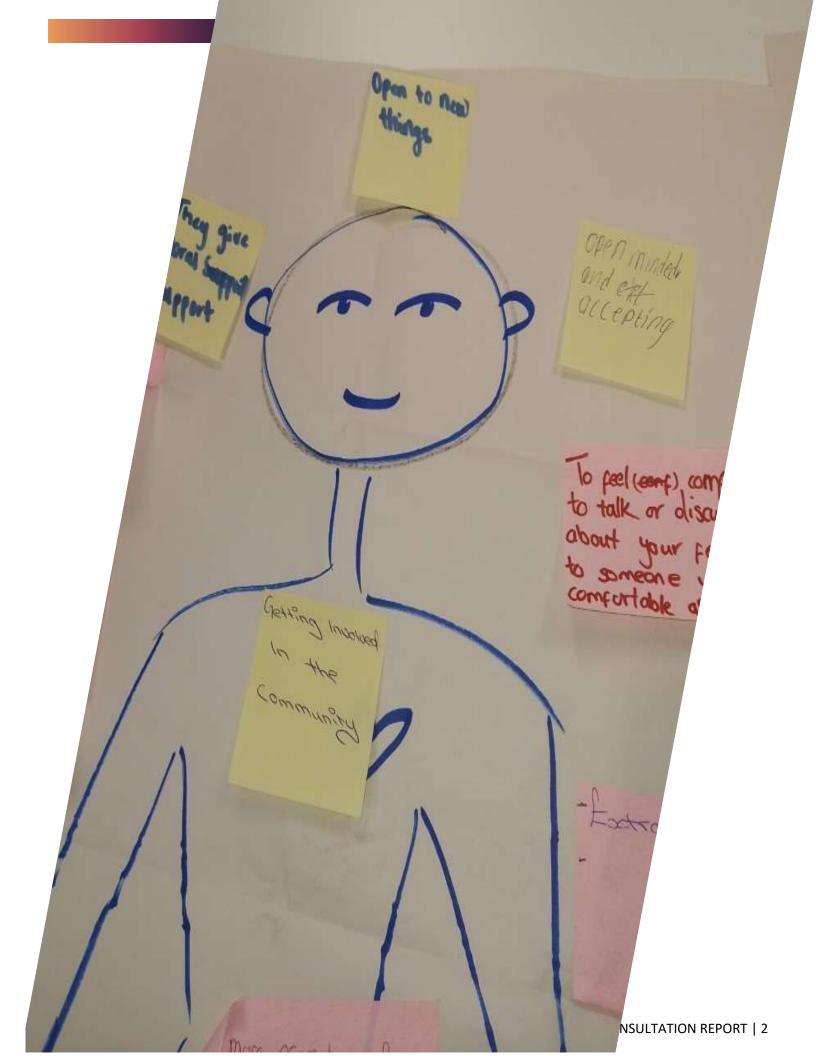


STRATEGIC PLAN
REVIEW & CONSULTATION REPORT
2022





INTRODUCTION

This consultation report presents the findings of an extensive consultation undertaken by Limerick Youth Service with young people, volunteers, staff, board members, parents, funders, partners and collaborators. The Consultation Report provides the baseline from which the Limerick Youth Service Strategic Plan 2022- 2026 will emerge.

- Focus Groups were completed with over 111 young people across Limerick City & County
- Social Media Survey with Young People
- Individual One to One interviews with Young People
- Survey undertaken with LYS Volunteers
- Board & Staff survey and planning workshops
- Stakeholder Survey
- Internal document review

The report presents a summary of the needs of young people and emerging priorities for Limerick Youth Service in the delivery of a strategic plan. The remainder of the document is divided into 5 chapters which outline full details of consultation with young people, stakeholders/collaborators, volunteers, parents, staff and LYS board members.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

YOUNG PEOPLE STRENGTHS & NEEDS

The following table sets out a summary of the strengths and needs of young people identified as part of the consultation

rocess.		
Outcome Area	Young People's Strengths & Need Areas	
Physical & Mental	Strengths	Need Areas
Health	Young people feel they are healthy, fit and	Substance abuse issues including problem drinking,
	enjoy getting involved in sporting	smoking and vaping.
	activities. Increased awareness of the	
	importance of physical health.	Social media perpetuates a perfect body image. "Body dysmorphia" and "fat shaming" highlighted.
	Young people enjoy being free to have	
	fun, to laugh and play/hang out with	Negative impact of COVID on young people's mental
	friends. Older young people are looking	health and wellbeing.
	forward to the future, to opportunities	
	and their independence.	Stigma, fear and a lack of understanding surrounding
		mental health. Lack of youth mental health
	Increased awareness and understanding	information, support and services with high waiting
	of positive mental health and wellbeing.	lists.
	Better variety of supports and services	
	available in this area.	Social media promotes false images of perfect lives
		and in turn, feelings of inadequacy. A pressure on
	Young people demonstrated strength and	young people to fit in.
	resilience throughout the COVID	5150 to 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
	pandemic.	Difficulties around managing emotions including
	We are the second of the secon	anger and fear.
	Young people are enjoying play,	Council books advection with an acceleric
	recreation and sporting opportunities and	Sexual health education with an emphasis on
	access to youth clubs/groups.	consent.
		More diverse recreational opportunities. Emphasis
		on competitive sport – to be the best. Spaces for
		older young people to hang out, which aren't 'youth
		clubs'.

Education &	Young people are open to learning, to new	Overemphasis on academic achievement.
Learning	experiences and think creatively. Improved educational access and equity for e.g., reduced rates of early school leaving.	Unequal engagement and achievement of Traveller community in formal education. Socio-economic disadvantage and its implications for poor educational attainment.
	More diverse educational choice and opportunities.	Teacher capacity to empower disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable young people to attain in education.
		Consequences of the COVID pandemic on educational retention and outcomes.
		Learner supports including financial, literacy and academic supports.
		The digital divide.
		Peer pressure to not do well in school.
		'Alternative' provision; a middle ground between mainstream and provision specific to learning difficulties.
Safe & Secure	Most young people live in stable and secure environments and have people who care for them.	Dysfunctional family environments and poor parenting. Family Conflict & parental mental health.
	who care for them.	Unsafe community environments enabling access to drink and drugs.
		Bullying in school environments and bullying and conflict within larger peer groups. Online bullying, relentless judgement and criticism.
		Treated badly in school by teachers and principals. Negative peer relationships can result in young people becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.
Economic	Young people enjoy their freedom from	The rising cost of living and inflation will further
Opportunity	financial and job-related responsibilities.	deepen socio-economic disadvantage.
		Insecure housing, homelessness, and the housing crises.

Young people have strong technological skills, which expand employment opportunities.

Participation in the workforce remains difficult for some young people including securing work experience.

Increased and varied employment opportunities.

Young people feel supported by their

family and friends.

Young people can feel pressure to be who the adults in their lives expect them to be, such expectations negatively affect self-expression.

Connected Respected

Young people are good at communicating

and making friends. Social media enables young people to communicate with others and develop networks of friends.

Services and supports are focusing more on marginalised young people and targeted interventions.

Young people feel that they are tolerant, accepting and committed to challenging inequality, injustice and exclusion through active citizenship and engagement in political, social and cultural life.

Perspective that society is becoming more inclusive in terms of disability.

Availability of more youth focused services supports and spaces.

Racism, integration and the marginalisation of specific groups including young carers, young people with disabilities, traveller youth and migrant communities. LGBTQ young people can be targeted and picked on. Gender inequality persists.

Some young people do not feel that they have a supportive family.

Importance of critical analysis with respect to social media and online information.

Young people can struggle with developing more 'real' and 'in-person' supportive friendships with their peers and within the community. Online relationships can be seen as 'fake'.

Young people can feel little control over their own lives or that their voice is listened to by the adults in their lives.

Young people in rural areas experience isolation from friendships, services and supports.

COVID restrictions minimised opportunities for connection and social activities, resulting in feelings of loneliness and increased isolation.

Young people feel that climate change and the environment are key issues affecting them today.

International Travel

Strengthened youth participation and voice in local and national structures and forums.

ENABLING OUR STRATEGY

The following table sets out a summary of the priority areas identified to enable the delivery of LYS Strategic Plan.

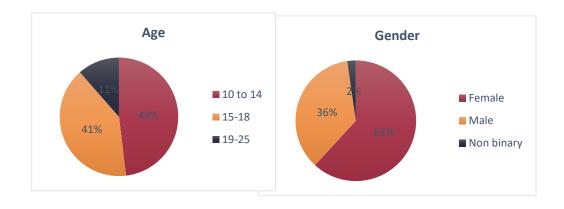
Enabling LYS Strategy	Priority Areas
Governance & Management	 Continue to pursue best practice in the areas of governance and management including ongoing commitment to charity, youth and education sector standards. Ensure integration, collaboration, and communication across LYS programmes & services, and within programme areas. Support the governance infrastructure of Limerick Youth Service so as to deliver on key priorities. Simplify and streamline governance, management, IT systems and financial reporting
Premises/Facilities	 Continue development and management of safe, accessible, youth friendly facilities and buildings with an emphasis on improving sustainability and commitment to green practices. Increase use of facilities by young people and local communities through the provision of additional services, partnership arrangements and exploration of new and innovative uses.
Funding	 Diversify and broaden funding streams to include public, private, corporate and generated income. Ensure staff requirement and project costings reflect true and accurate costs of project delivery. Continue to improve financial planning and budgeting functions and achieve efficiencies where possible. Negotiate any restrictive, excessive, inconsistent reporting requirements.
Identity/Branding/ Communication	 Create a clear marketing and brand strategy to clarify and communicate the key role of Limerick Youth Service in the lives of young people in Limerick City & County. Take a leadership/coordination role in identifying the needs of young people and ensuring that youth voice and leadership is central in influencing relevant policy and strategy Celebrate and communicate the history and reputation of Limerick Youth Service in achieving positive outcomes through successfully engaging young people, their families and the wider community. Maintain a positive and accessible media presence to accurately reflect the lives of young people and to broaden the profile of young people/families/communities engaged in our services.
Capacity (Staff)	 Recognize and support staff as a key resource in delivering on the mission and objectives of LYS and continue to enable staff to build knowledge, skills and capacity. Prioritise and develop innovative & inclusive staff recruitment and retention strategies which address opportunities for progression, performance, contract terms and flexible arrangements. Ensure there is clarity of roles and purpose and an in- depth understanding of our values and approach. Build a strong team and support work-life balance and well-being.

