford, Wexford, Carlow and Kilkenny, and Creative Waterford. The report, published in 2021, stated the objectives of Youth Arts Now as:

- To establish an advocacy network for the development and adoption of a youth arts policy in Ireland
- To research and recommend a funding strategy that will enable the development of Youth Arts work across Ireland.
- To marshal the collective experience, passion and skills of youth arts practitioners and young people in Ireland to effectively lobby for the implementation of youth arts policy in Ireland
- Support the ongoing development of skills and constant advocating for the creative rights and needs of all young people.
- To assess the potential for a national youth arts network in the South East region and nationally, throughout Ireland.

Molumby's report states that

> One of the **biggest challenges** of the research was **differing understandings of the term 'youth arts', both within existing literature and within the arts sector itself**, presenting difficulties in establishing accurate cross contextual comparisons". (Emphasis added)

What we will propose is that this challenge of definition is a "wrong end of the telescope" problem. To put it another way, the problem with the definition of youth arts is that much policy discussion at a national level focuses on the outcomes of the arts practice, and not on the process, defined by the relationship between participants and facilitators, framed by those change mechanisms of values, skills, and behaviours. It is a common confusion of "agent" and "cause". The art is the agent of delivery (and in many cases, the output), and the cause of the outcomes is the "scaffolding" put in place by the facilitator, and the willingness of the young person to engage. Why is this important? From a policy perspective if we want to achieve specific results or outcomes then we need to correctly identify the change mechanisms, and understand what is agent and cause so we invest time and resources in the right pressure points of the system, and in the right people or roles. If we get this wrong then the desired outcomes simply do not occur.

Networks

The research also provided a definition of networks.

> an arts network can be generally understood as 'decentralized socio-political formations consisting of arts and cultural organisations that work together towards shared objectives' (Delfin, 2012 p.240).

"Network" is one of the great 21st century policy buzzwords (along with "creativity" and "collaboration"). The important question with networks is: what do we expect a network to achieve? The reality on the ground is that networks come and go, networks depend on people's needs, and depend on people willing to manage, develop and drive them. Youth Theatre Ireland is a network, Music Generation is a Network, Fighting Words is a network, NYCI is a network and there are youth arts networks within it, Young Irish Film Makers is developing a youth film network; there are informal networks of facilitators sharing skills and work information and opportunities. The question is not "do we need a network?", but "what do we want to achieve through a network and who will drive it?"

Respondents in the Molumby report stated that there are

> opportunities to connect with others working in their own artform, such as Youth Theatre Ireland and the Irish Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle but, many clarified that opportunities to network amongst peers were limited across artforms

Why are there opportunities to network within but not across artforms?5 What's driving that phenomenon? Is it a result of artform focused funding tools informed by categories established in the Arts Act? Is networking across artforms necessary? What's the purpose of, or desire for, the network? What's preventing it? What do we expect will happen? To paraphrase Samuel Beckett, "What shall we do now that we are networked?"

The report also identified that

> Many connections take place in an informal or ad hoc way, without an organised approach. As a result, many respondents indicated that **their specific needs as youth arts practitioners were not met in artform-centric forums and networks"**. (Emp added)

It seems that the practitioners consulted for the Molumby report feel that the opportunities for skill sharing are limited. Which in turn suggests a concern with skill levels, perhaps a low level of confidence around skills, in turn suggesting a lack of availability of, or access to, training opportunities and professional qualifications, which begs the question "what kind of training and qualifications are appropriate?" Should we look to academic models to increase skill levels and professional recognition, or should we look at an "apprenticeship" model that acknowledges, validates, and rewards the way skills are acquired and developed, and the time invested by practitioners?

Networking is already happening albeit in "an informal or ad hoc way". The community clearly exists, and there are informal networks of artists, youth arts facilitators/practitioners/youth workers etc. The questions are, what kind of platform do we want, what do we want to happen as a result, and who will be responsible for it?

At a more formal level, the NYCI's Youth Arts Hubs are cross-artform and are open to youth workers, youth arts practitioners and artists. They are run in 3 areas in collaboration with local partners and offer about 3 events a year.

5 The NYCI Youth Arts Hubs are cross-artform and are open to youth workers, youth arts practitioners and artists.

International Comparisons
Molumby also identified some "Best Practice" models, in Scotland, Wales and Norway and conducted interviews with key respondents in these organisations.

The data gathered from these conversations is fascinating, but it is vital that we maintain a critical distance. Looking for international models of best practice is a commonplace in research of this type. However, we must ask if these organisations are "best practice" or if they are simply different, appropriate to their social and economic contexts. It is a commonplace of arts advocacy to point to work done in other places and ask, "why can't we do it that way?". While there are always lessons to be learned it is not helpful to ignore the specifics of different contexts. Ireland is not a European Welfare state,6 and European policy in arts and education, in the provision of public goods in general, developed along very different trajectories across Europe.

As an international respondent to this research phrased it, demonstrating those different trajectories:

> How well are children educated in the various art forms? Is this kind of training financed by the state? Or does the local education boards have any guidelines that they have to follow on the teaching of art in schools? Policymakers have a tendency to think that knowledge and familiarity with arts is something that "happens" to individuals. If asked if they feel the same about mathematics, they will look at you as if you have problems, serious ones.

My message here is that youth need education through the school system, in a continuous and structured way, in order to contribute and appreciate the Youth Arts work available to them... Professionals, both as artists and facilitators have to be engaged in the work, on a long term basis. The lack of professionalism in this field will continue to keep the funding erratic and scarce and always be a line in the accounts that can be erased if times get rough. (Anonymous, 2021)

Findings
A key finding in the Molumby Report is that securing quantitative data around youth arts is not straightforward. The response from local authorities was limited, with respondents stating that data was difficult to establish, particularly across extended periods of time, as they had no dedicated Youth Arts funding strand. Consequently, funding for an Arts Centre (for example) may well support a youth arts project operating out of that Arts Centre, but there was no centralised record of youth arts funding.

In policy terms the Molumby report identified

- A need for sustainable funding,
- A need for a comprehensive youth arts policy
- connectivity amongst organisations and practitioners:

6 Four distinct types of Welfare State have been identified: Nordic Europe and Continental Europe, built on social democratic values, and The Anglo-Saxon World and Peripheral Europe built on Liberal Capitalist Values. Ireland fits into the Peripheral Europe distinguished by Catholic Corporatism and subsidiarity.

- greater strides to be made in the area of facilitating better inclusion,
- need for better supported inclusion in youth arts for hard-to-reach young people - rural settings - Direct Provision:
- a desire for recognition for the profession of youth arts practice and the young people who participate and,
- greater access to an improved youth arts infrastructure:

Case Study - Local Creative Youth Partnerships (LCYPs)

Local Creative Youth Partnerships are an initiative of Creative Ireland under their Creative Youth Plan.

> "Key to the vision of the Creative Youth Plan is enabling collaboration to provide greater opportunities for young people to experience and enjoy creative activities".

LCYPs are centred in local Education and Training Boards and their purpose is to

> "enable information sharing and collaboration between the host ETB, local authorities, the non-formal education sector, family support services and youth services – and an opportunity to forge new partnerships and relationships with the local creative sector".

This partnership model is similar to Music Generation's Local Music Education Partnerships (LMEPs) in that they bring together the various key stakeholders to share knowledge and budgets. Both LCYPs and LMEPs hark back to the 1987 proposal by the then Minister of State for Youth and Sport, Frank Fahy, who proposed establishing Local Voluntary Youth Service Councils.7

While the LCYPs will impact on Youth Arts practice and provision, their remit "goes beyond that of the "arts". In keeping with the Creative Industries model underpinning the Creative Ireland programme the LCYPs are concerned with heritage, the environment, STEM, and digital creativity.

> The range of activities is limitless – everything from traditional and visual arts to coding and tech; music and opera to circus arts, comedy, street arts & spectacle; architecture & design to heritage; film, drama, theatre or dance to literature and creative writing.

The implementation plan is simple and effective:

1. Develop collaborative plans across local communities and between schools and creative out-of-school activities.
2. Facilitate and develop new local creative initiatives, targeting different groups more effectively to ensure wider coverage; and
3. Avoid duplication of effort

(Local Creative Youth Partnerships (LCYPs) - Creative Ireland Programme, 2022)

At the time of writing there are LCYPs in six Education and Training Boards Kerry, Laois/Offaly, Limerick/Clare, Cork, Mayo/Sligo/Leitrim, and Galway/Roscommon.

7 It was proposed these Local Voluntary Youth Service Councils would bring together representatives from existing voluntary organisations with the chief executive officer of VEC to assess the level of local provision and submit costed programmes to the Department of Education through the VEC

The LCYPs receive funding and training support from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media, the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

This kind of partnership model is exemplary in terms of both local investment and genuine, welfare models of provision. It creates a context in which all relevant stakeholders can engage, and provision can be designed in a holistic and effective manner.

The success and the challenges of the model are captured by these responses

> As we have a greater demand for our services, delivery mechanisms and resources will become a major challenge. Already we are looking for funds from a variety of sources, but the national and local funding landscape is very competitive.
>
> The biggest challenge is going to be resources, both in the field of trained personnel and budget to deliver our programme. We work in close partnership with the youth and community sector which is, in itself, already straining under limited resources and finding it increasingly difficult to find qualified personnel. The combination of the under-resourced arts sector with a youth and community sector that is also challenged by the same issues, leaves much to be desired if the aim is to grow our work and reach a larger cohort of under-served young people across Ireland. (Anonymous, 2022, email response)

The LCYPs have an approach to provision that is both targeted and universal, and involves the deployment of creative practice to deal with complex social problems of exclusion and inequality.

> We strive to find the hard-to-reach young person, those who do not have access to cultural provision on a regular basis due to issues of poverty, ethnicity, disability, migrant status and/or rural peripherality. To this end we work with Travellers young people accessing disability services, living in direct provision, or identified through the AMIF programme, living in communities identified as being socio-economically disadvantaged. These are the areas where gaps in provision exist. (ibid.)

The high-level policy language around the programme is interesting, focusing on activities as opposed to change mechanisms, outcomes, or impacts. However, at the point of delivery the focus is on building capacity and developing longer term, sustainable models.

The LCYPs are engaging more and more with strategic youth arts organisations for expertise and programme delivery. This model of local stakeholder partnerships is an effective use of local resources, and an effective way of designing a genuine provision model.

Defining Youth Arts - Whom does the grail serve?

Existing Definitions

The Molumby report offers the following definition of Youth Arts

> the practice of all art forms in sectors that are not part of the formal education system, in which young people, in the 12–25-year age range, engage as active participants or as consumers/audience members in their own free time (Coughlan, 2002, p.5).8

And then adds the following by way of extension and qualification: youth arts is

> ...the engagement of adult artists and arts practitioners as well as youth workers who facilitate arts activities, workshops, and collaborative work, with and for young people' (Durrer, 2011, p.56). More recently, youth arts has emphasised young people as active 'contributors' or creators, rather than simply passive 'recipients' of arts activities (Durrer, 2011, p.56; Arts Council, 2005, p.1).

In 2022 the Arts Council issued a briefing paper as part of its consultation on its YPCE programme, stating that

> The Arts Council wants to make sure children can make, share, and enjoy all kinds of art. The arts include dance, music, stories, poetry, film, painting, putting on plays, going to shows, making and building, and much more...Children have a right to participate in cultural life and the arts. This is part of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Ireland in 1992.

Within a national policy context in Ireland, the NYCI (2009, p 4) states that youth arts:

> can be broadly defined as young people taking part voluntarily in creative, cultural, or expressive activity outside of the formal education process. It can encompass participation and appreciation, as well as engagement with arts work specifically created by, with or for young people.

The NYCI report, Mapping Youth Arts in a Youth Work Context, says of this definition that

> This broad understanding of youth arts positions young people as both recipients or consumers of arts and cultural activities and as artists or creative producers in their own right. (Hogan et.al., 2021, p. 19)

The definitions are broad and inclusive of a wide range of policy objects - voluntary participation; delivery outside the formal education process; participation (making stuff) and appreciation (visiting stuff); and the idea of a specific arts discourse for young people (created by, with, or for). The definitions don't address the questions of quality and quantity, specifically around the issue of frequency. How much participation? How many visits for

8 There are other definitions of youth arts that we will refer to throughout this report. We do this to demonstrate that no single agreed definition exists, and to demonstrate the similarities between the definitions.

appreciation purposes? What kind of "scaffolding" needs to be in place around these voluntary engagements to guarantee impact?