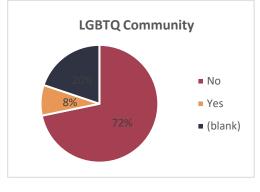
Capacity When recruiting volunteers - Emphasise motivations relating to 'Making a (Volunteers) contribution to and supporting young people in my community' Enable volunteers to achieve a stronger understanding of the challenges experienced by young people today for e.g., bullying, social media, drugs and alcohol. Strengthen volunteer training including access to online training. Support Volunteer promotion and awareness raising activities including recruitment events to increase volunteer numbers. Provide information and support around youth club development, management and administration including vetting, collaboration and communication between clubs. **Collaboration &** Continue to collaborate and partner with local, regional and national organisations in **Partnership** order to deliver services, supports and programmes and maximise outcomes for young people. Facilitate collaboration and networking in the areas of European Youth Work, Homelessness, Young people with additional needs or disabilities, Drug or alcohol use, Family relationships Alternative Care/aftercare for young people and alternative education options. Research, Commit to ongoing review of the mission, vision and priorities of Limerick Youth monitoring & Service so as to ensure we meet the needs of young people and identify emerging **Evaluation** Develop a strong evidence base/theoretical approach to our services and supports and further refine data collection, monitoring & evaluation systems. Improve efficiency of programme administration, data collection and reporting requirements including the use of IT based systems Youth Work & Enhance young people's participation across LYS particularly the participation of those **Education Services** hard-to-reach young people. & Supports Increased support and resources for volunteer-led youth clubs and volunteers in the aftermath of Covid 19. Strengthen the involvement of parents/guardian and families in general. Develop formal learning programmes which reflect context and industry demands and broaden delivery and certification opportunities so as to maximise engagement. Strengthen access to services and support for rural young people. Expand the range, type and hours of service delivery and further develop detached and outreach methodologies in the delivery of all services. Emphasise re-engagement of hard to reach young people post-covid.

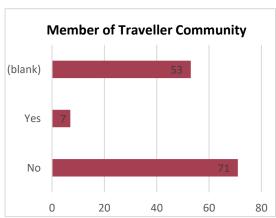
CHAPTER 1 YOUNG PEOPLE

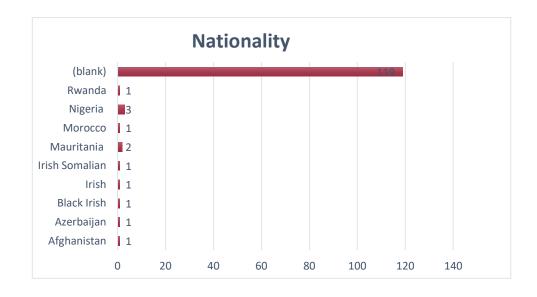
1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the findings from focus group consultations and individual interviews held with 111 young people accessing LYS services and supports over March and April 2022. Also included is the results of a Social Media survey conducted with young people over the same time-period. The consultations were undertaken using best practice guidance on engaging young voices in decision making and used a range of creative and interactive methodologies. The findings of the focus group and individual interviews are broken down across age ranges and set out in the following chapter. The profile of young people participating in the consultation was as follows;











1.2 YOUNG PEOPLE - STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES

1.2.1 AGE 10-14

Young people aged 10-14 years outlined key strengths and the positive aspects of being a young person as follows:

Young people emphasised their freedom to have fun; to enjoy play, recreation and sport and access to youth clubs/groups. Gaming and social media were also mentioned as an enjoyable recreational opportunity.

gaming

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING INCLUDING ACCESS TO RECREATION **OPPORTUNITIES**

school holiday sports club soccer

best friend boxing youth programme shopping summer ballybunion

Health was indicated as a strength, whilst also enjoying easy access to fast food:

"Health.....fast food is cheap...".

Challenges highlighted in the area of physical and mental health included limited access to different sports such as basketball and that sports can focus too much on competition. There was an expressed desire to return to "normal" life post-COVID and to have the chance to talk more. The downsides of social media perpetuating perfect images and the pressure to be perfect was also outlined.

"Talk more often....Covid to go away, to get back to normal.......Sports [are] too competitive, pressure to compete and be the best.....Body image and social media"

EDUCATION & LEARNING



Challenges in terms of education and learning highlighted a dislike of homework, not being able to study subjects that they would prefer, and the pressure it causes.

Freedom from financial responsibility was highlighted, which may suggest a feeling of financial security, or exposure to financial issues as a cause of worry:

"No bills.....Don't have to pay any bills.....Not having to save money"

In terms of safety and security, bullying was highlighted, with the experience of homelessness mentioned:

SAFETY &
SECURITY /
ECONOMIC
SECURITY

"Bullying.....to stand up for myself....School and making friends....School bullies......".

"Some young people don't have a roof over their heads and are in a bad position".

The positive aspects of family, friends, and the role of social media in enabling young people to communicate was emphasised:

CONNECTED,
RESPECTED &
CONTRIBUTING

"Family.....Relationships.......Having friends and people by [my] side.....Seeing friends online.....social media; comfortable using technology and communicating through it......Gaming and Connections with others"

The challenges highlighted in this area included unequal gender and adult relationships, an imbalance in parental/guardian authority, imposed dress codes, a desire to travel, not having a place to hang out and the unreal nature of online friendships:

"Sexism.....Proving your point to older people.....Strict parents.....Expressing yourself - Dress codes......More Travel......Place to

meet friends, To have fun, To be ourselves, To chill out, relax......Making 'real' friends v's 'fake' friends".

1.2.2 AGE 15 - 18 YEARS

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING



Young people aged 15-18 years outlined key strengths and the positive aspects being a young person.

healthy, Being active, the opportunity to play sports and getting out there and involved were noted as strengths. References were made to youth physical and appearance.

They highlighted that young people are fun and like to have fun.

'....Sense of humour...they are funny'

Positive attributes such as being brave, honest, compromising and supportive of others were also highlighted. "Giving Cheek", which could be understood as being assertive was suggested.

In terms of challenges for young people, a need for places to go, places to have fun and meet friends in youth friendly spaces was outlined:

> "Need places to go......Everything is for old people".

Problem "Drinking, Smoking, Vaping" was identified as was stigma and lack of understanding around mental health and wellbeing.

"I personally find it hard for people to accept my mental health problems because, I keep getting diagnosed with more and every time I am forced to

"I wish my dad knew how to talk and listen to me and see how depressed I feel sometimes. He never notices, he just gives out and says I'm lazy, that hurts me".

go to the hospital it makes people draw away from myself.... past generation not understanding mental health...".

"Parents/teachers don't know how to talk to young people about depression or anxiety. They should learn skills in how to recognise when a young person is in trouble and needs help, not making them feel ashamed".

However, it was suggested that the concept of mental health and wellbeing has become so overused that those who are seriously ill are not being heard:

"everyone is talking about having depression and anxiety that it's losing its meaning.....is applied to so many [things] that speaking to [my] friends about how depression lasts for weeks at a time, not feeling low for a bit and then being ok, its different".

A lack of mental health information and services was identified:

"Not enough servicesYoung people might need someone to talk to and find it hard or not knowing who to talk to".

Mental health illnesses including "social anxiety" and "body dysmorphia" were identified.

The negative impacts of constantly comparing oneself with a glut of social media images depicting perfect lives and bodies were outlined, with reference also made to "fat shaming":

'being fed lots of news at once....only seeing the positive side of people's lives online.....need to look a certain way from viewing perfect bodies and ideal beauty standards online"

Social media as false and fickle was also highlighted:

> "young people creating pages after someone young takes their life and going about it effects them when really they are only doing it for the likes and hardly knew the person".

"I wish my dad knew how to talk and listen to me and see how depressed I feel sometimes. He never notices, he just gives out and says I'm lazy, that hurts me.

Openness to learning and new experiences and creative thinking were outlined as strengths.

"creative....Thinking of new ways to do things".

The challenges highlighted in terms of education and learning included school hours, homework, and exam pressure. A lack of school supports was also noted:

EDUCATION & LEARNING

"School hours- having to wake up early......pressure from school - exam pressure......Can find school hard and find it difficult to complete their work.....School can cause you stress cause of the work load and exam pressure.....Lots of homework".

A lack of independence was also outlined:

"You always need supervision – can't go to concerts or places without an adult with you. Can't drive so you need an adult for that too...Not allowed to drive......You have no money of your own you have to ask for it and then you have to tell your parents why you want it. They can go and buy what they want whenever and nobody asks them".

The destructive impacts of negative peer relationships, the benefits of learning from such relationships, and "Getting in trouble with guards" was outlined:

"Hanging around with people that do bad things, can be peer pressured into joining in.....if you have bad friends as a young person, you'll know what to look out for when you are older because you will have learned from it".

Homophobia and hate crime were further identified:

"homophobia.... being targeted and assaulted. hate crime....people in schools are mean/ non-inclusive and make fun".

Bullying and conflict within groups was highlighted as challenging to manage:

"Bullying involved in groups and drama......Bullying-it

can make you lose confidence and make you feel low....if you have too many snapchat streaks you are judged to be a slut and obviously getting off with everyone".

A fear of crime, and the feeling that the world was a frightening place was noted:

"For ages after Aishling Murphy and even now I kept looking around me and thinking somebody going to attack me and something bad is going to happen".

It was also suggested that some young people don't have the safety and security of a "mam or dad at home".

SAFETY &
SECURITY

Findings in the area of connections and family relationships highlighted the importance of family and friends.

"Family is very important.....Spending free time with family".

Friends are particularly important in terms of understanding, trusting, and confiding in each other.

CONNECTED,
RESPECTED &
CONTRIBUTING

'they are the only ones you can trust and talk to about everything, parents/teachers don't have a clue'.

Young people are good at communicating, making friendships and the positive role of social media/web in developing friendships was also highlighted:

"Understanding each other and talking to each other.....Good at communicating with others even if they do not know them that well".

"I think young people are good at making friends online if they are unable to make it IRL" (IRL = in real life)....... Social media, connecting and making friends".

"For some young people they don't have a loving supportive family but they are stuck at home because there is no alterative place for them to go because they are a child...... If you are struggling with family problems at home, can make things more difficult

Findings suggest that young people believe themselves to be tolerant and accepting with a commitment to challenge inequality, injustice and exclusion through aactive citizenship and engagement in political, social and cultural life:

"open minded and accepting......Self-awareness.......More open about identity and then not being homophobic......Accepts differences in others, e.g., religion, race, gender and sexuality.... We realise the toxicity in this

world and try to change it......being vocal.....I believe change is happening.....Speaking out".

The qualities that young people bring to their communities were highlighted as including optimism, enthusiasm, and fresh perspectives. "Getting involved in the community" was highlighted as a strength.

The challenges highlighted in this area included the experience of some young people in not having a supportive family and family difficulties:



Other challenges highlighted included the feeling that young people don't have real influence and voice in decision making on matters affecting their lives; that they are living in accordance with the expectations of others and that these

expectations can cause pressure and stress. There exists an imbalance between expectations imposed on young people, their own autonomy and having their voices heard. The pressure to be someone that you are not was also highlighted.

"constantly under pressure to live up to people's expectations.....by older figures in their lives — parents, teachers, family in general".

"Young people not being consulted in community".

The difficulties in finding supportive friends and friendships was outlined including the importance of having friends at school:

"hard to find good friends because they're all immature and so can't support someone who needs help...... finding other people with similar interests.....keeping friends.... pressure from school - not always having friends".

In a similar vein, social status, and the pressure to fit in to the detriment of expressing your identity was emphasised:

Related to fitting in, judgement and criticism both on and offline was highlighted, as was being "blamed for everything".

"Unfairly judged.....Being judged by community and internet.....People are quick to assume things and place you under certain stereotypes....".

Gender inequality and a judgement of single parent families was also noted as was "small town mentality":

"Single parent families feel they are lacking something in life".

Rural Isolation and limited transport were also identified as a challenge along with the geographical distance between friends:

"parents are not always available to be transporting them everywhere".

1.2.3 Age Group 19-25 years

Young people aged 19-25 years outlined their key strengths and the positive aspects of being a young person as follows:

Physical & Mental Health & Wellbeing including access to recreation opportunities.

Young people highlighted looking forward to the future and all its possibilities and having more independence and freedom to choose their own path as a strength:

"World is completely open to you, new experiences and more freedom".

Positive developments in mental health and wellbeing awareness and understanding were identified:

"I think another good thing is that mental health is talked about more which has helped me" .

Challenges in this area included the pressures of social media on mental health and wellbeing in terms of perpetuating false perfection and feelings of inadequacy:

"Oh, actually probably another thing would be Instagram and TikTok. I feel everyone is fake now like. I find it hard for the head like.... it would be making me feel depressed".

"can be hard comparing yourself to other people's photos on social media".

In this context, the importance of challenging the emphasis on perfection and "opening up" about our struggles was highlighted. However, stigma, a sense of taboo and a lack of government commitment was again outlined.

The challenges of managing mental illness and the destructive impact of childhood trauma on living a full life was identified

"childhood experiences set the foundation for adulthood".

"mental health [challenges] can narrow down our opportunities and ability to do the things we want....my mental health has held me back from completing college, it's been incredibly hard to come to terms with that. I would love to do it in time when I am well enough....and I know that there are so many other young people in the same boat".

References were made to social and emotional challenges and to managing those including living with uncertainty, anger management and adapting to increasing responsibilities as you get older:

"isolating shift as you and your friends move away to work or go to college. To see your community get smaller and be thrown into the deep end of responsibilities".

Young females as having less freedom was also noted:

"My parents won't allow it without them because they think I'm too young and they wouldn't want me as a female to travel by myself."

Education & Learning

Young people identified increased educational access and equity as a positive development:

"For me being a traveller woman and in college and being in college is a big step".

"I think what's good about being young now today is that I can go to college or do courses that are free which my parents never did".

In a similar vein, more educational choice and the provision of information was identified:

"Well, I suppose we get given more choices on what we want to do with our lives".

"I am constantly aware of what's going on in the world which wasn't the case for when my parents were younger".

Young people identified their access to and proficiency in technology, art, music and sport:

"I'm pretty good with like social media and technology. I even created a website the other day as part of an assignment which i was well proud of".

" I also think we have great access to technology."

Challenges in terms of education and learning highlighted academic and exam pressure, to the detriment of mental health and wellbeing:

"not enough emphasis on it [mental health] more on getting on good grades".

Educational exclusion was referred to with respect to the Traveller youth and support for pupils with disabilities:

"Travellers been given a fair chance in school".

"I feel like being a young person with ASD it can be hard to get the support needed from schools and college. Thank god I have ye to help me get that."

The importance of sexual health education, particularly understanding consent, underpinned by gender equality was highlighted:

"there is emphasis on what not to do, more emphasis should be put on how scary and confusing this topic can be.....men aren't thought how to control urges/women not shown how to say no"

The negative impact of social media on focus and attention with respect to schoolwork was noted:

"For me what I find hard is the motivation to study as theres so many distractions with social media and TV".

Economic Opportunity

Freedom from financial responsibilities was outlined as a strength:

"I think the freedom we have. I have no responsibilities, I dot have to pay bills which is great. "

Young people also highlighted improved employment opportunities including opportunities in technology, and the benefits of good technological skills in securing employment:

"Technology and the opportunities it provides including employment opportunities.....I think a great stength that we have is our ability to use different types of social media. Hopefully this will help me to get a job".

Challenges for young people in securing employment included a lack of work experience:

"I also find it a challenge to find a job as they always want experience and Im only young I don't have that."

Connected, Respected & Contributing

Positives in this area highlighted the valuable perspectives and insights of young people, which can be dismissed due to their youth, and a willingness to talk about issues that were once sensitive or taboo including racism, mental health, sexuality and gender, as well as a commitment to their responsibility to challenge inequality and exclusion:

"I think we are more good at talking about mental health and peoples sexuality. More openminded about peoples sexuality. I suppose I'm a part of the LGBTQ+ community and I feel that wouldn't be something you could go to when my mother or father where born".

The opinion that society is becoming more inclusive in terms of disability was identified:

"I feel like people are more accepting and understand disabilities and ASD more even since being in school".

That young people who are parents are "good" parents was also expressed.

Young people like to "hang out", connect, talk and have fun, and the creative role of technology and social media in enabling this was highlighted:

"Young people are great for a laugh, we love hanging out".

"I love how I can see others peoples lives and talk to them on tik tok, snap chat and Instagram".

The challenges highlighted in connecting with others included family difficulties and supports in this regard:

"I find especially since covid being stuck with my family was difficult.

I find it really hard to manage my emotions."

"For me being a young mother is extremely tough. I grew up in care so I find I don't have that family support which is really tough."

Isolation because of COVID, the resulting loss of friends and in this context, the loneliness of being a young mother was identified

'suffered from prolonged isolation due to the pandemic".

"I find my mental health suffers as I find it lonely sometimes especially with covid, being a young mum and not much family support".

The importance of having friends/a supportive social network and the difficulties in developing this was outlined:

"I find it really hard to make friends everyone is fake and influenced by social media. Nobody talks about real life issues its all superficial stuffNeed more connection within there community/friends......Its hard to make friends these days everyone just stays at home on their phone". Finally, the importance of young people "speaking up" and for young people to be listened to was highlighted.

1.3 LYS - STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES

1.3.1 Age Group 10-14 years

Young people regarded the key strengths of LYS as being the supports provided to achieve positive change:

"How they help people......You get lots of help with something you can do....Doing homework support.....Doing homework then playing a game or bingo..... Helping us become the best we can be....Helping me talk a little louder".....Helping people get jobs.......Encouragement...".

Supportive relationships were also emphasised:

"Being kind and thinking about everyone's feelings...... How they are caring".....
Staff...People who care".

As was the focus on acceptance and inclusion:

"Making everyone feel included.... LYS makes you feel heard.....place to feel welcome and like someone cares... place to be me....feeling when I'm here".

Their enjoyment of the activities, the provision of good food, fun and a comfortable space was highlighted:

"It's fun we do all nice things in the summer, we go somewhere nice.......Bringing us on trips....Going on walks.....Baking and Cooking Lessons.....table quizzes......GO Karting......going places....competitions...sports...get away from home.......Having everyone come to the dinner table and eat..... nice food...... I love coming here for the crack.......Warm food, warm place, warm staff".

That LYS allows them to meet new people and develop friendships was emphasised, along with the voluntary and drop-in nature of the service:

"The people I meet there.....Talking to young people.....Friendships.....space to have fun and meet friends"

Young people outlined learning including strengthened knowledge and understanding of gender and sexuality through engagement with LGBTQ focused youth group, an understanding different cultures and of mental health and wellbeing:

"Understanding each other.....LGBTQI, Gender understanding.....More understanding of culture (Different people going to school).....More understanding of mental health".

LYS challenges/areas that could be improved identified the potential to facilitate more diverse participation in youth groups by mixing youth groups both within LYS and groups external to LYS, and to encourage more young people to join groups:

"Mix with other groups more..... Getting involved with outside groups...
More people".

The need to ensure positive behaviour in groups was noted:

"Others being kinder"....The way people act around club.... some messers".