These definitions focus on the activities, as opposed to the context. That context can be understood as the framework of behaviours and values surrounding and supporting the activities. These definitions suggest that it is the drama, or the film, or the dance (or whatever art practice) that is driving the outcome as opposed to the behaviours, skills and values of the people facilitating the work, or the complex relationship between the art practice, the young person, and the skilled facilitator.

This valuing of the activity over the practitioner is a common phenomenon when policy is framed as a technical (as opposed to a rights or values based) practice.

Given these various definitions of Youth Arts, when can we say that "youth arts" is occurring? When a young person walks into a theatre or a gallery? Or when they take part in an orchestra or band? Or when they work with a professional artist (who may or may not know how to work with them) in their local youth club? Or is it when young people are supported and facilitated to talk about themselves and their world on a regular basis, using various creative practices in the way that they want to use them, to investigate their world, and to support the development of their voice, identity, and values toward imagining a better one?

Is a single visit every year to a museum or a theatre "youth arts"? Is a commercially run stage school or dance school Youth Arts? Is Youth Arts about the acquisition of a set of skills or is it about the development of a set of relationships and ideas about people and the world and a set of skills to navigate, understand, and shape that world?

These kinds of questions are important because the answers impact on the nature and expectations of policy and the focus of investment.

The Legislative Frameworks

The definition of youth arts is further complicated by the fact that Youth Arts is essentially understood within a national policy context as a subset of youth work, which is defined as

> a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is –
>
> a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and
>
> b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations. (The Youth Work Act, 2001, Part 2, Section 3)

If Youth Arts - from a national policy perspective - is part of "a planned programme of education…complementary to their formal, academic, or vocational education and training" then how do we evaluate it? How are we to measure its impact on the formal "formal, academic, or vocational education and training"?

The requirement that youth work (and by extension youth arts) be "…provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations" suggests that the practice of Youth Arts is not a

skilled professional practice. The expectation in the act is that the "planned programme of education" that will aid and enhance "the personal and social development of young persons" will be provided by interested people (artists? teachers?) free of charge, in their spare time. The Youth Work Act 2001 arguably reflects a country and a culture thirty years prior to its publication and is not fit for purpose in a contemporary world.

It's worth taking a moment to reflect on this. Youth work (and therefore Youth Arts as a practice within Youth Work) is understood at a legislative (and therefore at a bureaucratic and policy level) as

- Complementary to the work performed in the educational system
- Non-compulsory - young people can opt in or opt in at their own discretion
- It is voluntary in a double sense, that the young people engage voluntarily, and that it is provided by voluntary organisations and their volunteers

These are three pervasive "institutional ideas" that drive policy. Few people working in the sector would argue with the first two of these ideas. The formal educational system cannot meet all the intellectual, social, and emotional needs of young people, and access to an informal social group - through youth work, sport, art etc. - is a vital support and driver of social capital. The second idea can be understood as essential to the "change mechanisms" of youth work - that young people have a unique relationship with the youth workers, meeting them as equal participants rather than as students, as people rather than as roles within a hierarchy (student/teacher).

The "institutional idea" of voluntarism throws up a lot of complex challenges. Who precisely is volunteering in this situation? The young people are engaging on a voluntary basis, but is the legislation suggesting that the youth arts workers should be voluntary? Or are they suggesting that the governance of the organisation's managing the youth work should be voluntary, but that those organisations should employ people to deliver the work? How do we assess the expertise of those people delivering the work if the work is entirely voluntary? What happens in an area where there is no voluntary action to fill the gap?

The nature of the voluntary sector is changing, and it is commonplace to argue that "voluntary" in this category refers to a not-for-profit organisation with a voluntary board which may have paid staff or volunteers. Not all such organisations engaged in the delivery of youth arts can afford staff, and even when people are paid or contracted on an hourly rate, the pay does not reflect the totality of the labour involved, as necessary work is done outside the contact hours (administrative, preparatory, fundraising etc.) and there is a considerable emotional investment that is not 'priced in'. This is a common phenomenon in the voluntary sector.

The "institutional idea" of volunteerism is deeply embedded in the institutions of the state and impacts significantly on all policies and funding strategies focused on areas of public value and public goods. Fundamentally the state neither provides for or interferes in the lives of individuals, whose welfare is the responsibility of themselves, their families, their communities, and their voluntary associations. How this idea plays out in policy delivery is that the state does not provide, it responds and supports.

The legislation also states that youth work programmes and services should have "particular regard" to the needs of young people "who are socially or economically disadvantaged".

In other words, although youth work can be available and of benefit to all young people giving it the quality of a universal "right" it tends to be instrumentalised to "target" particular groups of young people, variously identified as marginalised, hard to reach or problematic in some way.9 This deep institutional idea persists, as Sinead McMahon points out in her 2021 article, "There have been significant changes to the funding contract that has direct implications for the narrowing of youth work practice including specifications on the percentage of time to be given to working in universal activities (20%) and targeted activities (80%)." (MacMahon, 2021)

The legislation surrounding the Arts adds to the complexity of definitions in Youth Arts.

The Arts Act defines the Arts as

> "arts" means any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes; (Arts Act, 2003)

The Arts Act - bearing in mind that much of it was originally formulated in the 1950s - focuses on product (any creative or interpretative expression), and then creates a hierarchy of product using the phrase "in particular". So "arts" can be any kind of product, but the act is particularly interested in products in the following forms: "visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture".

Very few practitioners would feel constrained by the language of the arts act in this way, however the language of the act reflects deep institutional ideas about what is and is not art, dating back to the 1950s.

Legislation sets up an intellectual framework that creates objectives and constraints within the culture of government departments, and it contributes to the development of "institutional ideas" and "received narratives". The legislation creates a picture of the world for people not living in that world, to allow them to make decisions about activities and relationships they may have very little practical experience of.

So, how does the legislation define the world of Youth Arts?

- Young people stop at 25.
- Participation is voluntary but it is educational
- It should aid and enhance personal and social development of young people
- It can involve the process of making, or the experience of consuming

9 This idea of the work existing on an axis between Universally available and Targeted is standard measurement of youth work provision. (European Commission 2014: 6).

- It should be delivered primarily by voluntary organisations
- Art is a product resulting from a creative process.
- Art can be in any form but preferably "visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture" all of which are in competition for funding.

The Arts Council's Pay the Artist policy (The Arts Council, 2022) protects the interests of the artist but not necessarily the youth worker or the youth arts facilitator. But not all Youth Arts work is dependent on the presence of artists, and not all artists are competent in the complex and skilled psychodynamic practice of youth work and youth arts facilitation.

Multiple Policy Sites

The challenge is further complicated by the fact that "Youth Arts" is not a policy object in its own right. It is not a clearly defined thing, activity, or service, about which policy can be easily made.

However, it can easily be perceived as an input into other policies. Something that can be used to "improve" education, mental health, job prospects, entrepreneurship, exclusion, etc.

There is also a lack of clarity and agreement around whether the point of Youth Arts is its process or its product. (Although as youth arts facilitators will point out, this is a false opposition). This creates uncertainty over what is being funded, and uncertainty over whether the return on the investment sits in the outcomes or in the outputs. Is it the art or the participation that is "important"? Do we evaluate Youth Arts based on the quality of the art produced or the "quality" of the experience of producing it? Is consumption of art (attending a gallery, play, movie, concert) by a young person to be considered "youth arts" or a day out? How many times and art forms should a young person attend before they manifest the desired "social capital"? Is acquiring a "skill" associated with an arts practice (classes in specific dance styles, musical theatre performance, camera operating) youth arts? Or does something other than skill acquisition have to take place for it to be youth arts? Does the process have to involve an artist? Practitioners are adept at operating within this complexity, however at national policy level this complexity can be problematic.

This inherent conceptual complexity means that youth arts does not sit easily in any single policy space, or within any single department or budget. It exists between places, surviving in the cracks, subject to a complex array of policy requirements, and understood more often as a policy input than a policy object. It is important to note at this point that the general policy environment at this time tends to favour the cultural and creative industries framework, valuing arts and cultural practices in general as economic inputs that can deliver a more "creative" knowledge-based economy.

Summary

Policy is vital. Policy identifies objects and desired outcomes, and in doing so creates a funding requirement. If it's not in the policy, it's not in the budget. However, in the arena of public provision, and particularly in cultural goods, there are two significant tendencies.

- The policy does not understand the process in the production of public cultural goods and unintentionally targets the wrong part of the process for intervention and funding.

- The cultural good is treated as an input into other policy actions with no inherent value of its own.

This complex problem of defining Youth Arts emerges from the focus on the "what" and not the "why" or the "how". The seven points in the legislative list on page 33 can be read as answers to a series of "what" questions (What is a young person? Someone under 25; What kind of participation? Educational and voluntary. etc.). When we ask the "why" and the "how" we can make answers like

> To support the development of young artists in the exercise of their art.
>
> To ensure that young people develop a set of relationships and ideas about people and the world and a set of skills to navigate, understand, reflect, and shape that world.
>
> and
>
> By supporting and facilitating young people to talk about themselves and their world on a regular basis, using various creative practices in the way that they want to use them, to investigate their world, supporting the development of their voice, identity, and values toward imagining a better one.

An effective definition of Youth Arts that can drive policy and simplify funding decisions needs to be built on a clear understanding of what is being supported, and the behaviours and values that support the young person in the creation of their art: the why and the how of the work.

Case Study - Music Generation - the Philanthropic Impact

Music Generation is arguably the largest and most effective delivery model for a specific art form experience for young people in the country. It combines many of the functions of strategic organisations (research, advocacy, policy development, training, quality control, networking) with a nationwide delivery structure. Music Generation is co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, the Department of Education and Local Music Education Partnerships.

Music Generation describes itself as a "national partnership programme whose mission is to create inspiring experiences for children and young people through music".

> The vision that inspires us is the same today as it was when Music Generation was first established almost 10 years ago. We work to break down the barriers that may otherwise prevent children and young people from experiencing the pure joy of making music. We believe in the power of music to build confidence and creativity, to nurture leadership and innovation, to promote self-expression, connection, and happiness. We want all children and young people to have the opportunity to realise that potential, regardless of circumstance. (About Us, Music Generation)

Music Education uses its funding to co-fund the Local Music Education Partnerships on a 50/50 basis: the LMEP investment can be both in cash and kind.

The 202010 audited accounts list 28 Local Education Music Partnerships. Twenty-five are led by local Education and Training Boards, and three are led by Local Authorities. The ETBs are in turn funded by the Department of Education.

The total investment into LMEPs by Music Generation in 2020 was €4,363,540. The implication being that an additional investment of €4,363,540 came from the local LMEPs giving a total statutory funding of €8,727,080 into the work of Music Generation.

This is almost twice the total Arts Council allocation, and more than the combined Arts Council and Local Authority spend on all youth arts activity for the previous year (2019)

However, the amount is not the point in this analysis. What is of interest is why a particular artform (music) has attracted more investment than all other youth arts activities combined?

Music Generation's success has been driven by many factors, including the vision, drive and capability of its team and board of directors. Its success is also determined by the media and political capital of U211 and the philanthropic investment of €7 million (U2 and The Ireland Funds) in 2009, and a further €6.3 million (U2 and The Ireland Funds) in 2016, and the fact that music is a curriculum subject. This combination of philanthropic investment with political and media capital has played a significant part in the commitment of The Department of Education. The nationwide expansion of Music Generation is now part of Creative Ireland's Creative Youth plan.

10 We are using the data from 2020 as the level of detail is not provided in previous accounts
11 It's interesting that a young Bono was a member of the Costello committee in 1989 that led to the Youth Work Act in 2001.

This is an extraordinary achievement.

This level of statutory support for Music Generation demonstrates the principle of subsidiarity writ large. The state is now spending more on a single art form, through the Department of Education, the Arts Council, Education and Training Boards and Local Authorities than on all other youth arts practices combined. The ability of private wealth and philanthropy to determine public policy and public provision is clearly demonstrated here, and the responsiveness of the state to the tastes and preferences of private investment in the public space is also evident. This is a deep "institutional idea" dating back to the development of arts policy in the 1950s within a framework of economic liberalism (Cooke, 2022).

Both the work and delivery model of Music Generation are exemplary, and demonstrate the power of ambitious thinking and planning on a nationwide level. However, the replicability and sustainability of the funding model are open to question.

Provision or Purchase? Voluntary or Professional?

The interviews conducted in the course of this work support the claim that the sector is reliant on "Inadequate, inconsistent, and piecemeal funding for youth arts provision, set within an under-resourced youth work sector" (Hogan et.al., 2021, p.10) There were variations within the responses to do with the idea that there were new opportunities emerging, new players coming online, that the situation was improving, but overall the existing funding was less than was needed, and that "a case needs to be made" at the political level for increased funding.

Is this really the case? Arts Council allocations under their YPCE programme have increased dramatically over the last few years, Creative Ireland's creative youth programme is driving significant investment and developing effective partnerships. Is there a problem with the level of funding or with the structure of the funding or with the object of the funding? To put it another way, is the general sense of being underfunded related to the amount of money, to the way in which the money is distributed, or to the target of the money? Is it a combination of all three, or is the sense of underfunding a result of something else entirely?

There are several research challenges here related to the conceptual problems set out in the previous section. To put it simply, it is very difficult to get a clear sense of the total size of the investment into Youth Arts. Why is this the case?

First, because Youth Arts is primarily treated as an input into other policies it's very difficult to track exactly how much is being allocated both directly and indirectly. Second, the perception that an activity is being underfunded is predicated on the assumption that there is a general understanding and agreement that it should be funded. And finally, any claim that something is being underfunded begs the question, "as compared to what"?

The current assumption that youth work, youth arts work, (and by extension youth and youth arts workers) should be funded is at odds with the institutional history and culture of these sectors, and the Irish state's general approach to "funding".

As Cooke (2022) demonstrates in The Politics and Polemics of Culture in Ireland 1800-2010 the development of arts policy in Ireland was underpinned by a model of economic liberalism in which the state's main role was to develop audience taste and so develop a sustainable market for the arts. The state never expected to provide, only to stimulate.

From the 1980s onwards the development of youth Policy was driven by a combination of practical and ideological factors. Ireland had one of the youngest populations in Europe at the time and one of the highest levels of youth unemployment. There were concerns regarding "apathy, disillusionment and active forms of anti-social behaviour among young people". (Devlin, 2008)

In 1983 the government appointed twenty-four people to the National Youth Policy Committee chaired by Declan Costello. The committee was tasked with developing recommendations for "...a National Youth Policy which would be aimed at assisting all young people to become self-reliant, responsible, and active participants in society".

The committee proposed a "comprehensive youth service" but upheld the "...primacy of the voluntary (non-governmental) youth organisations as the direct providers of youth work programmes and services". (op.cit)

The committee itself stated that

> We are convinced that until a clear and unambiguous statutory duty is imposed on some agency to ensure supply of the services which young people need...development will be spasmodic, muddled and inadequate...**It should be made clear that the statutory agencies will support, not supplant, the voluntary organisations**. (emphasis added).

Despite the increasing professionalisation of Youth Work in the intervening years, interviews conducted with experienced youth arts practitioners for this work produced the following observations

> "At the moment. There's a lot of talk about volunteer engagement...you kind of go, okay, that's fine. That's good. It's important. Yes. Don't forget you need a paid staff. (Anonymous, 2021)

> ...you can feel the undertones of that...word volunteer is dangerous because...there's the danger that it could undermine paying a professional, a skilled professional to deliver that work. (Anonymous, 2021)

> In the department they're talking about youth workers, youth organisations, and engaging volunteers...And you kinda go well, that's fine well, what about the, you know, volunteer's not going to arrive after a couple of hours training with the skills to run a youth group" (Anonymous, 2021)

Youth Theatre Ireland's Centre Stage reports are invaluable for the detail of the research. Centre Stage +20 captures the underlying reliance on volunteerism, and the tensions inherent in the voluntary provision model.

> Volunteerism is active within autonomous youth theatres, and they have been particularly impacted by changes in regulatory compliance, policy change and funder requirements over the past 10 years...and youth theatre leaders cite the additional burden of legislative/regulatory compliance and the reporting requirements of funders as the biggest change in youth theatre management and practice over the past 10 years.

> Developments in this area have added significantly to the workload of over-stretched youth theatre leaders, and with many reporting 'burn-out', this poses a threat to the ongoing sustainability of youth theatre. Streamlining the duplicated reporting demands that different agencies and bodies make of youth theatres would help decrease the workload without decreasing accountability and transparency. (Youth Theatre Ireland, 2019)

The voluntary model is changing according to Centre Stage +20, but the change is not systematic and there are underlying assumptions about the value of the work and the required commitment. As the report points out the voluntary model is "struggling" for the reasons quoted above, but the idea that the work should be voluntary seems to persist

> The voluntary committees /boards of most autonomous youth theatres pay a youth theatre facilitator or a team of facilitators and assistant facilitators (depending on the size and structure of the youth theatre) to carry out a range of roles within the youth theatre. **These youth theatre leaders may receive payment for all hours worked or, more typically, may work additional voluntary hours. Committee/board members within autonomous youth theatres of this size will typically take on voluntary operational duties as well as their governance role.** (Youth Theatre Ireland, 2019, emphasis added)

Centre Stage +20 also states that

> Local Authority Arts Offices aren't generally resourced to manage long-term youth arts projects such as youth theatres and it has been difficult for staff to maintain the level of administration and management support necessary for youth theatres to thrive. **Many of these youth theatres were also affected by changes in procurement practice within Local Authorities where regular youth theatre facilitators who were on repeat short-term contracts were deemed to be part-time staff (an unfeasible option for Local Authority Arts Offices) or Arts Officers were requested to put the youth theatre facilitation contract out to tender rather than automatically engaging the facilitator who had been working regularly with the youth theatre.** (Youth Theatre Ireland, 2019, emphasis added)

This phenomenon of avoiding direct employment through arms-length organisations (usually charitable and voluntary) or procurement practices is part of how local and national government deal with a substantial part of welfare/public goods provision. The Music Generation model challenged this approach, calling for the direct contracting of musician/educators albeit on an hourly rate. However, there appear to be challenges emerging with this model as it becomes clear to the lead partners that the musician/educators are developing long-term employment entitlements.

The arms-length model puts organisations at risk, as their ongoing support is always partial and discretionary. As Centre Stage +20 put it

> One factor that contributed to the drop in Local Authority Arts Office run youth theatres, was the closure of multi-centre youth theatres across the past decade. These multi-centre models ensured a strategic provision for young people by delivering services in multiple locations throughout a county **but they were particularly vulnerable to funding cuts during the recession** and to facilitator shortages in some counties (Youth Theatre Ireland, 2019, emphasis added)

The Centre Stage +20 report captures the persistence of volunteerism, even as the sector strives to professionalise. While some facilitators are paid, the majority put in hours over and above their contract terms, and many organisations depend on voluntary support from trustees and others.

Where does this dependence on voluntary provision come from? It is driven by a social policy principle known as "subsidiarity12". This is a core "institutional idea" that is part of the bedrock of bureaucratic thought and culture within the Irish state. The principle of subsidiarity defines the role of the state as secondary in the provision of social services; the primary providers of social services should be families, communities, and associations many of which historically often have religious affiliations.

According to this principle the state should only have a secondary ("subsidiary") role in providing for people's care, welfare, and education. The best way for the state to support the common good is when families and individuals are enabled to fulfil their proper destinies. "The State does not exist to do for individuals and families and other associations what they can do reasonably well themselves". (Kavanagh, 1964: 57).

Once we view policy and funding strategies through the lens of subsidiarity a whole range of government actions in housing, childcare, education, health, and arts and culture come into sharp focus.

Subsidiarity, with its emphasis on volunteerism, creates problems for the recognition of youth arts. Youth arts facilitators speak of the high level of knowledge, skill and abilities required to effectively work with young people. It is, in and of itself, a professional practice, but subsidiarity identifies it as a vocational, voluntary activity. It is interesting that there are very few professional qualifications for youth arts workers.

This dual position on the professional status of youth work - that it should be performed voluntarily, while at the same there is a need for paid workers with adequate terms and conditions creates a tension between the voluntary (subsidiary) nature of the work and professional aspirations for the work. A tension that continues to be felt in youth work and in youth arts and arts practice today.

12 "The principle of subsidiarity has been attributed to Catholic intellectuals in Germany (Kennedy, 2001: 188; see also Geoghegan and Powell, 2006: 33-34) – the state should only have a secondary ("subsidiary") role in providing for people's care, welfare, and education. The State exists for the common good, and that common good is best achieved when families and individuals are enabled to fulfil their proper destinies ... The State does not exist to do for individuals and families and other associations what they can do reasonably well themselves. (Kavanagh, 1964: 57)" (Devlin, 2009).

A Brief History

If we accept that Youth Arts practice occurs within the wider context of Youth Work practice13, then it is worthwhile to locate the emergence of Youth Arts as a specialist practice within the development of Youth Work in General.

As Hogan et.al, point out "...there is a paucity of academic literature in the Irish context on youth work policy. With respect to youth arts provision in youth work settings, the field of literature is even more limited, both in Ireland and internationally" (2021, p.19). What we can say is that the emergence of strategic Youth Arts organisations such as Waterford Youth Arts (1985), The National Youth Orchestra (1972), Youth Theatre Ireland (1980), Young Irish Film Makers (1991), and Music Generation 2010 occurred against the policy backdrop of the Youth Work sector, and arguably is shaped by the same "institutional ideas" that continue to inform policy decisions and funding models.

Historically, youth work can be understood as a voluntary and philanthropic intervention into the lives of the underprivileged. Those three concepts of "voluntary", "philanthropic" and "underprivileged" are still core pillars of contemporary policy. (Devlin, M. 2010 Jenkinson, H. 2000, 2013)

Cohen (2002) speaks of a "moral panic" about young people informing the early development of youth work. This moral panic merged with a philanthropic impulse and an emerging social activism that saw connections between young people (usually of lower socioeconomic groups) and pressing social problems. A part of this activism was built on a "...promise of the future and with the potential to defend and promote certain political, cultural or religious values and beliefs" (Devlin, M. 2009).

Jenkinson (2013) argues that "Early policy thinking in Ireland views youth work as an "adjustment" function and an adjunct of education". The beginnings of youth work were characterised by the explicit aim of the social and moral development of young people, primarily of lower socioeconomic status.

There was a shift in policy thinking in the 1970's and 1980s with the Bruton and O'Sullivan reports, with the former stating that

> "The aim of youth work should be ... to enable young people to develop personally, to appreciate society and to contribute to it' (Bruton 1977, p.7)

and the later stating that

> "Youth work provides opportunities and support to young people, for association, the development of personal autonomy, and the essential values and competencies to participate effectively in a changing society" (O'Sullivan 1980, p.12).

In 1983 the National Youth Policy Committee (known as the Costelloe Committee) was appointed by the government and chaired by Declan Costelloe. It was tasked with developing recommendations for

13 The NYCI has a full-time Youth Arts Programme Manager and a part-time Youth Arts Programme Officer, and their National Youth Arts Programme is dedicated to the development of youth arts in Ireland with a particular focus on youth work and non-formal education settings.

> "...a National Youth Policy which would be aimed at assisting all young people to become self-reliant, responsible and active participants in society".

According to Devlin (2009) it was expected that "much would flow from its final report (in terms of the government response, and subsequent funding and other support for youth work, youth services and the development of youth policy".

Devlin argues that Youth Policy was driven by several practical and ideological factors. Ireland had one of the youngest populations in Europe and one of the highest levels of youth unemployment. There were concerns regarding

> "apathy, disillusionment and active forms of anti-social behaviour among young people – and the increasing popularity of SF with urban youth". (Quoted in Devlin,2009)

We can see here some underlying "institutional ideas", namely that the thoughts and interests of some young people need to be controlled, and that there is a core society and a society on the margins - what we now think of as "the hard to reach" - and this marginal society is conceptualised as, in some ways, a threat.

It's a very short line of development from this mode of thinking to ideas of art as "wellbeing", a mode of engagement that prioritises individual creative achievement and coping mechanisms over collective activism.

The Costelloe committee proposed a "comprehensive youth service" but upheld the "... primacy of the voluntary (non-governmental) youth organisations as the direct providers of youth work programmes and services". (Devlin, M. 2010)

Devlin argues that this model of voluntary provision is driven by the principle of "subsidiarity". It has been argued that this doctrine sought to

> "...undermine the class appeal of socialism through an alternative system of vocational organisations. Fundamentally the church argued that a welfare state - including the idea of universal provision of public goods and services - was a totalitarian state. (Powell, F. 2017 pp 134 -135)

The institutionalisation of the subsidiarity principle as the foundation of social policy in Ireland after independence meant that the Catholic Church had formal ownership and control of vital areas of social services and the state's main role was to offer funding and support. This is a situation that is only now, and only slowly, changing.