Challenges with respect to facilities included location and a shared space:

"Too many stairs......Temperature.......Get Wi-Fi....Space is too far away from Garryowen.....Limitations due to space e.g., club can only be on specific time/day".

More away activities including residentials, a better variety of activities, insurance restrictions, more group sessions and in some cases smaller group sessions and the need for LYS to promote themselves more was outlined:

"More outside activities.....More overnights....horse riding.....Sleepovers.....Go on more trips......Need cooking tutor Margret back......More selection for groups as people have different interests....more options......Insurance – can't go on trips we want towould like to come here more often than once a week......smaller groups......Longer time; Use time more wisely".

"Put themselves [LYS] out there more on social media"

That young people like planning and having a say was noted:

"Planning sessions every year together so everyone can have their say"

1.3.2 Age Group: 15 – 18 years

Young people within this age group regarded the key strengths of LYS as being the opportunities provided and the knowledge, positive attitudes, skills, and experiences gained because of their engagement:

"Activities and opportunities to try new things......We like the opportunities group

gives us, I wouldn't do half the things I've done here only for group".

Some young people explained how they wouldn't have gone on to pick up litter on their own road only for being in the group but loved being able to do it and felt a great sense of achievement. Access to woodwork and art courses were highlighted as was the role of LYS in supporting educational attainment in addition to the safety and security of young people:

"They help you with your CV and to get a job or help you with your theory test".

"Keeping young people in school and out of trouble".

"Helping young people to stay out of trouble by getting involved in activities".

Outcomes in terms of physical and mental health and wellbeing were also highlighted and access to mental and sexual health programmes noted:

"They help people with their problems and addictions"

Young people appreciate their involvement, influence, and voice:

"Great that it's not forced to go to it, you can go or you can also not. Asking everyone for opinions before making big enough decisions".

"LYS listens to young people's voices and includes them regardless of what their background".

Young people feel comfortable and accepted in LYS; it is an inclusive space:

"I never feel judged in here, I can say anything and look however I want and can eat food without being judged".

It makes them feel good and provides routine and structure to the week:

"Makes me enjoy Tuesday I like coming here after a bad day.......
They do everything that makes me happy".

"I have a place to go on Fridays".

Young people enjoy meeting friends, making new friends, being able to socialise and eat with friends:

"Spending time with friends......Having chances of socialising, making new friends.....I never want to leave....being at club is so much better than hanging around getting in trouble".

That LYS provides a supportive space for young people to talk with each other and feel part of a community was outlined:

"Being supportive about everything and you can talk about things freely, without judgement......Good place for people to go and to just talk and feel safe.....LYS helps people feel more safe and lets them know that they are not alone".

That you can be yourself and that it is a safe space including for LGBTQ young people was identified:

"Feeling comfortable and a place where you feel safe and can be yourself.......A safe space for LGBT......Bringing together people of similar interests.....Supporting each other".

Young people emphasised the positive relationship that they have with LYS staff and the benefits they gain from this relationship such as accessing additional services and supports and meaningful guidance and support when going through difficulties:

"Youth workers are friendly, kind and always positive.....I love the chats we have......people we can talk to especially if we have problems...... Giving good advice......[X] understands me and helps me feel better.....".

Young people have fun in a safe way, even when talking about serious things, and thoroughly the activities and new experiences:

"We keep coming back to group because we have fun here.....Groups is good craic.....Somewhere to go if you are just bored and want to have fun".

"Trips Odeon, Beach, Escape Rooms Zoo AquaDome.....LYS comes up with many activities and fun things young people can take part in.......Keeping us active......making memories".

Meeting up in person with other young people, going on away trips and residentials and re-building relationships with young people and youth workers was particularly important for young people post -COVID. Support with transport for young people in rural areas was also appreciated.

The suggestions made as to where LYS could do better included more trips away as they are so much fun, they get to know other young people, it keeps young people engaged and trips "will help take mind off of things".

"More outings.... more money for trips......Go on more trips so the young people can socialise more and meet new people".

Young people highlighted that insurance requirements restricts the types of activities that they can do:

"Sick of being told no we can't do activities because of insurance. Means we can only do certain activities and its always the same activities just in different places".

In addition, young people highlighted the need for more outdoor activities and spaces:

"More outdoor activities and designated outdoor space".

With respect to the issues addressed by the programmes, services and supports provided young people highlighted mental health, bullying, international exchange programmes, literacy and sexual health as potential areas for development:

"Mental health/ more info on trans tips/ safety things...Helping with tips on how to have safe sex as gay/lesbian/trans/everyone...... help younger people read and write..... Anger management/support for people who are acting out...... To learn more practical skills and communication skills".

In terms of the delivery of supports and services, young people identified more sessions, more time within sessions, the need for groups/young people across LYS to mix and come together, more one to one support and smaller group numbers:

"Youth club should be like soccer club, every few daysSmaller groupto make people feel more comfortable....groups within LYS don't mix much"

Some young people highlighted the time-consuming nature of registration and consent forms, restrictive rules around parental/guardian consent for collection following trips, and around young people leaving the building during group time. The need to exclude young people who are behaving badly during group sessions and to ensure minimal interruptions from other people during sessions. That certain premises/facilities are not good quality was also noted. Access/transport in rural areas was highlighted as a challenge.

Finally, more awareness raising, and promotion of LYS services and supports was highlighted:

"Awareness isn't as big as organisations like Jigsaw".

"More promotion for people to know about LYS".

1.3.3 AGE GROUP 19-25 YEARS

Young people within this age group regarded the key strengths of LYS as being the positive difference it has made in their lives with respect to education, employment, economic security and mental health and wellbeing:

"Ye helped me get in and complete my QQL5 in Social Studies. They are currently helping me get in to LIT".

"Ye help me look for a job and prepare me for it".

"The youth mentors help me with my forms for housing, for the baby, medical cards and ringing services."

"I remember the school outing one in particular where we did modelling. It built up my confidence. I did kick boxing also which I loved. I would never have got that in school."

"For me it has been the psychotherapy. It has changed my life in immeasurable ways and continues to be a huge support".

"Ye helped me to get involved in the LQBTQ+ group....which I love." Young people value the "sense of community" within LYS and gaining access to positive social networks and friendships:

"I loved the social group that ye had, I made new friends and learned useful things along the way. Its always a good laugh and puts me in a good mood".

Friendly relationships with LYS staff based on respect and patience were identified:

Young people appreciate accessing a safe and non-judgemental space, where they can be themselves and also enjoy the routine and structure it provides:

"LYS is inclusive and does not tolerate hate speech and young people are educated in differences".

"Being able to talk in a safe space without being judged".

"I've been with ye now for a few months. I feel like I need ye . Tuesdsay is a good day for me to talk to you in a safe place, get stuff done that I need to do. I feel more hopeful for the future."

LYS facilitates young people to enjoy themselves and have fun. The diverse and holistic nature of services and supports, whereby a young person can volunteer with Lava Javas, participate in a foreign exchange, and access counselling:

"I feel like I could tell ye anything and you wouldnt judge me."... "I never feel rushed or judged. I always get a cup of tea also which is a plus. I feel like without ye I wouldnt have gotten though this year. " But with Ability ye just listened and ye actually helped!"

In terms of services and supports, more advocacy around Traveller issues, expanded services, more social events including day trips, more funding for snacks, coffees and taxis was outlined. The need for stronger management of bad behaviour in groups, especially with younger groups and a continued focus on being honest and letting young people be themselves as opposed to trying to make things "happy" all the time.

Finally, the need for more awareness raising and promotion of LYS to ensure that young people are availing of the service, and also awareness raising of all the services and supports available within LYS so as to facilitate integrated and holistic supports.

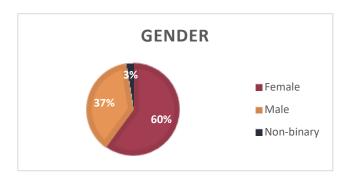
> "I don't really have any criticisms, I've had a wonderful experience. All I can say is that I was unaware that I could avail of these services, maybe advertising"



1.3 SOCIAL MEDIA SURVEY FINDINGS

40 young people completed this online survey which asked questions regarding the key challenges facing young people today and how best Limerick Youth Service (LYS) can support young people. A higher percentage of females than males took park with an even spread across Limerick City & County. All age groups were represented in the survey

1.3.1 PROFILE



Age:

Age	Number of YP
13	4
14	5
15	1
16	8
17	5
18	3
19	5
20	3
21	2
22	1
23	1
24	1
25	1
Total	40

Location:

Limerick City	Limerick County
19	21

1.3.2 FINDINGS

In response to the question, please rank in order of importance the main challenges, in your opinion, affecting young people today, the following responses were received.

Please rank in order of importance the main challenges, in your opinion, affecting young people today	
Substance Abuse Issues (Including alcohol, drugs & gambling)	22.5%
Web Safety and Social Media	17.5%
Physical Health (Including being active, diet and obesity)	17.5%
Climate & the Environment	17.5%
Sexual Health and Wellbeing	15%
Employment and Career Opportunities	15%
Equality Issues (Including gender, LGTBI+, racism)	15%
Housing & Homelessness	7.5%
Education and Training Opportunities	7.5%
Mental Health and Wellbeing	2.5%

Substance Abuse Issues (Including alcohol, drugs & gambling) received the highest ranking at 22.5%, followed by Physical Health (Including being active, diet and obesity), Web Safety and Social Media and Climate & the Environment at 17.5%.