Despite the expectations surrounding the Costello report very little happened in terms of policy or provision following its publication. It wasn't until the final week of the International Year of Youth (1985) that

> "...senior figures in the Youth sector were summoned to a hastily convened launch of the White Paper *In Partnership with Youth: The National Youth Policy.* (Devlin, M 2010)

In 1987, Frank Fahy was appointed Minister of State for Youth and Sport. According to Devlin the official position was that the Government of the day was not interested in youth service legislation or in new statutory structures. They did propose establishing Local Voluntary

Youth Service Councils, composed almost exclusively of existing voluntary organisations at local level plus the chief executive officer of the VEC or his/her nominee.

> "It was suggested the Councils could assess the level of provision locally and collectively submit costed programmes to the Department of Education (through the VEC) with a view to addressing deficiencies or filling gaps there was no legislative or statutory responsibility to ensure a comprehensive or coordinated local youth service, and the arrangement always appeared likely to reinforce the status quo whereby voluntary organisations were most concerned with their own funding needs".

In 1991 the youth sector was described as severely hindered by

> "...the erratic and fitful evolution of policies ...insecure employment conditions, inadequate resources and a constant search for funding from a bewildering array of sources" (Gilligan 1991 p.89).

A comment that resonates with the comment in 2022, some thirty odd years later, in *Mapping Youth Arts Provision in Youth Work Settings (Hogan et.al., 2022)*

> "Inadequate, inconsistent, and piecemeal funding for youth arts provision, set within an under-resourced youth work sector;"

In 2001 the Youth Work Act was passed and "parts of it implemented" (Jenkinson 2010). While Ireland is one of the few countries to have a specific piece of legislation on Youth Work that commits the government to taking responsibility for its development and coordination, the legislation puts limits on its own power with phrases such as "as far as is practicable" (Section 8(1)), and "within the financial resources available" (Sections 8(c) and 9(a)).

These are standard phrases in Irish policy and legislation that effectively dilute responsibility and action.

Jenkinson, writing in 2013, based on a series of interviews with key people in the youth work sector stated

> Interestingly, there was a mixed response among participants in this research regarding whether the Act should be implemented fully. Most commented on how little of it had been implemented; some felt that its full enactment would provide a positive framework for future youth work development, others felt it was redundant and should be put aside and a fresh view taken of where we go from here.

The National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007 followed on from the Youth Work Act and set goals for the development of Youth Work.

- To facilitate young people and adults to participate more fully in, and gain optimum benefit from, youth work programmes and services.
- To enhance the contribution of youth work to social inclusion, social cohesion and citizenship in a rapidly changing national and global context.
- To put in place an expanded and enhanced infrastructure for development, support, and coordination at a national and local level.

- To put in place mechanisms for enhancing professionalism and ensuring quality standards in youth work (Department of Education and Science 2003).

There are two "ideas" underpinning these goals that have become institutionalised at this point. That youth work has a clear instrumental purpose - to deal primarily with the marginalised and hard to reach and integrate them into the wider society, and that the delivery of the work should be professionalised and monitored for specific standards and outcomes.

Indeed, it seems that funding was increasingly provided for specific interventions for particular populations. This targeted approach undermines the commitment of youth work agencies to the youth population in general. Concerns about this move towards targeted work are expressed by Kiely (2009), who claims that this shift represents an eroding of a foundational tenet of youth work, which is universalism. Participants in Powell et al.'s (2010) research also referred to the tension between targeted and general youth work and highlighted a desire to combine and maintain a balance in these two elements of youth work provision

The general election in 2011 resulted in a full ministry being allocated to Children and Youth Affairs, leading to the publication of Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020). It set out the government's key commitments to children and young people aged 0-24 across five key outcomes:

> Outcome 1 – that children are active and healthy, with positive physical and mental wellbeing – included a specific aim for children to enjoy play, recreation, sport, arts, culture and nature.

In terms of Arts and Young People it stated

> 1.14 Enable greater access to sports, arts and culture for all children and young people, including through facilitating collaboration between sports, youth, arts and cultural organisations and schools and preschools to enrich the educational experience of all. (DES, DCYA, DAHG, DTTS, Arts Council)14

Given this history we can suggest that there are three prevailing, underlying "institutional ideas" informing policy development to date:

- Youth work is primarily voluntary and philanthropic - it is not the direct responsibility of the state

- It is class based - one class attempting to integrate another into certain political, cultural, or religious values and beliefs

- Young people are both a problem and an opportunity

These core ideas have remained relatively consistent up to present day policy, and we can feel them in the language of "wellbeing" and universal "creativity", in the project-based funding models, in the "lots of small pots of money" model, and in the use of arts to target "problem groups" - be they marginalised, or hard to reach, or whatever.

14 DES (Department of Education and Skills), DCYA (Department of Children and Youth Affairs), DAHG (Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht), DTTS (Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport)

In taking this kind of critical perspective we need to be aware that youth work and non-formal education settings are, according to NYCI, working with over 380,000 young people, many of whom are experiencing disadvantage or come from marginalised backgrounds. Targeted youth arts funding increases young people's access to youth arts experiences and addresses issues of equality or equity of provision.

Time to Shine - Lessons from a National Youth Arts Policy

TIME TO SHINE is Scotland's Youth Arts Strategy for children and young people aged 0 - 25. It was launched in 2013 with a 10-year lifespan. Funding is managed through Creative Scotland, which has a dedicated Time To Shine youth arts team to manage the programme. The Creative Scotland team works with a National Youth Arts Advisory Group composed of 30 volunteers aged from 14 - 23, to set out an artistic vision and recommendations that will help Scotland's young people to "flourish and achieve their goals using arts and culture".

The Time to Shine strategy is a fine example of contemporary arts/culture strategy documents. Its vision is to "support all Scotland's children and young people to flourish and achieve in and through the arts and creativity". This clearly identifies both the Target Group15 ("all Scotland's children and young people") and the principle of universal access, along with the Impact ("flourish and achieve"), and the principal activities ("arts and creativity"). Its mission is "To establish Scotland as an international leader for children and young people's arts and creativity" which is a politically valuable Outcome, and its Change Mechanisms or Values are identified as the themes of "Participation – creating and sustaining engagement, Progression – nurturing creativity and talent, Provision – developing infrastructure and quality".

As with all such strategies the language is inspirational and memorable but begs many questions. What do we mean by "flourish"? Achieve what and to what end? Is it possible to have art without creativity? A leader in what sense? In the quality of the art? Of the policy delivery? What do we mean by "engagement" etc. But this is nit-picking. All strategies in this sector are attempting to deal with wicked problems in a complex environment without being overtly political, and so the language tends toward the inspirational.

What is important for our purposes here is the story behind the development of Time to Shine. "In 2009 the Chairs and Chief Officers of the National Youth Choir of Scotland, The National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, the Scottish Youth Theatre and YDance (Scottish Youth Dance) met and produced a "Concordat of Intent" that included the following statement:

> "That (we) are united by a common purpose to create opportunities for young people in Scotland in the performing arts – and that (we) are committed to do so in a manner that embodies the twin principles of access and excellence. (We) believe (our) individual and collective history of achievement over the last three decades is a source of tremendous pride for the country, and the skills (we) have encouraged and developed have enriched the lives of tens of thousands of Scots as participants and

15 Almost all contemporary strategy statements, particularly in the culture space, are structured as logic models, clearly defining the Impact, Outcomes, Change Mechanisms (Values) and Activities. Essentially logic is that if we do this (activities) in this way (Change Mechanisms/Values) then these things will happen (Outcomes), and this change will occur (Impact)

audience. (We) are convinced of the need to extend the reach and nature of these opportunities; of the benefits that will accrue to young people and to the country as a result; and of (our) ability to work together, and with other strategic partners, to make this a reality."

It was this "network" of key strategic youth arts organisations that led to the Scottish Government appointing Creative Scotland to facilitate the necessary consultation process and the development of a National Youth arts Strategy. The consultation process involved almost 2000 stakeholders, including over 800 young people.

The Scottish government allocated a budget for the implementation of Time to Shine.

As in Ireland the practice of Youth Arts spans the arts and youth work sectors and is used as an input into other policy areas. Therefore, the practice and skill of collaboration is considered a key skill in Time to Shine.

A meeting was held in 2019, halfway through its lifespan, to review and reflect on the learnings from the roll-out of the strategy.

The attendees identified challenges in the rollout that are immediately recognisable from an Irish perspective:

- The youth arts sector is complex and involves a wide range of stakeholders including government departments "civil society and community actors". Co-ordinating this wide stakeholder group is an ongoing challenge.
- The complexity of the sector can make it difficult for some people/groups/organisations to meaningfully engage
- The degree of sectoral collaboration required is not currently supported.

These attendees at the midpoint acknowledged that they had the commitment and the energy to build a "formal and objective-driven collaborative strategy" within the framework of Time to Shine, suggesting that five years into the delivery of Time to Shine "formal and objective driven collaboration was still a challenge"

The recommendations from this meeting included

1. The formation of a formal representative group or Council to help define, advance, and measure the strategic development of the children and young people's arts sector in Scotland. This group or Council could have a rolling membership and would be representative of key stakeholders.
2. The inclusion of a wider group of stakeholders through the creation of broader, self-selecting community of interested parties who wish to engage in the strategic development of the children and young people's arts sector. These would likely be the members from which the majority of any formal group or Council would be drawn.
3. The definition of a vision or purpose for and from these groups.
4. The holding of annual or biannual meetings of these groups to identify and address key objectives.

5. The creation of an online or digital space to facilitate more informal and year-round discussions.
6. The creation of a work plan that is updated regularly to evidence progress. There are several key enabling roles that are required to make the formation and ongoing management of such groups possible; these include a 'Convener', a 'Facilitator' and a 'Catalyst'.[16]

Obviously the latter five years of Time to Shine has been impacted by the Pandemic, and the implementation of these recommendations interrupted by the need to pivot the delivery of youth arts programmes.

Within this context it is interesting to note that the most popular and successful funding programme to run under Time to Shine was the Nurturing Talent Fund that provides funding of up to £1,000 for children and young people aged 11-25 for their own creative ideas and projects.

The youth work, arts, and youth arts sectors in Scotland are similar in many ways to our sectors in Ireland, but there are also key historical and structural differences. While Time to Shine is a great example of what a sector can achieve, we must always remember the differences in context. We must recognise the key lesson - the delivery of Time to Shine was dependent on a joint action led by a network of strategic, national, youth arts organisations representing multiple artforms.

16 The Convenor brings people together; the Facilitator encourages people to work together and to move beyond the status quo; the Catalyst widens horizons and brings new information and perspectives into this group.

Policy Development

If we are to consider recommendations toward to the development of a National Policy, it is necessary that we consider the idea and practice of policy development at a national level.

It seems that the idea that policy is built on evidence is at best misleading. (Cairney, P. 2019, Belfiore, E. 2021)

In her 2021 article the leading culture policy academic and researcher Elanora Belfiore wrote

> "Despite the move towards a supposedly "evidence- based" policy, "evidence" rarely underpins decision-making, especially in policies surrounding the perceived social impacts of the arts." (Belfiore, 2021)

Particularly in the area of the public good (which incorporates arts, culture, welfare, health, education, and other areas of interest to young people) how we define and measure value is problematic and contested. As Belfiore puts it

> "Rather than enhancing accountability and transparency in policy making, the pressures placed on...publicly funded cultural institutions to produce evaluations of their performance, and to subject themselves to the constant attempt to measure their efficiency and impact, has been pivotal in the escalation of very dubious "evidence" (Belfiore, 2021).

There is an illusion of rational and linear thinking surrounding the idea of research and evidence-based policy making. However, research into the practice of policy making in recent years suggests that the policy making process is "...in fact messy, irreducibly political, and more influenced by ideas than evidence" (Belfiore, E. 2021)

Anybody with more than a few years of experience in the youth and arts sector in Ireland will recognise the culture captured by this statement.