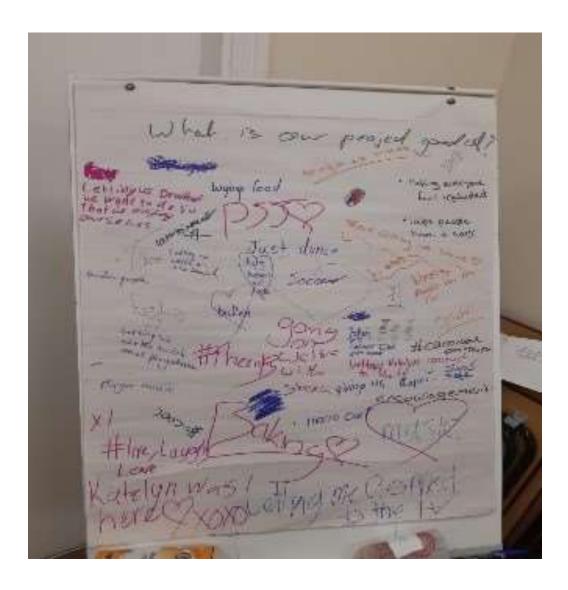
In response to the question, please rank in order of relevance, how best LYS can support young people in Limerick City and County, the following responses were received.

How can LYS best support young people in Limerick City and County	
Provide more alternative education and training opportunities for young people	22.5%
Provide more opportunities for rural young people	20%
Provide more youth friendly spaces & youth clubs	17.5%
Provide more mental health and wellbeing programmes	15%
Targeted support for minorities (Including LGBTQ+, Migrant, Travelling Community)	15%
Provide young people with the information that they need to make positive life choices	15%

Support young people in building positive relationships	15%
Give young people the opportunity to volunteer and participate in their local community	12.5%
Guidance with employment & job seeking	10%
Support young people to participate in political, social and civic life	7.5%

Provide more alternative education and training opportunities for young people received the highest ranking at 22.5%, followed by provide more opportunities for rural young people at 20%.

Additional comments highlighted supports for the mental health and wellbeing of young people due to COVID, more services and supports including transport supports for rural areas and more clubs and spaces for young people.



Summary of LYS Strengths and Priority Areas:

LYS Strengths

The supports provided to achieve positive outcomes knowledge, positive attitudes, skills, and experiences under all 5 outcome areas.

Supportive relationships and a sense of community. Focus on acceptance and inclusion, young people feel comfortable to be themselves.

Enjoyment of the activities, the provision of good food, fun and a comfortable, safe space to get away from everything. Provides routine and structure.

LYS allows them to meet new people and develop and make new friendships, along with the voluntary and drop-in nature of the service.

Youth voice and participation.

Holistic services and supports and strong advocacy and collaboration with internal supports and external agencies.

Priority Areas

Expand provision, more group sessions, weekend sessions/Youth Cafes and for more ages.

More alternative education and training opportunities for young people.

Mixing youth groups both within LYS and groups external to LYS to support diversity.

Ensure positive behaviour in groups. Exclude young people who are behaving badly.

Limitations of a shared space including interruptions from other people during sessions.

More activities including away residentials and social day trip activities, a better variety of activities, address insurance restrictions on activities. More outdoor activities and spaces.

More promotion and engage more young people.

Awareness raising of all the services and supports available within LYS to facilitate integrated and holistic supports.

Facilitate mental health, bullying, international exchange programmes, literacy, and sexual health.

Time-consuming registration and consent forms, restrictive rules and regulations.

Certain premises/facilities are not good quality.

Provide transport in rural areas.

More advocacy around Traveller issues.

More funding for snacks, coffees and taxis.

Let young people be themselves as opposed to trying to make things "happy" all the time.



CHAPTER 2 STAKEHOLDERS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the findings of a survey disseminated to Limerick Youth Service (LYS) stakeholder organisations.



42 community and voluntary, statutory, and local government organisations (Appendix 1) responded to a survey questioning what is going well for, and the challenges experienced by young people in Limerick City and County today. In addition, LYS strengths, opportunities for improvement and potential threats were addressed.

2.2 POSITIVES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

In terms of what is going well for young people in Limerick City & County, the following was outlined:

Respondents emphasised that young people have good access to sport and recreational opportunities and facilities with sporting opportunities highlighted. The availability of youth groups and clubs was noted:

'Young people have good access to sporting, cultural & recreational opportunities'.

'the range of sports....'.

'Good access tosporting organisations.....'.

An increased awareness of the importance of physical health was also noted as was youth mental health and wellbeing including the services available:

PHYSICAL AND
MENTAL
HEALTH
INCLUDING
SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL
WELL-BEING
AND
RECREATION
OPPORTUNITIES

'Emphasis on mental health - young people's well-being, confidence, and self-esteem. Access to therapies such as Jigsaw, Bluebox, Children's Grief Project etc....'.

The resilience showed by young people throughout the COVID pandemic and the need to harness this strength was further highlighted:

"Young people showed resilience during the pandemic and were creative in their ways of overcoming obstacles"

Positive developments in terms of sexual health for example the reduction in teenage pregnancies was stated.

A more diverse range of formal and informal educational and training opportunities, the progress made in tackling educational inequality and reducing early school leaving rates including the expansion of DEIS schools and an increase in supports was identified:

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Young people have a wealth of new opportunities and pathways arising for further education and training experiences that they can avail of

outside the traditional educational route'.

Expansion of DEIS programme, positively impacting 22 Limerick schools'.

'The increased availability of

Educational, training/apprenticeships and work support services for young people..... schemes such as the HEAR and DARE programmes....Availability of supports in primary and second level through schemes such as School Completion Programmes, Learning Hub.....alternative educational and training programmes and supports and encourage students to complete senior cycle and progress to third level...'.

In a related vein, improved employment opportunities were highlighted:

'increased range of opportunities employment wise'.

'more opportunities in education and employment'.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

With respect to the safety and security of young people, it was highlighted that:

'most young people live in stable and secure environments and have people who care for them'.

'Most young people are doing well across a range of indicators [including safety and security] most of the time'.

CONNECTED,
RESPECTED &
CONTRIBUTING

Positive developments for young people under this indicator included a strong sense of identity; inclusive peer and community networks; a focus on marginalised young people and more targeted interventions; technological developments in communication; a strengthening youth voice and engagement in local, national and global issues:

'Young people living in Limerick have a good sense of identify & positive about their county'.

'positive peer & community networks'.

'supports for marginalised and excluded communities has increased'.

'access to mobile device/social media platforms/communication tools'.

'a greater recognition of the importance of voice and perspective of young people in the policy/planning is an area which has improved over the years'.

Improved services and supports, along with the contribution of youth services including LYS in supporting young people to connect in safe and secure spaces and facilitated by professional and experienced staff was emphasised:

'I think there is a growing number of services becoming more available to young people particularly through the provision of support provided by Limerick Youth Service and associated agencies'.

'Safe spaces where youths can connect - such as the youth service, learning HUB'.

"Safe spaces where youths can connect - such as the youth service, learning HUB"

In terms of an increasing range of services, the collaborative approach to service delivery was

noted:

'More partnership working.....Collaborative approach to supporting the young people holistically'

2.3 CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

In terms of the challenges experienced by young people in Limerick City and County, the following was outlined:

PHYSICAL AND
MENTAL HEALTH
AND
WELLBEING,
AND ACCESS TO
RECREATIONAL
OPPORTUNITIES

Key issues with respect to this indicator included substance abuse, the negative impacts of social media with an emphasis on body-image and social pressure, limited youth mental health services and long term supports, poor mental health and well-being (with trauma identified as a particular challenge) and in this context, the impacts of the COVID pandemic, the need for a more diverse range of recreational opportunities and more youth friendly safe spaces:

'Drug and alcohol availability and consumption is an issue'.

'I think one of the many challenges young people face today is the constant bombardment from social media. It is putting huge pressure on young people to live up to these ideals/perfect image'.

'The appalling level of supports around mental health and early mental health interventions'.

'Where support is needed (particularly in Mental Health), waiting lists are an issue'.

'Impact of Covid lockdowns on young people's social skills - Anxiety - Mental health'.

'Lack of non-sport activities and places to meet'.

Challenges with respect to education and learning primarily related to socioeconomic disadvantage and its impact on poor educational attainment, the consequences of the COVID pandemic on retention and educational outcomes and the benefits of more educational supports such as 3rd level financial supports, literacy and academic supports:

EDUCATION AND LEARNING 'Education deficits & poverty especially prevalent in marginalised groups like travellers & migrant young people'.

'Recent pandemic has resulted in more early school leavers, who are not yet engaging in further education and training'.

'School refusal and reduced hours in school'.

'Children and young people in these circumstances [experiencing disadvantage] require regular - sometimes daily - support and help to remain in school and to achieve in school'.

The challenges emphasised in this context included the rising cost of living and inflation as fuelling poverty; negative cycle of socio-economic deprivation and its impact on outcomes for young people, homelessness and the housing crises and that Participation in the workforce and economic security remains difficult for some young people:

E C O N O M I C O P P O R T U N I T Y 'Increased cost of living/inflation which is fuelling poverty and homelessness'.

'Being caught in a negative cycle of deprivation'.

'Issue of poverty that underpins most of the challenges that exist for young people in areas of disadvantage'.

'overcrowding and sub-standard housing'.

'Property prices and rental costs'

The issues highlighted in this regard included poor community environments encompassing negative peer relationships and pressure; crime and anti-social behaviours; bullying particularly cyber bullying; poor parenting and family issues:

'Poor Parenting, Deprivation, Access to crime and drugs'.

SAFETY AND SECURITY 'Young people in dysfunctional environments without adequate family support/additional stressors re poverty/family dynamics/addiction etc'.

'Peer pressure/bullying/body image/sexualised behaviour'.

'Some young people are still vulnerable to abuse, neglect & exploitation'.

CONNECTED,
RESPECTED
AND
CONTRIBUTING

Survey findings with respect to young people being connected, respected and contributing to their world highlighted issues including racism and integration

and the marginalisation of specific groups including young carers, young people with disabilities, traveller youth and migrant communities, with reference made to the experiences of young Ukrainian refugees. The digital

'a significant challenge will be for young people's voices, needs and aspirations to be central as to how we respond and shape Ireland's responses'

divide and the importance of critical analysis skills with respect to social media and online information. The need to extend the voice of young people and support and encourage young people to belief in their ability to make a difference was also highlighted.