It is a characteristic of the arts and culture sector in Ireland that research (such as this report) is expected to focus on finding evidence to demonstrate the value of the work. Evidence that will categorically prove that engagement with arts (whatever that means) produces outcomes worthy of significant state investment leading to sustainable practice and delivery. Evidence that unequivocally demonstrates that arts engagement makes us creative, team players, problem solvers, more confident, builds inclusion, supports "hard to reach" or "marginalised groups" etc.

The policy language around the impact of arts engagement has mutated over time, as for example with the rise of the "Creativity and Wellbeing" framework over the last decade. This mutation in official policy language creates problems for research focused on delivering compelling evidence, because changes in the narratives underpinning the policy language can invalidate existing research.

This approach to research, to finding compelling evidence that will inform policy and secure funding, speaks to an interesting power imbalance: it is not considered appropriate to research the policy making process itself, rather we continue to look for evidence to influence

the policy making process, even though none of the evidence appears to effectively change the policy.

This approach - conducting research to find evidence that will shape policy - is built on a questionable assumption of rationality underlying policy and funding decisions. The assumption being that policy will be led and shaped by objective and compelling evidence. There is very little evidence to suggest that this is how policy development actually happens.

Considerable qualitative evidence has been captured over the last decade on the values of youth arts to the participants. The National Youth Council of Ireland's *'Arts Mapping: Mapping Youth Arts Provision in Youth Work Settings'* (op.cit.) concisely summarises the positive outcomes for young people as

> Arts and cultural participation impact positively on young people's wellbeing in multidimensional ways. The benefits of arts participation can be expressed as 'instrumental' or 'intrinsic'. Instrumental approaches articulate benefits in terms of social, economic, and health-related outcomes, including positive therapeutic and behavioural impacts, personal and social development, educational and academic advantages, diversion from antisocial or criminal activities, and community cohesion. 'Intrinsic' benefits of participation include developing artistic skills, the joy of making, the pleasures of experiencing art, and the sense of empowerment that lies in the act of creating.

These and other benefits have been captured and expressed in reports by Music Generation (Possible Selves in Music 2016), by Youth Theatre Ireland's Centre Stage Reports (Centre Stage+10, Centre Stage +20), in academic articles and policy reports nationally and internationally dating back to the Champions for Change report on the impact of arts practice on learning outcomes in 1999 published in the US (Fiske, 1999).

A google search for "positive impact youth arts" returns 1,460,000,000 hits in less than a second, and a journal search through the UCD database using the same terms produced over a 1000 articles, doctoral theses, books, and reports. The "evidence" is extensive and compelling, and we will not rehash it here.

What is of interest is that despite the research, the reports, and the ever-increasing practice of evaluation, the practical response in terms of policy, investment and provision has been slow.

Despite the slow rate of change the assumption is that there is something wrong with the evidence, with the case being made, as opposed to the structure and ideology underpinning the state's approach to the policy making process.

For example, The NYCI report (2021) quotes a respondent as saying

> We need a greater understanding of how art benefits, [how] youth art benefits young people, but also in the future how it benefits Ireland [and] its place in the world. Ireland has a fantastic reputation for culture, writers, musicians, artists, filmmakers, which we don't want to lose.

A respondent to this research stated

> They all understand that the practice is good, they all understand the outcomes, what they are. Now what it feels like, it's happening now both in the Arts Council, (although it's a bit more kind of vague or it's harder for them to speak directly to what they're talking about) … but in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs specifically, they've said … "we get it; I understand what you're doing. I understand the outcomes for young people. What I need from you is, what are the value-added success indicators that you can deliver, that we can then go to the higher ups… the Department of Finance and…Expenditure…And we can go to them showing success indicators and indicators which will encourage more investment in this space. Now they haven't defined what they are yet. Nor have the Arts Council…

The NYCI (2021) report itself states that

> …respondents suggested that there needs to be leadership at government level for youth arts provision to be fully realised, particularly with respect to funding commitments. Without that recognition from the top, the goal of expanding opportunities for engagement in the arts to all young people will be impossible to achieve.

The lack of policy development or significant changes to the funding structure and levels over a thirty-year period indicates, on the one hand, the very slow pace of policy development in the Irish state (indeed policy in general), and on the other hand that the presentation of evidence is not working in terms of driving policy. Waiting for "leadership at government level" does not constitute an effective strategy.

The question we need to ask is not "what new way can we present what we already know?", but rather "why is the evidence, the advocacy and the lobbying producing such limited results over such an extended time period?" Even though - at a policy level - this model of arts as an input into desirable social outcomes (primarily around employment and "well-being") has now embedded itself in the language of policy making. As Taoiseach Micheal Martin said at the launch of the Creative Youth plan

> It seems to me that the real value of creative Ireland is that it is, at its heart, a well-being initiative. The core proposition is that participation in cultural and creative activity promotes wellbeing at an individual, community, and national level. Every person has creative capacities that should be encouraged throughout their lives. Promoting creativity not only benefits our wellbeing, it also builds social capital and economic success. Creative Youth is about delivering on this for children and young people so that you can become creative and engaged citizens. The creative youth plan is about working towards a society which enables the innate creativity of all our young people to flourish.

While on the one hand these kinds of policy pronouncements are welcome and suggest a profound shift in policy thinking, on the other hand we need to be alert to the persistence of established narratives around youth as a fundamentally problematic condition, around questionable notions of "wellbeing" as a function of personal rather than social conditions, and around the ongoing instrumentalisation of arts and cultural policy as an input into "economic success" and "engaged citizens".

As with all areas of social policy and planning there is never a simple relationship between two variables. Prolonged and continuous exposure to creative practice (and it needs to be prolonged and continuous - one-off, short-term interventions have little or no long-term impact) by itself will not drive economic success or build an entrepreneurial culture. These outcomes depend on the complex interaction of multiple variables ranging from access to capital, education, copyright and patent protection, taxation, levels of inequality, attitudes to bankruptcy, and a host of other factors. Likewise, wellbeing - which is a health outcome - is dependent on income and social protection, education, unemployment and job insecurity, working life conditions, food insecurity, housing, basic amenities and the environment, early childhood development, social inclusion and non-discrimination, structural conflict, and access to affordable health services of decent quality (Social Determinants of Health, WHO).

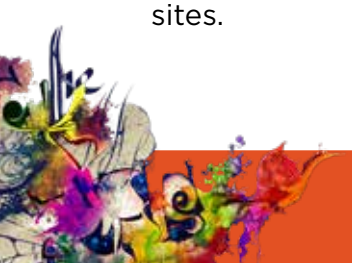
The assumption that evidence derived from research will drive government policy dates to the emergence of New Public Management in the 1980s, and the drive to make government more effective and "business-like". NPM drove the obsession with metrics, with professionalisation of arts management, with value for money arguments (as if money were the only store and measure of value in a society), with internal competition, and with quality awards and frameworks. NPM and its constant need for metrics-based evidence tends to transform political and ideological positions into "technical matters" in constant need of ever more evidence. Once we play into this evidence game, and the associated model of rational decision making in policy, we effectively depoliticise the policy making process (Weiss 1977). Evidence based policy is at best "a vague, aspirational term, rather than a good description of the policy process" (Cairney, 2016).

If this is correct - and the lack of meaningful policy response in the youth arts sector in Ireland over thirty years could suggest that it is - then how are we to proceed? How are we to account for the gap between "...policy discourse and policy reality"? (Belfiore 2021).

Katryn Smith (2013) identifies the "ideational approach" as a way of understanding the relationship between research and policy. Policy, Smith argues, is developed through argument and persuasion, and primarily influenced and shaped by "institutional ideas". We've already identified some of the key "institutional ideas" underpinning youth arts in Ireland in previous chapters. Smith's analysis of policies and supporting documents indicates that decision makers do not set goals for themselves based on the available evidence.

If Smith is correct, then changing the policy and funding situation around Youth Arts requires us to identify and understand the "institutional ideas" that are shaping and informing policy and funding decisions at government level and engage in a public process of "argument and persuasion" to deconstruct the prevailing "institutional ideas". If this is not done then it is unlikely that we will ever produce enough evidence, or the right evidence, and practitioners and participants will only ever be steerage passengers on the policy ship.

If we step away from the evidence game and accept that "policy analysis and planning are practical processes of argumentation" (Fischer & Forester, 1993, p. 2), and that "facts and values are so intertwined in policy-making that factual arguments unaided by persuasion seldom play a significant role in public debate" (Giandomenico Majone 1989, p. 8) we are forced to embrace the possibility that youth, arts, and youth arts are politically contested sites.



If youth arts are fundamentally a contested political and ideological site in which various stakeholders are making decisions and taking positions based on personal beliefs and values as opposed to the available evidence then how can the people who constitute the youth arts sector, the facilitators, artists, and young people, effectively shape the policy objectives and outcomes?

The first step is to understand and acknowledge the existing "institutional ideas" and narratives that shape policy decisions. The second step is to understand the power relationships between the many stakeholders and strategise accordingly. The third step is framing the argument.

The challenge therefore is how we use the available evidence to deconstruct the "institutional ideas" and propose an alternative framework that can fit with the policy makers priorities and beliefs, while delivering the structures, investment and results that are desired. A vital part of this framing process is to switch out the object of policy as discussed earlier. We need to make the why and the how objects of policy, and not the what.

Ironically, despite the prevailing policy language around creativity and arts practice summarised in the Taoiseach's speech quoted above, of everybody's "innate creativity" and creativity and creative practice as inputs into social cohesion and economic development, that language has not been matched by the kind of systematic and visionary policy and funding allocations they require; rather the new policy language has produced a lot of activity and brought some new players onto the field, and various well intentioned gestures have been made, but it remains to be seen if these new activities will disrupt the underlying structure of institutional ideas, ideologies, and delivery mechanisms around young people, arts, education, and the role and responsibility of the state in the universal provision of public goods.

If these ideas are correct, then it means that the development and implementation of a youth arts policy in Ireland is not dependent solely on evidence and research no matter how compelling. Rather we need to develop an understanding of the "institutional ideas" that shape and constrain the policy making process and reframe our argument in such a way that those institutional ideas can be challenged and changed.

If we are to move policy forward effectively and quickly then our ability to produce and marshal data is only one, and perhaps the lesser, tactic.

Case Study - Fighting Words

Fighting Words is a valuable, feted, and professionally run organisation ideally suited to a policy environment built on subsidiarity, favouring the voluntary provision of services of significant public value.

Fighting Words now delivers its services at 18 locations throughout the Republic, many of which are partnerships with the library service (an obvious and valuable partnership). Fighting Words works with primary schools, secondary schools, youth groups and community organisations, as well as through online programmes, special projects and as a research partner with DCU.

The delivery of services is performed by approximately 1000 trained volunteers, and the funding model is based on a strong philanthropic content. For example, in 2019 the total income was €487,550 - 42% of which was donations, 52% was Central Government, Local Authorities and Other Public Bodies, and the balance accounted for by Other Philanthropic Organisations.

Fighting Words is a valuable service with a nationwide impact that would not be possible without the statutory support leveraged by philanthropy and donations, and the extraordinary support-in-kind of 1000 volunteers.

If Music Generation throws into question the level of influence individual philanthropic taste has on policy and provision, then Fighting Words highlights the prevailing policy attitudes to career professionalism in youth arts provision.

These are not criticisms of either the intent or the quality of the services provided by both organisations. They are presented here to illustrate deep seated institutional ideas around provision, professionalism, volunteerism, and philanthropy that shape policy at a national level.

Section Three: The Funding Piece

The Funding Piece

As mentioned in previous sections, it is not easy to precisely identify the funding for youth arts, or to identify precise amounts. We have focused on 2019 and 2020, as there was more detail available for those years from a variety of sources. Such detail as was available from some sources for other years is included in the appendices.

Funding allocations and decisions tell us about policy priorities, institutional ideas, assumptions, and expectations. The danger when working with numbers is that we forget that one number only makes sense in terms of another number.

For example, we can say that - for example - it appears that total statutory funding into youth arts (in the widest sense of youth arts) was approximately €17 million in 2020. Is that the right amount? Is it too much or too little? How do we know? The number only makes sense in terms of other numbers - the number of young people involved, the costs involved at a local delivery level, the average size of the awards, the percentage of funding that makes its way to young people as opposed to the amount involved in managing the delivery etc.

It is equally valuable to interpret the funding patterns as metaphors, as gestures that reveal values, priorities, assumptions, and institutional ideas about how the world is meant to work.