'Young Travellers face multiple barriers'

'care responsibilities on young people, caring for elderly and younger children, not age appropriate responsibility'

'Hopelessness - Finding significance and purpose, and given an opportunity to make a difference'.

'Poor critical analysis skills of online information'.

'Young people from marginalised or disadvantaged communities also face additional challenges — economically, socially, culturally — lack of positive role models'.

That rural young people face additional challenges in accessing services, for example transport was also noted:

'supports for young people are disproportionately weighted toward the city'.

'Access to services, outreach for the county can be lacking or even under pressure'.

The need for continued investment in services and supports for young people, particularly in youth services including youth clubs and in ensuring an awareness of such services was outlined:

'Support for local based voluntary youth clubs..... Professional support for the recruitment and retention of youth leaders and volunteers'.

'Knowing how to and when to access services'.

2.4 LYS STRENGTHS

The strengths of LYS highlighted by stakeholders emphasised the participative and youth-led nature of our work. Our caring ethos and genuine and supportive relationships with young people, informed by an in-depth understanding of their needs was outlined:

'Caring ethos, warm welcome, acceptance'.

'Champions for the young person's voice'.

'The empathy for young people Trust for both children and young people but also their parents is a very important feature'

'Good understanding of the needs of young

people.....Expertise in engaging appropriately with young people'.

Our rootedness in and relationship with the community and families was also endorsed in addition to collaborative stakeholder relationships:

'Good integration with local community..... frontline workers are embedded......well respected and highly visible'.

'partnership and collaborative work is strong'.

LYS professionalism and efficiency in addition to staff excellence was highlighted:

I find Limerick Youth Service very easy to deal with - communication, openness, transparency'.

'Huge value for money'.

'Professional Organisation which is well managed and well governed'.

'Excellent trained committed staff'.

The high quality and diverse nature of LYS services and supports focused on social and emotional wellbeing, the excellence of our integrated approach and high-quality infrastructure and facilities was outlined:

'The scope of its projects. The imaginative and creative ways in which projects are designed and implemented in a variety of locations in the city and county'. 'Integrated Youth Services Model.... A team approach to delivering to local young people'.

'Facilities are excellent, in areas where they are established, and they are appreciated'.

Furthermore, our accessibility to young people with high needs including those hard to reach young people, and in varied contexts was outlined:

'Providing a service to rural young people. It is often the only service available to them'.

'Reaching out to young people on the margins.... Having the skilled staff team to engage with "hard to reach young people".... it provides a service and genuine chance to those who have failed to fit in other areas'.

'The service engages young people across the continuum of need from universal to high need supports'.

'Having the skilled staff team to engage with "hard to reach young people"'.

2.5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

The potential for stronger LYS leadership/coordination and voice in identifying the needs of young people, and in influencing policy and strategy in addition to an increased focus on youth leadership and youth voice and disseminating good practice in this regard was highlighted:

'Limerick youth service could have a greater voice in terms of identifying the needs of youths in Limerick'.

'LYS have a history of innovation and best practice in youth work and are highly regarded at national level. Using this knowledge and experience to greater influence in terms of policy at national/international level'.

'Encourage and support young people to influence the delivery of services offered by LYS & take on leadership roles'.

In terms of engaging more young people detached/outreach was emphasised, collaborative engagement with primary and secondary schools, as was greater publicity and awareness raising and expansion into areas without a youth service and parent/guardian engagement in enabling the participation of young people:

'More detached youth workers in parts of the county were there are no existing services'.

'More proactive young person recruitment'.

'I think there is a need to publicise the work of Limerick Youth Service, especially in the communities where the youth spaces are'.

'Share successes, good news stories, participant case studies'.

In terms of LYS services and supports, increased support for volunteer-led youth clubs and volunteers, more one to one counselling/mentoring, family/parent/guardian collaboration:

'It needs to be resourced to be able to support voluntary clubs more and to provide training and support to volunteers'.

'More intensive one to one work with young people who might need additional support – extra resources'.

'Supports for parents / signposting for parents'.

More clarity on services and supports offered, referral processes and strengthened collaboration including collaboration with Higher Education Institutions regarding student placements and with employers regarding work placements was identified. The impact of poor staff retention on collaborative relationships was outlined:

'I am not 100% clear on the exact services offered or how to refer a person to you'.

'Changing staff/ Staff retention and progression is a challenge within Youth Service, can make it harder to link young people in with the appropriate services in a timely manner, build relationships and staff morale'.

Finally, the need for LYS to recognise and take pride in its knowledge and expertise was outlined:

Youth workers should be extremely proud of the spaces they provide for young people and be more confident in owning the space'

In this context, the role of LYS in promoting youth work as an academic discipline, a professional practice and essential service wasidentified.

Areas for collaboration was specifically addressed, with the following key areas identified:

- **European Youth Work**
- Homelessness
- Student internships, collaboration with research and the formulation of policy
- Young people with additional needs or disabilities
- Support work with young adults from 18-25 years old Over 18s drug or alcohol use, transition to 3rd level education including apprenticeship scheme
- Family relationships
- Alternative Care/aftercare for young people
- Primary & Secondary schools HSCL, school refusal, reduced hours
- Art
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Collaboration across CTCs (Community Training Centre)

2.6 THREATS TO ACHIEVING LYS MISSION

Finally, findings with respect to the external factors that may pose a threat to realising our mission emphasised rrecession and funding cuts, inflation and rising cost of living, long waiting lists, a high demand for LYS services may result in young people not getting

service they need, privitisation, financial impacts of COVID, pressure services/funding streams due to number of Ukrainian migrants, community restrictive voluntary sector governance and funding requirements, downgrading of mainstream/universal youth provision, staff recruitment, retention and progression, COVID impact in terms of hard to

The scope of its projects. The imaginative and creative ways in which projects are designed and implemented in a variety of locations in the city and county'. 'Integrated Youth Services Model.... A team approach to delivering to local young people'

reach young people becoming even harder to reach, a tendency to lower expectations and demands on young people because they come from marginalised and disadvantaged communities and the declining numbers of young people attending Youthreach services.

2.7 PRIORITY AREAS FOR A NEW PLAN

The table below sets out the key strengths and priority areas of work to take into a new Strategic Plan as identified by our key Stakeholders.

LYS Strengths

Participative and youth-led.

Caring ethos and genuine and supportive relationships with young people.

In-depth understanding of young people's needs.

Rootedness in and relationship with the community and families.

Collaborative stakeholder relationships.

LYS professionalism and efficiency in addition to staff excellence.

High quality and diverse nature of LYS services and supports focused on social and emotional wellbeing.

Integrated approach.

High-quality infrastructure and facilities.

Accessibility to young people with high needs including those hard to reach young people.

Priority Areas

Stronger LYS leadership/coordination and voice in identifying the needs of young people, and in influencing policy and strategy.

Increased focus on youth leadership and youth voice.

Disseminating good practice.

Engaging more young people through detached/outreach, collaborative engagement with primary and secondary schools, publicity and awareness raising, expansion into areas without а youth service and parent/guardian engagement enabling the participation of young people.

increased support for volunteer-led youth clubs and volunteers.

More one to one counselling/mentoring.

Clarity on services and supports offered, and the referral processes.

Strengthened collaboration including collaboration with Higher Education Institutions regarding student placements and with employers regarding work placements. The impact of poor staff retention on collaborative relationships.

LYS to recognise and take pride in its knowledge and expertise.

AREAS FOR COLLABORATION

- **European Youth Work**
- Homelessness
- Student internships
- Research and the formulation of policy
- Young people with additional needs or disabilities
- Support work with young adults from 18-25 years old Over 18s drug or alcohol use, transition to 3rd level education including apprenticeship scheme
- Family relationships
- Alternative Care/aftercare for young people
- Primary & Secondary schools HSCL, school refusal, reduced hours
- Art
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Collaboration across CTCs (Community Training Centre)





CHAPTER 3 VOLUNTEERS

This chapter presents an overview of findings from a survey submitted by 9 respondents: the majority, at almost 70%, volunteering in a rural location.



MOTIVATION/ BENEFITS

3.1 FINDINGS

With respect to the benefits of volunteering, the majority at almost 80% strongly agreed with the statement 'Making a contribution to and supporting young people in my community'. 'Meeting new people', 'learning skills' and 'having fun' were strongly agreed to and agreed to by approx. 40% and 50% respectively. 22% disagreed with the statement 'Career Development/Work Experience' and 11% with 'meeting new people' as benefits.

Accordingly, making a contribution to and supporting young people in my community can be seen as key motivator/benefit for volunteers with Career Development/Work Experience as the least relevant.

CHALLENGES/ DIFFICULTIES Under this heading 44% of respondents *strongly agreed* with the need for 'a stronger understanding of the challenges experienced by young people today for e.g. bullying, social media, drugs and alcohol' followed 33% who *strongly agreed* with 'Other time commitments e.g. family, work', highlighting these areas as key challenges/needs. 'I require additional formal training and skill development' was *disagreed* with by 44% of respondents and 22% *strongly disagreed* with 'Unsure as to my role and responsibilities as a volunteer'.

Accordingly, the need for a stronger understanding of the challenges experienced by young people today for e.g., bullying, social media, drugs and

alcohol as need for volunteers, and recognition of time commitments and approaches to overcome this challenge.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

67% strongly agreed with 'Promotion and awareness raising activities including recruitment events' as a way in which LYS can best ensure high quality volunteering opportunities and experiences, followed by 56% who strongly agreed with 'Information and support around youth club development, management and administration'. 'Issue based workshops on young people's needs for example bullying, social media, drugs and alcohol' was agreed to by 77%. 22% disagreed with 'Formal training opportunities for e.g., induction, first aid, facilitation skills, committee management', with 11% disagreeing with 'Recognition & Award Events' and 'A more flexible and diverse range of volunteering opportunities.