One of the key findings from this piece of work - established initially in Molumby's work - is that it is difficult to capture an exact amount invested in Youth Arts. There are many reasons for this: not all grant applications identify themselves as "youth arts". For example, youth theatres can be identified as "youth clubs"; specific arts projects in youth work settings can be funded under "mental health" or "inclusion" or some other heading depending on the available funding; local authorities may fund arts centres or production companies which in turn run youth arts projects, and so on.

Requests made for granular data (details behind budget top lines) were frequently met with the response that the information was not collated or easily available or, in the case of some government departments, with no response at all.

This uncertainty around what is and is not youth arts funding is not unexpected. As we suggested in previous sections youth arts can be understood as an input into other policy areas, therefore it is not a stand-alone policy priority and consequently it is not treated as a stand-alone budget category in many instances. This is ultimately driven by, and drives, the fluid definitions of youth arts.

If we look at the funding into Youth Arts in a single year (e.g. 2019) we can state that funding was made available via the Department of Education (directly and via the ETB), The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (Directly), Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (directly, and indirectly via the Arts Council, and other arm's length agencies), Local authorities (directly and indirectly via partnerships and local organisations) and philanthropic sources - as well as amounts in membership fees, summer camps, workshops, etc.

The analysis so far suggests that Youth Arts policy and provision are driven by underlying, mostly unacknowledged, "institutional ideas" around voluntarism, subsidiarity and class, and that youth arts has become an input into other policy objectives.

If this analysis is correct then we would expect to see the kind of funding framework that exists, and when we look at the many sources we would expect to see an absence of consistency in funding levels across the country, because funding is designed to "support" activity on the ground as opposed to ensuring universal access; we would expect to see inequalities in investment; and we would expect to see policy and investment responding to philanthropic interventions.

The Arts Council

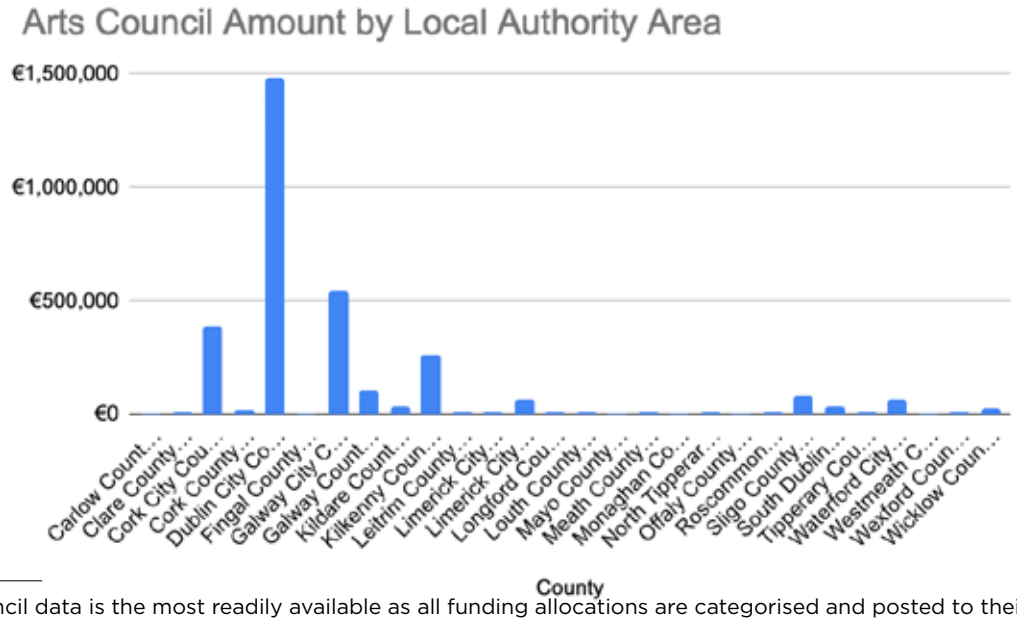
In 2019 the Arts Council made 68 awards tagged as YPCE totalling €3,253,912.17 This amount includes arts in education initiatives, bursaries for YPCE practitioners, strategic organisations, festivals, travel and training awards and young ensemble awards. Depending on the definition of youth arts we choose to use, we could exclude certain awards as not really being "youth arts". However, we will work with the total of YPCE awards, with the caveat that the actual amount is dependent on definitions.

The spend varies depending on location, so that in terms of regional spend we can see that Dublin City (€1,484,807 – 45.6%), Galway City (€543,252 – 16.7%), Kilkenny (€261,000 – 8%), and Cork City (11.9%) were the four largest recipients of Arts Council Funding.

According to the Central Statistics Office there were 959,400 young people between the ages of 10 and 24 in 2019.

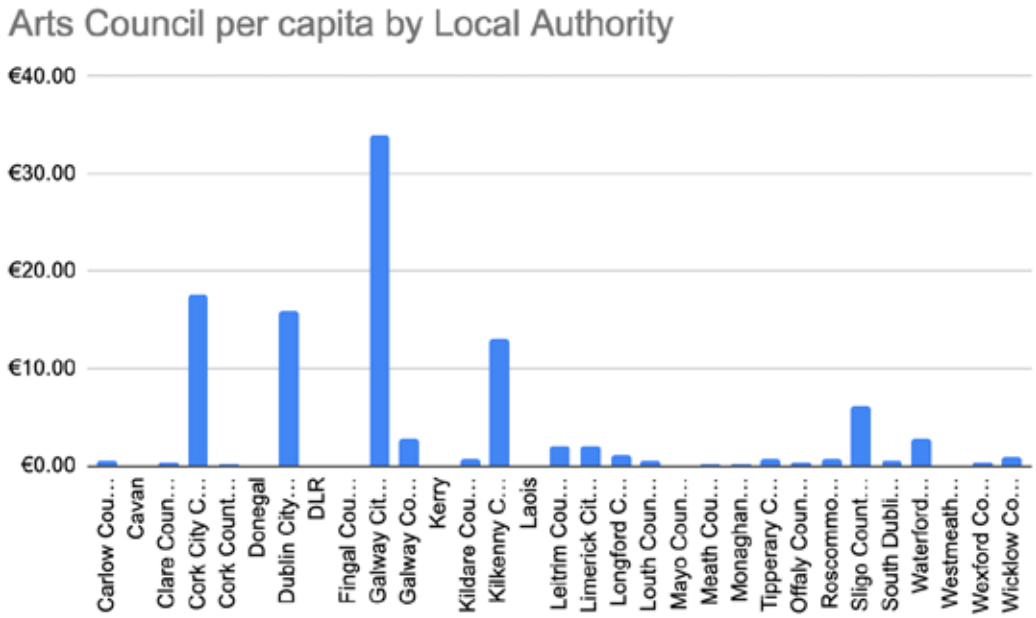
Therefore the average per capita arts council allocation for Young People, Children and Education (YPCE) in that year was €3.39 per annum. Bear in mind that this amount includes education initiatives and projects for children under the age of 10.

The range of arts council awards across local authority area is so large that it is difficult to capture on a simple chart, as the majority of local authority areas fail to register, simply because the four areas mentioned above accounted for 82.2% of the total YPCE allocation in 2019.



17 Arts Council data is the most readily available as all funding allocations are categorised and posted to their website here https://www.artscouncil.ie/funding-decisions/

However, we need to adjust for population distribution, and express the funding in per capita terms for each local authority area if we are to get a meaningful picture of the distribution.



Again, the range is so large (€0 - €34) that some amounts barely register on the graph. This does not imply that the Arts Council is favouring one county over another. This kind of distribution is driven in large part by the deep institutional ideas that drive policy. State funding responds to and supports activity on the ground. Historically it has not provided for what is not there, but supported what individuals and their communities have invested time, resources and talent in. The funding is a support mechanism but is not designed or conceived of as a universal provision model. Funding at this level is predicated on the assumption of support from other sources including the voluntary investment of time, talent and resources.

We need to treat this kind of data with caution. From a purely economic perspective we could say that every young person in Galway has €34 a year to spend on youth arts activity as opposed to every young person in Dublin who has €17, suggesting that young people's engagement with arts are "valued" differently in different parts of the country.

However, a small percentage of young people engage in arts activity, (between 20% and 33% depending on family income18) which means that the per capita funding of active participants is higher. What the per-capita amount gives us is the ability to compare regions, and to compare this spend in other funded areas.

What per capita analysis tells us is where activity is taking place, and the relative "purchasing power" of young people in different parts of the country. It is probable that there is work occurring that is not funded by the arts council, some of which has been captured by the NYCI mapping report.

18 *Organised sports and cultural activities.* There were indications of income inequalities in the level of participation in organised sporting and cultural activities, particularly when these were paid activities. Participation in dance, drama or music lessons (usually paid activities) was also higher among those in the top income quintile; 33 percent participated at least once a week compared to just 20 per cent in the bottom quintile. (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2018, p182)

The reality is that the arts council simply responds to activity on the ground. This is in part informed by the subsidiarity principle. The state and its agencies provide support for local activities but are not involved in any systematic programme of universal provision. Programmes and organisations (and those driving them) need to demonstrate a competence, vision and track record before the Arts Council gets involved.

Local Authority

"Youth Arts" is not a well-defined policy or budget line item across all local authorities. Many respondents pointed out that spending into youth arts can occur in several ways. For example, a local authority may fund an arts centre or organisation which has a youth arts practice or delivers youth arts programmes or projects; it may commission an artist to work in a youth club or support a youth service programme. On the other hand funding for projects in formal educational settings, or funding for projects with children, can be presented as "youth arts". Again, so much depends on what definition is being used. Several respondents to requests for data made the point that funding is not necessarily "tagged" as youth arts, so tracking youth arts funding over extended time periods is problematic, and so it is difficult to establish trends at both a national and local level. Arts offices in many areas of the country are understaffed and under-resourced, so this challenge is understandable.

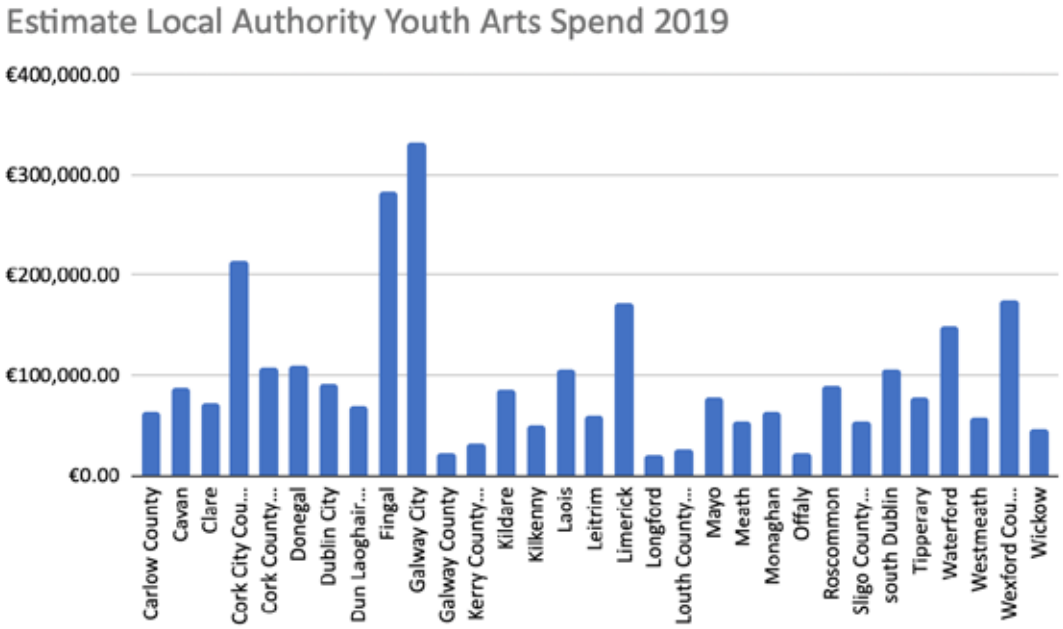
As part of the first phase of this research in 2019 a questionnaire was sent to all arts officers, requesting detail on youth arts funding. There were 15 respondents. Some of these respondents gave definitive figures, others gave figures with caveats attached, and one provided no figures. A second request was sent out in 2021 with a similar response.

The data provided by these respondents was treated as an acceptable sample. We compared the amounts spent on youth arts by each of the respondents with the total arts programme budget for their respective counties using publicly available data on NUI Galway's localauthorityfinances.com. The average spend of the fourteen respondents was 5.22% of their total arts programme budget for that period. The range was wide and so the confidence interval is also large, but it is possible to work backwards from that average to produce an estimate for every local authority.