Accordingly, these findings suggest Promotion and awareness raising activities including recruitment events and Information and support around youth club development, management and administration as key ways in which LYS can best ensure high quality volunteering opportunities and experiences, with 'Formal training opportunities for e.g. induction, first aid, facilitation skills, committee management' being disagreed with the most.

Additional comments emphasised strengthened interaction with other clubs, recruitment and retention of volunteers, improved vetting processes and training:

'Volunteer recruitment, event planning, club networking'. 'Get more volunteers involved so as people can rotate duties'. 'Training, better communication between LYS a Youth clubs'. 'Interaction with other clubs, training including presentation from clubs who overcame challenges. Attractions volunteers & members & retention'.

'The burden of vetting/training shouldn't be on the volunteer committees. LYS should work with other groups to lobby the government to introduce centralised vetting . This is a huge turn off as most volunteers are vetted multiple times Safeguard training should be accessible online. The GAA had a very successful program during lockdown'.

'More volunteers. Cheaper transport. More interaction between youth clubs'

'No improvements can be thought of'

'More training and maybe a submit a question to the group and have anyone that feels they can answer to answer'

3.3 PRIORITY AREAS FOR A NEW PLAN

The priority areas of work to take into a new Strategic Plan as identified by Volunteers are set out below.

- Emphasise motivations relating to 'Making a contribution to and supporting young people in my community' when recruiting volunteers.
- Volunteers require a stronger understanding of the challenges experienced by young people today for e.g., bullying, social media, drugs and alcohol. Strengthen volunteer training including access to online training.
- Strengthen volunteer promotion and awareness raising activities including recruitment events to increase volunteer numbers.
- Strengthen information and support around youth club development, management and administration including vetting processes, collaboration, and communication between clubs.

CHAPTER 4 PARENTS

This chapter will outline the key findings from a consultation held with 4 parents of young people engaged with TUSLA' Youth and Family Support Programme and the Youth Diversion Programme.

4.1 FINDINGS

POSITIVES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Parents emphasised positives in terms of increased services and supports including LYS and the benefits this provides young people with in terms of having others to tourn to, particularly youth workers:

"Youth Clubs are great".

"Being involved in the youth centre".

"Support services outside LYS are great".

"Nearly all kids now have someone they can turn to as well as their parents, you know if your child was afraid to say something to you like if they were pregnant. I know they could pick up the phone to "Youth Workers Name" and they would be there to talk to them and help them out".

The importance of sport was highlighted and also creative activities and doing these activities as part of a family:

"Sports clubs in the community are very important".

"Young people are being creative at home and learning skills from their families, cooking, making headbands, crochet".

CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Parents highlighted challenges in terms of education including young people being treated badly in school by teachers and principals; the need for teachers to strengthen their own knowledge and skills and improve attitudes with respect to empowering young people to learn and develop and support as opposed to blame parents; peer pressure to not do well in school and the lack of supports for young people with additional support needs:

"Children in school being bullied by teachers and principals".

"Teachers need more training on how to work with and speak to young people".

"Limited consideration for children with additional needs"

"Young people and parents are being made scapegoats and always getting the blame no matter what".

"If a child gets a reputation for being bold that's all they will be known for even if they change or try to do better".

"Young people are afraid of succeeding in and out of school because other kids will slag them for doing well"

The need for a more middle ground, an alternative to both mainstream and provision specific to learning difficulties:

"Need an alternative between Catherine McCauleys and mainstream school [linked to not enough alternative education provision both primary and secondary school]".

Other challenges highlighted a lack of play, recreation, sport, arts, cultural and nature activities for young people resulting in boredom and anti-social behaviour:

"There's nothing for kids to do and having nothing to do means they're hanging around getting in trouble, bringing the guards to your door".

"Kids are turning to drink and drugs because there is nothing else for them to do".

"There aren't enough community centres and even when they are there there's nothing in them for kids".

"There is a lack of green areas in communities – green areas are used to build houses on or extend footpaths so kids have nowhere to play".

Social workers as being more of a burden rather than constructive support and the precarious nature of social housing was also outlined for e.g. when guards are being called for "silly" reasons in urban areas such as kids playing ball in the street in an urban area can put their home at risk if they are part of social housing or housing is provided by external agencies.

LYS SYTENGTHS

Parents emphasised the support received from youth workers including advice, facilitating access to additional supports and services and access to parent support groups providing space for them as parents:

"just part of our lives now, I don't know what I did before them"

"The Garda Diversion Programme saved my 2, if I ever hear of a child acting

"I remember one time I rang someone from the youth centre I hadn't seen in near ten years and they still answered the phone and helped me out, I can't say enough about ye."

up or being a bould ***, I tell their mother get him into Garda Diversion straight away"

"I can honestly say without the support of (named youth workers) I would literally not be here. I couldn't cope with all the problems I had going on for me and with my kids, but I always knew [youth workers] were on the end of the phone always. I mean it I wouldn't be here only for them; I wouldn't have been able to manage on my own. I was hanging by a thread. That's the difference ye make, I'm still here for my kids and that's down to ye."

The role of LYS in preventing involvement with social workers was also noted:

"I never had social workers involved with my family but that's only because I had support from [TUSLA & YDP staff names]. Being involved in the project meant they were able to spot the problems and stop them before it needed social work, thank God. I can hand on heart say that's the only reason I didn't have social workers at my door".

LY'S open, patient and long term approach, which prioritises the needs of the young person was outlined and the positive relationships amongst LYS staff were noted:

"Ye never gave up, even when he was a bould ***, ye still took him back over and over and look at him now, he's still a bold ****sometimes but he's not as bad as he was but no matter how bad he got he always knew he could go back, and he did".

LYS CHALLENGES Parents recommended more weekend sessions/Youth Cafes and for more ages:

"My small one is going to a youth café and that's on (day and time) and even though she moved class into first year I don't think the café was replaced for the younger ones".

"[name of youth café] is closed very early and the hours are very short, they need to be open more and for longer especially on the weekends".

Suggestions as to activities included swimming lessons and sports clubs, and the importance of recreational and sporting opportunities for youth mental health.

3.2 PRIORITY AREAS FOR A NEW PLAN

The table below sets out the key strengths and priority areas of work to take into a new Strategic Plan as identified by Parents.

LYS Strengths	LYS Priority Areas
Supportive and patient staff Facilitating access to additional	More weekend sessions/Youth Cafes and for a more diverse age range.
supports and services	Improved variety of activities.
Parent Support Groups Long term engagement	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
Intervention prior to involvement of	
social workers.	

CHAPTER 5 BOARD & STAFF

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will outline the findings gathered from 4 consultations conducted with 50 Limerick Youth Service (LYS) staff over March 2022 and online survey completed by Board Members.

The consultations adopted the Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats (SCOT) tool and findings, specifically priority areas, will be presented under the following headings:

- 1. Governance and Management
- 2. Premises/Facilities
- 3. Funding
- 4. Identity/Brand Communication/Promotion
- 5. Youthwork and education programmes/services
- 6. Capacity (Staff)

5.2 FINDINGS - STAFF

Consultations identified LYS IT systems/software for example MS Office and HR Locker, governance and ethos and a friendly and open environment/culture as strengths in terms of governance and management.

Based on these strengths and in addition to the challenges, opportunities, and threats identified, priority areas include:

- Simplified/streamlined governance and management structures and systems with more opportunities for 'team leaders' to support progression.
- Eenhanced 'top-down' communication and direction, and improved management 'visibility'.
- More efficient programme administration/reporting requirements including reduced duplication. The potential for automated monitoring and evaluation systems for all programmes based on existing systems including CORE IMS in Be Well, and YLS in the YDP was highlighted.
- Updated/modernised financial IT systems/portals and clear and consistent communication with programme areas to ensure more efficient and effective budget management.
- Integration, collaboration, and communication across LYS programmes/services, and within programme areas, with a focus on teamwork - particularly when staff are based in different locations.

GOVERNANCE

- A clear vision and mission in line with policy contexts and stating our target group, which is fully understood by all staff.
- Clear policies and procedures with respect to drug and alcohol misuseapplicable to both staff and young people and compliance and accountability maintained in this regard.
- Health and safety policies and procedures outlining duty of care to staff and learners.

PREMISES/ FACILITIES

The strengths outlined with respect to LYS premises and facilities stated high quality buildings and facilities, located and visible across the city and county ensuring a strong presence with 'premises and feet on the ground in all areas'. HQ and CTC's prime location in the city centre was identified, and the benefit of this in enabling access for young people to services and supports. Excellent CTC facilities were further identified. The challenges included inconsistency in standards across premises and facilities. Increasing costs for e.g., insurance and utilities, the threat of insurance claims and the location of the CTC in city centre as making the management of young people's challenging behaviour quite visible were all highlighted.

Based on SCOT findings, the following are areas to be prioritised.

- Regular assessment to ensure premises/facilities are fit for purpose/meet the needs of local communities/young people.
- Strengthen public access for e.g., wheelchair access.
- Efficient and effective health and safety procedures. Improve building maintenance systems for e.g., in hygiene and repairs.
- Increased use of the premises/facilities by the local community and ensure maximum use of facilities by young people at times which suit them.
- Strengthen awareness of premises as LYS owned.
- Promote 'green' environmentally friendly buildings.
- Develop city centre as a hub location, adopt a campus approach to developing buildings/premises.
- Develop infrastructure to broaden service provision for example enabling national and international young people/student exchanges.

FUNDING

LYS strong and positive relationship with funders was identified. Reduced numbers of young people engaging with certain services may result in funding cuts and a conflict of Interest with state agencies who are both funders and competitors were highlighted as challenges and potential threats. Based on the SCOT analysis, the following key areas were stated:

 Diversify/reduce dependence on certain funders and in this context, support for staff in diversifying and applying for funding, for e.g., accessing corporate funding and to include a focus on funding for research.