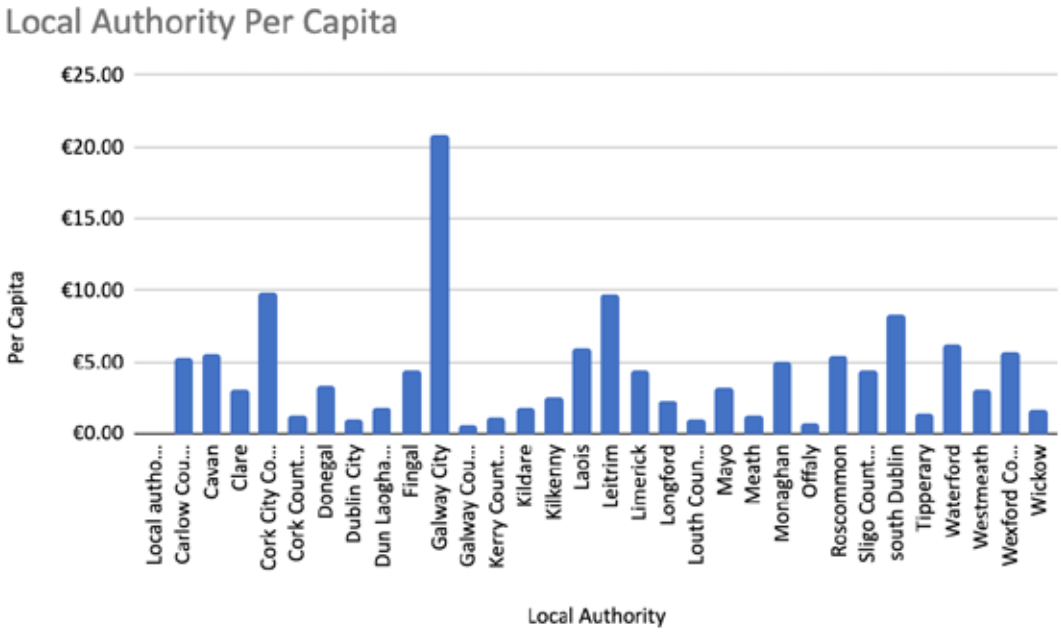
Again, this average of 5.22% is just an isolated number. It is difficult to say if it's too big or too small.

If we apply this average to all local authority arts programme budgets, we get the following nationwide picture

The total estimated local authority spend on Youth Arts in 2019 was €2,993,878.



The Per Capita Local Authority Spend looks like this:



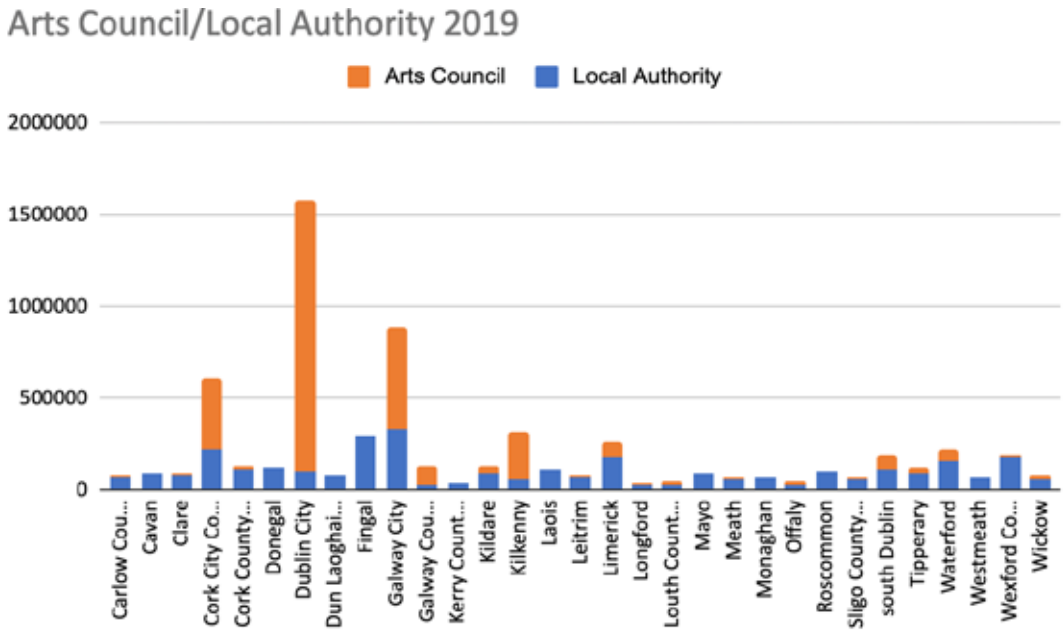
Again the range is extensive here, from less than €1 in some local authorities to a high of just over €20.

Again, what is important here is not so much the nominal amounts but the story they tell about relative levels of support, about the absence of a model of universal provision, about responding to activity on the ground and the expectations around volunteerism and local investment of time, energy and resources on the part of individuals and communities.

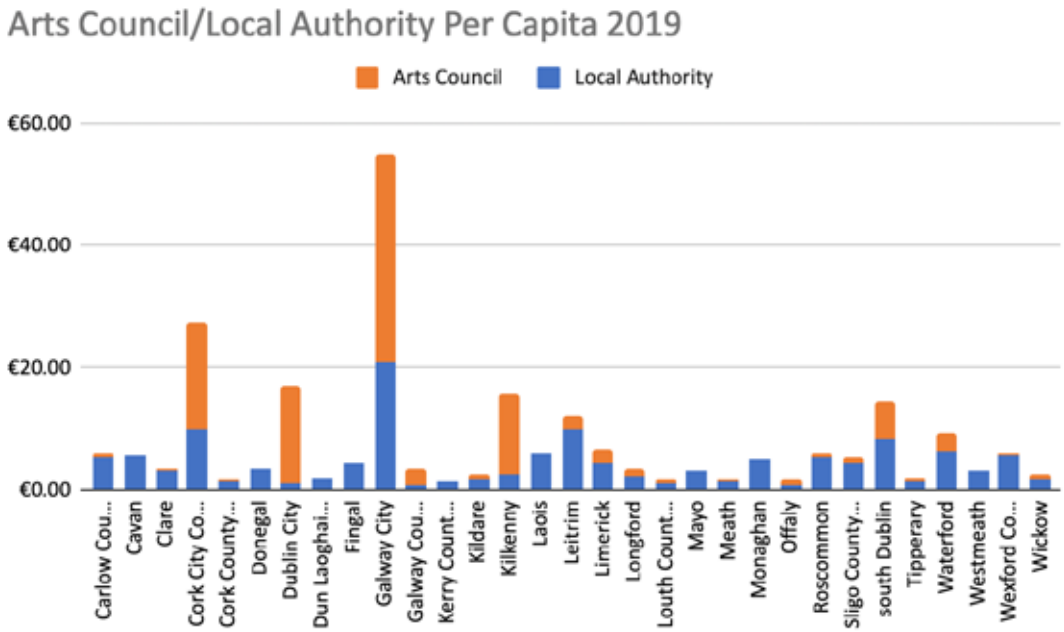
It is important to remember that these charts are built on an estimate based on an average derived from a sample of fourteen local authorities. Having said that, while some of the numbers may be different in reality, it is statistically very unlikely that the overall picture is inaccurate in any significant way.

Comparing Local Authority and Arts Council Funding Patterns:

In 2019 the total combined spend of the Arts Council and all local authorities was €6,247,790. In terms of where that investment goes the relative distribution looks like this:



Or in per capita terms



We can say that for 2019

- The range of funding into youth arts by both local authorities and the arts council was wide, from approximately €2 in some locations to almost €60 at the top end of the scale.

- The wide range is clearly the result of responding to activity on the ground rather than providing that activity. The funding model is supporting what is there rather than providing what is not. Which in turn suggests a dependence on investment from other sources including individuals giving time and skill on a voluntary basis.

- These numbers are estimates, and in areas of significant arts Council spend much is accounted for by Strategic Organisations.

The big question of course is, is this enough? It is unlikely that even a per capita spend of €60 on youth arts is adequate to ensure a quality, sustainable and universal provision.

Essentially, what the pattern of size and distribution clearly illustrates is that this is not a provision-based welfare model concerned with universal access, or with ensuring cultural rights. This is a support model that assumes that the provision of public goods is the primary responsibility of individuals, communities, and their voluntary associations. The role of the state is to provide support to local communities and voluntary initiatives.

It is vital that we not let ourselves be distracted by the size instinct. Even at the highest level of almost €60 per capita, we must remember that this is an annual figure that can be expressed as 16 cents a day. If we think of funding as another form of purchasing power, then it's evident that 16 cents a day will not allow a young person to buy an awful lot. To put it another way, the funding level is intrinsically exclusive.

Muddying the Water - Additional Funding

It would be convenient from a research perspective if the funding for Youth Arts was confined to local authority arts offices and The Arts Council. However, the reality is that Youth Arts - because of its fluid identity - is an occasional practice within a wider youth work context, and this brings in funding from a range of departments, from the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps schemes managed by Leargas in their Youth Programme, as well as various foundations, trusts etc. and a wide range of other types of grants to which youth services and youth arts organisations can apply.

For example, if we look at government funding sources, then The Book of Estimates gives the following information:

	2019
Education and Skills	**€9,800,656,000**
A.11 GRANTS TO EDUCATION BODIES WORKING IN THE PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY SECTORS	€96,524,000
A.14 Misc Grants and Services	
Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht	**€337,195,000**
Culture Ireland	€4,600,000
Arts Council (Part Funded by the National Lottery)	€73,957,000
Children and Youth Affairs	**€1,482,676,000**

SECTORAL PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	€651,728,000
B.6 - YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND SERVICES (PART FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL LOTTERY)	€60,395,000
Creative Ireland	€100,000

A request was made to both Education and Skills and Children and Youth affairs for a breakdown of the allocations behind these line items, but no acknowledgement or reply has been received to date.

According to the Department of Education the direct funding of Music Generation is under A.11, but we can assume that other youth arts projects will receive funding under both A.11 and A.14. A request for a detailed breakdown of the allocations behind these line items received no response.

In 2020 Music Generation disbursed €4,363,540 to Local Music Education Partnerships. The implication being that an additional investment of €4,363,540 came from the local LMEPs giving a total statutory funding of €8,727,080 into the work of Music Generation.

Within Children and Youth Affairs there is a sub-category under B.6 called the Youth Service Grant Scheme that supports National Youth Organisations, including both Youth Theatre Ireland and Young Irish Film Makers.

It is interesting from a metaphoric perspective that the grants toward Youth Organisations and Services (Vote 40, B6 above) are "part funded by the national lottery", as is the Arts Council (Vote 33 above). Lottery funding was originally intended to be an additional source of funding for arts and community projects. However, over the years it has replaced (and augmented) the exchequer allocation. In other words, a part of the funding for both arts and youth organisations does not come from tax sources. Dail Questions have been raised looking for precise amounts, but detailed answers have never been provided.

Arguably the use of Lottery funds protects these budgets (as lottery sales tend to increase as an economy declines), but it also reflects an "institutional idea" that places these activities outside the remit of the state (which invests and recycles tax revenues which are mandatory) and positions them as voluntary activities properly funded primarily by philanthropic donations (lottery revenues are not a tax, they are better understood as voluntary contributions).

Youth Arts Work is also funded by the ETB through the UBU programme, and the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme. Again, details are difficult to secure so numbers become meaningless (the overall budget allocation to the ETB for 2021 is available in the Appendix III). We know anecdotally that youth arts funding can also be secured through the HSE and other departments, as youth arts is treated as an input into other policy outcomes.

The Erasmus programme has funded 193 projects between 2014 and 2021 that identified culture and creativity as a key topic, and in 2019 provided approximately €875,400 in grant aid to arts and culture related projects.

The Creative Youth Programme announced a "combined" budget of €6m in 201919, but it is unclear how much of that is additional to the amounts identified above.

In summary then, we can speculate that approximately €21,850,270 was invested nationally in Youth Arts in 2019, or an approximate national per capita average of €22.77(almost 40% of which is for a single artform), and there are significant differences in per capita averages between counties. Given the difficulties in identifying what is and is not youth arts funding, this number remains an estimate.

The difficulties experienced in trying to identify a precise figure indicate the liminal nature of youth arts. Within the current policy rhetoric creativity is a broad concept, and although young people and creativity are positioned as a central government concern the position and practice of youth arts is unclear within that broader policy construct. Consequently, youth arts tend to slip into the space between departments and policies. While some argue that this is an advantage, allowing youth arts work to be funded from multiple different budgets, the reality "on the ground" at the point of delivery is that work is precarious, project based, difficult to scale or sustain over the medium to long term, and dependent on significant personal investment in terms of time and opportunity cost.

The possible per capita figure of €22.85 is worth keeping in mind, as the final case study suggests that the actual per-capita cost of inclusive youth arts provision should be in the region of €400 per capita.

19 https://www.schooldays.ie/education-news-item/6m-for-Creative-Youth-to-Enable-Creative-Potential-of-Children-and-Young-People-Announced

Case Study – Waterford Youth Arts

Waterford Youth Arts (WYA) was founded in 1985. It was registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee in 2001. It's development spans the history of youth arts practice in Ireland.

Waterford Youth Arts started as a voluntary, ad hoc youth drama group and has evolved over the years to become a multi-disciplinary arts organisation, providing programmes for young people in creative writing, literature, contemporary dance, youth film, visual art, youth circus and street spectacle and more recently music.

WYA developed with the support of key stakeholders who experienced the value of the work first hand – teachers, youth workers, arts workers, parents and others. These stakeholders formed a voluntary management committee to support and progress the work of the organisation. This approach is similar to the LMEP (Local Music Education Partnerships) developed for Music Generation. The difference appears to be that the WYA committee members were individuals with connections to key institutions (schools, youth services, arts, etc) as opposed to formally representing those key institutions. However the importance of a cross functional/departmental board overseeing and supporting the work of youth artists is significant.

WYA defined itself as a youth-centred organisation, dedicated to young people and children with an 'open door' policy. Everybody is welcome at WYA. It also defined itself early on as an independent Youth Arts organisation as opposed to an education or outreach wing of a larger 'adult' organisation. This decision was informed by a belief in the value of Youth Arts as a practice and in the intrinsic value of the Art produced by young people.

The history of the organisations funding model reflects the issues around multiple funding sources, volunteerism, and professionalism raised throughout this report. The organisation benefited from FÁS Social Enterprise funding which supported a full time administrator. Interestingly, given its values of universalism (open door policy) and cultural rights, and the intrinsic value of art produced by young people, they were recognised as a Youth Work Provider almost from the outset. This was in part due to the fact that the local Youth Development Officer at City of Waterford VEC (now WWETB) at that time believed in youth arts practice as a valued and important practice for youth development. This dependence on key gatekeepers or sympathetic individuals is significant.

WYA have stated that "Youth arts practice was seen at the time as 'falling between two stools' neither full-time youth work nor professional arts practice". It seems that at a national level this challenge persists.

WYA's current funding model is built on a three-way partnership between State, Local Authority and Arts Council. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (via the UBU Your Place, Your Space programme) recognise and fund it as a full time youth work organisation; the Arts Council Young People Children and Education programme provides annual Arts Grants Funding, supporting the employment of professional artists to collaborate with young people to create work; and Waterford City and County Council provide the space in a former military barracks, repurposed as a community centre building, under an anchor tenancy agreement of. The local authority also supports the work through arts service project grants.

In 2019 WYA had an income of just over €230,000, almost 74% of which is state, local authority and arts council, almost 13% of which is from trading and commercial activities, and the balance is from other sources and other public bodies.

WYA is a strong example of local partnership supporting sustainable and scalable Youth Arts provision through an independent, universal, arts focused model.

Having said that it's interesting that despite its focus on the art young people make, WYA maintains strong working links with the local youth and community sector, working with adults with learning, physical learning and sensory disabilities in a range of artforms.

Recommendations

Research findings and recommendations are dependent on how we construct or frame the research problem. Research that seeks to influence national policy usually takes the position that the problem exists within the target sector (e.g., youth arts) and it is the function of policy to address the problem in the sector in response to the recommendations. This is a standard "market failure" approach.

This report frames the problem from another perspective. Over the last forty years a generation of people have invested their time, talent, and resources to build a youth arts sector that produces quality artwork, develops skilled and talented people, protects cultural rights, is a key resource for the wider arts, culture and creative industries sector, and has the capabilities to support a range of vital work in other essential areas of social policy.

The proposition here is that the "problem" is not in the sector but in the relationship between the sector, composed of people who deliver the extraordinary work, and the national policy framework understood as "...the sum total of government action, from signals of intent to the final outcomes" (Cairney, op.cit.).

This proposition is based on the history of the development of the current policy environment, an analysis of the level and structure of the funding, the findings of recent research, and the interviews conducted as part of this report.

If we are to drive the kind of change that will reposition Youth Arts at both a local and a national level we need to question the existing institutional ideas, embed new ideas and create a new narrative, a new story, based on universal provision in acknowledgement of universal human and cultural rights; recognition of the professional skills of youth arts work; and the inherent value of the work independent of other policy outcomes.

What can we actively do?

The recommendations made in the Molumby Report (appendix 1) and the NYCI's Mapping Youth Arts in a Youth Work Context (Appendix 2) are all valuable. The recommendations we add here are the result of asking, who will deliver these recommendations, and how can we redesign the inherited delivery structures to match the ambition of the sector and the objectives of the new policy language?

- The national strategic youth arts organisations and those working in the delivery of youth arts must collaborate on a framework national youth arts policy built on a sector wide agreed definition of youth arts, and a vision for the development of youth arts.

- This network must collaborate on the development of a draft implementation plan (including proposed costings, and funding models)

- This network must issue a manifesto that positions the practice of youth arts as both a distinct and professional practice, and as a professional service that supports other policy outcomes and therefore must be priced accordingly.

Section Four: Recommendations

- This network should conduct or commission a time use survey of practitioners in youth arts organisations of all sizes to identify the total time invested and the corresponding value of that time.

- This network should collaborate with tertiary educational providers in each regions (e.g. ETB and SETU) to develop professional training and accreditation for youth arts professionals in both an academic and apprenticeship model.

- Greater detail is required in the accounting of youth arts spend across departments and local authorities, and so youth arts needs to be a specific budget line item, or at the very least local authorities and departments need to identify youth arts specific allocations.

- Local authorities, relevant agencies and departments, should be tasked to make both policy and budget commitments (e.g. 10% + of total arts programme budget) to developing and supporting a universal model of youth arts provision.

- The Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media; Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Department of Education; and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment must acknowledge the direct relationship between youth arts and the wider professional arts culture and creative sector, as a developer of skills, a producer of quality art, and a significant training site and produce an investment plan commensurate with the value created and with the value of the input.

- The promised independent review and evaluation of LCYPs needs to be completed and published prior to nationwide roll-out

- All Youth Arts policy and funding must be based on a universal model of access, in acknowledgement of the creative and cultural rights of all citizens.

In this moment of tension between a policy language that prioritises young people and creativity and an inherited delivery system that favours arm's length delivery through local, voluntary initiatives there are significant opportunities for real structural change to match the shift in language.

That change can only be driven by collaborative, national, action on the part of those individuals and organisations engaged in the delivery of Youth Arts.

Appendix I – Molumby Report Recommendations

6.3 Recommendations

The findings of this research report demonstrate the need for the establishment of a professional network for youth arts practitioners in the southeast and nationally. This network would serve to:

- Support greater connectivity for the sector
- Acknowledge the unique needs of youth arts practitioners, as distinct from youth workers and artform-specific practitioners
- Offer skills sharing and knowledge sharing platforms in support of best practice in the sector
- Support scaling and replication of best practice of youth arts models in the South East.
- Inform the development of youth arts policy in Ireland
- Inform youth arts funding provision on a local and national basis
- Inform funders and stakeholders about the impact of Covid 19 on the sector and young people, supporting sectoral resilience and agility
- Ensure the youth voice is central to policy and funding provision in Ireland.

The findings of this research report signposted the need for further research into youth arts provision in Ireland, addressing the following key areas:

- Research and analysis of Local Authority youth arts funding in Ireland
- Assessing the impact of the Local Creative Youth Partnerships model for nationwide scaling and replicability
- Further International models for youth arts networks which have informed youth arts policy and provision in their respective countries

Appendix II – NYCI – Mapping Youth Arts Provision in Youth Work Settings Recommendations

Resourcing and Recognition of Youth Arts Provision
NYCI recommends:

1. The resourcing and development of a comprehensive youth arts strategy informed by cross governmental commitment in consultation with the youth work sector and youth arts sectors. This strategy would serve to provide a statutory framework for youth arts provision. In recognition of the unique and valuable contribution of youth arts provision in non-formal education settings and in shaping youth policy, additional resources are required to ensure the development and implementation of the strategy throughout the country.
2. A review of the youth work funding schemes to include the additional costs associated with materials, equipment, the hire of appropriate spaces, the purchase of specific technologies, transporting artworks, etc. Within this review, consideration should be given to ensuring youth workers have more flexibility in how they allocate funding, to ensure the provision of both universal and targeted youth arts practice.
3. The creation of a capital investment fund to support the development or refurbishment of appropriate buildings and spaces for youth arts practice. We recommend that this fund should also support the provision of mobile facilities, such as vans and buses, to support outreach work and as a method of expanding youth arts provision in rural areas.
4. As the research highlighted youth arts requires significant financial investment to realise its full potential, in this regard the following measures should be implemented:

the introduction of a new funding scheme to support the development of long-term (e.g. 5-year) youth arts projects, taking into account pay and conditions for freelance practitioners and artists,

a. the expansion and adequate resourcing of funding schemes that support partnership between youth work and arts organisations/artists, and the human resources necessary to develop fruitful and meaningful collaborations,

b. the establishment of platforms to support networking and sharing and exchange of practice between youth workers and youth arts practitioners across Ireland,

c. increased investment in showcasing youth arts provision in non-formal settings to ensure the work can be exhibited in physical and virtual platforms,

d. investment in the design and delivery of bespoke training to respond to the learning and development needs of youth arts practitioners and youth workers. This would enhance their competencies to deliver high quality youth arts provision in recognition of specialised skills required,

e. the establishment of a fund to assist youth workers to participate in this training. Such training can be delivered regionally through the ETB and local authority arts offices,

f. the appointment of an additional 16 youth arts officer posts to be located within the ETB to provide guidance and leadership to enhance youth arts delivery in youth work context.

Research & Evaluation

NYCI recommends:

1. government allocate additional funding to facilitate collaboration between youth arts practitioners, the youth work sector and Government Departments,
2. the development of suitable evaluation frameworks for youth arts,
3. future research in the area of youth arts practice and provision in Ireland to provide an evidence base to inform youth arts policy development and practice.

Appendix III – Budget Allocation to ETB 2021

LOCATION	Targeted Youth Funding Scheme / UBU Your Place Your Space 2021	YIC 2021	Local Youth Club Grant Scheme 2021	ETB Youth Grant 2021	Total Funding 2021
Cavan and Monaghan	€528,949	€117,355	€60,830	€150,620	€857,754
City of Dublin ETB / CDYSB	€14,408,267	€102,167	€364,870	€1,033,694	€15,908,998
Cork	€3,127,281	€130,355	€243,398	€353,561	€3,854,595
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB	€7,771,104	€131,308	€357,541	€653,331	€8,913,284
Donegal ETB	€374,367	€141,433	€71,583	€119,605	€706,988
Galway and Roscommon ETB	€2,009,414	€52,028	€145,766	€265,562	€2,472,770
Kerry ETB	€438,657	€118,569	€60,241	€133,538	€751,005
Kildare and Wicklow ETB	€1,685,362	€104,056	€169,649	€216,633	€2,175,700
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB	€908,132	€52,028	€69,657	€249,456	€1,279,273
Laois and Offaly ETB	€233,653		€73,991	€119,609	€427,253
Limerick and Clare ETB	€2,863,053	€107,230	€143,541	€339,927	€3,453,751
Longford and Westmeath ETB	€598,705	€52,028	€59,171	€132,035	€841,939
Louth and Meath ETB	€625,453		€149,426	€193,611	€968,490
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB	€520,975	€68,594	€96,915	€207,527	€894,011
Tipperary ETB	€839,885	€60,847	€69,903	€183,735	€1,154,370
Waterford and Wexford ETB	€2,509,881	€112,875	€118,182	€322,574	€3,063,512
					€47,723,693

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Photo Acknowledgements

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All other images Waterford Youth Arts