- Salary funding should reflect cost of living increases and include appropriate terms and conditions for example parental leave and longerterm contracts. The need to secure funding for additional staff hours was also highlighted.
- The need for funding to reflect rising project management/building
- Ensure LYS ownership and creativity and address inefficiency, and in this regard, negotiate any restrictive, excessive, inconsistent reporting requirements.
- Clarity and consistency around budget/funding management to ensure planned as opposed to ad hoc/last minute spending.

IDENTITY/ BRAND

LYS strengths include a long history and a solid reputation. LYS is visible and known by communities, families, and young people in Limerick. A SCOT analysis has highlighted the following priorities:

- Clarify or brand/unique selling point, re-enforce positive attributes and challenge any negative perceptions – emphasise LYS locations in many communities, our reputation for high standards, engaging diverse and positive young people, wide range of services/programmes, long history and record of accomplishment, and relationships with communities, families, and young people. Take pride in LYS.
- Use positive and empowering language any communications/promotion's initiatives for example, not 2nd chance education but alternative education. In a similar vein, ensure ethical communication and promotion processes, images, and language.
- Maintain our positive social media presence, to include more testimonials from young people, evaluations, case studies and other examples of achievements and outcomes for young people.
- Broaden profile of young people/families/communities targeted and enable easier access to information for e.g., online registration of interest, online registrations.
- Facilitate activities and collaboration to increase LYS profile for e.g., volunteer awards, corporate social responsibility partnerships. Consider the development of a marketing/promotion strategy.
- Develop a promotion strategy for LYS 50th Anniversary.

YOUTHWORK/ EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Strengths highlighted with respect to LYS services and supports included our integrated service approach with extensive, innovative, and diverse educational, recreational, social, and personal opportunities, programmes, and services for young people. LYS is a large local organisation and can access a large cohort of young people.

LYS' historical presence, embeddedness within the community and the generations of relationships built with communities and young people ensure an in-depth knowledge and understanding of young people and their families, and where they come from/their needs and experiences. Caring, trusting, open, empathetic, non-judgemental relationships with young people were emphasised. Our accessibility and inclusivity, that we always have our doors open to young people and families with both universal and targeted supports providing something for everyone; a 'safe haven'. In this context, our ability to engage hard to reach young people, and our programmes and services supporting those who need it most was outlined. Excellent external networks and positive relationships with other agencies supporting strong signposting and access to referral opportunities. In terms of the nature of provision, our quick adaptation to digital/online provision because of COVID and strong levels of youth-led decision making/youth participation was noted in addition to Voluntary participation.

The potential threats highlighted included uncertainty of the long-term impacts of COVID on young people; long waiting lists for government services due to COVID could result in LYS becoming overloaded; high waiting lists for our own services may result in young people not receiving support; CTC young people getting younger, which has implications in terms of programme development supports; an increasing emphasis on 1:1 youth work as reducing impact on larger numbers of young people, and the growth of large national organisations for e.g. Jigsaw. Due to LYS engagement with young people with high needs, the potential for any addiction and/or behavioural issues to result in a negative image, which could deter other young people from engaging or cause existing young people to exit, was also highlighted.

Based on a SCOT analysis, recommended priorities include:

- Ensure robust needs assessment for example to identify any mental, socio-emotional, and addiction needs and the supports that maybe required.
- Enhance young people's participation in the development and management of programmes/courses, particularly the participation of those hard-to-reach young people.
- Strengthen family involvement.
- Clear and consistent rules, and clear expectations, which challenge and empower young people to reach their full potential.
- Strengthen collaboration, networking, referrals, signposting with external agencies including educational institutions/schools and local business with respect to employability.
- Develop a library of literature, programmes, and resources to support the delivery of evidence and issue-based youth work programmes.
 Prioritise an evidence based/theoretical approach to our services and supports.
- Prioritise the delivery of international youth exchanges and themes including LGBTQ issues, the digital divide, the mental health, and wellbeing of young people because of the COVID pandemic, sexual

health and wellbeing and the disruption of educational attainment due to COVID, for e.g., school refusal. Challenge a reliance on sporting activities.

- Develop CTC learning programmes to reflect contexts and industry demands for e.g., ESOL provision for Ukrainian refugees, accessible short modules/programmes for example micro-credentials, flexible delivery, delivery targeting younger learners and broaden certification opportunities for example City and Guilds. Open training courses to other locations for e.g., satellite centres.
- Ensure understanding amongst staff of the range of services/provision across LYS to enable integration, reduce duplication and promote efficiency/value for money
- Document/report learning throughout the year on a quarterly/annual basis, which will inform planning.
- Strengthen access to services and support for rural young people.

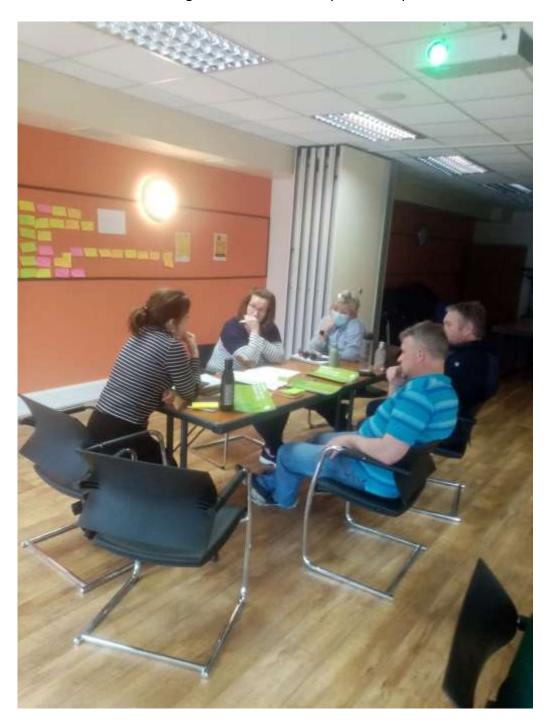
LYS strengths in terms of capacity emphasised qualified, specialised, experienced, caring, empathetic, friendly, committed, long-serving, flexible, hardworking, helpful, motivated, positive, resourceful and creative staff. A diverse range of staff experiences and skills, teamwork and supportive staff relationships, excellent staff training opportunities and committed high quality volunteers was further outlined.

Challenges and threats with regard to capacity included a loss of staff due to our inability to compete with statutory organisations pay and conditions, which will affect the quality of services and supports; young people's challenging behaviour impacting staff retention; fewer volunteers will have an impact on club provision. Additional challenges included COVID as as having an impact on staff retention as well as on staff mental health and wellbeing. Conflict between staff and the unwillingness of staff to change and evolve was highlighted. Staff conflict.

Priorities based on the SCOT analysis include:

- Enhance mental health and wellbeing supports for staff.
- Enhanced staff appreciation.
- Prioritise and develop staff recruitment and retention strategies including improved pay and conditions, opportunities for progression, terms of contract, pension.
- Develop/strengthen non-monetary rewards in recruiting and retaining staff for example annual leave.
- Staff capacity development and support in managing complex needs including challenging behaviour and addiction, on youth participation and monitoring and evaluation. Consider the potential for external supervision.
- Strengthen the diversity of staff.

- Manage staff workloads. Clear staff roles and responsibilities and consistent Performance Management Reviews to reward good performance and address poor performance.
- Ensure volunteer funding and support and develop volunteer recruitment strategies so as to maintain youth club provision.



5.3 FINDINGS - BOARD

This report will present the findings from a survey administered to LYS board members. This survey addressed LYS strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats, and responses will be outlined the following headings:

5.3.1 SWOT

The strengths highlighted included excellent leadership, strong teamwork, and a shared vision, which prioritises young people:

"The CEO has is a clear leader and has a team to support her".

"The shared vision, mission, and genuine care for the young people of Limerick".

The strengths outlined by the Board emphasised skilled and dedicated staff:

"Expertise and dedication of staff"

Challenges in terms of recruiting and retaining the expert staff required to provide high quality services and supports was outlined. Volunteer recruitment was also highlighted as a challenge:

"I think it will be important to find a way to keep talented people within the service and to encourage others to join. Volunteering may also be a challenge in the post-pandemic world".

PREMISES & FACILITIES

The need for the physical space/infrastructure required to develop services and supports in line with young people's needs was outlined.

Accordingly, the key priority areas/opportunities as highlighted by the Board include:

The development of premises/infrastructure to enable expanded provision in more communities in collaboration with local services:

"the opportunity to be based in more communities in both city and county - this would require a huge capital buildings project, and financial support, but the council could support with the provision of buildings facilities"

FUNDING

Challenges with respect to financial stability, secure funding and the threat of a potential recession were noted as was changing state priorities "that may lead to reduced state financing".

IDENTITY & BRAND PROMOTION

Findings highlight the positive reputation of LYS and indicates how LYS "improves the image of Limerick City"

Increasing awareness and promotion of LYS:

"Marketing LYS by engaging with companies in Mid-west for funding/ partnering for internships/work experience'

YOUTHWORK
& EDUCATION
PROGRAMMES
& SERVICES

LYS provision was emphasised as excellent with a wide reach, strong collaboration with other services, engaging particularly disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable young people and securing positive outcomes for them:

"LYS provides a foundation for people who may have none".

"Shared success (i.e. look at the newsletter - we should all be proud of what's being accomplished)".

However there are a number of key issues affecting young people today, which should in turn inform the development of services and supports include youth physical and mental health, young Ukrainian refugee arrivals, climate change, increasingly culturally and ethnically diverse Irish society increasing inequality:

"Issues around youth mental health will also need careful monitoring as we return to 'normality'. The numbers of young people arriving from Ukraine may impact services too".

The current cost of living crises was also highlighted as a threat in terms of furthering disadvantage and inequality

"Rising costs of living will mean increased difficulties for families who are already struggling and this will have a knock on for LYS and other services who work to support young people".

Sustaining the continued engagement of communities was indicated as a threat.

Maintaining a collaborative approach to the delivery of LYS services and supports, and the development of programmes addressing areas including cultural and ethnic diversity, climate change and development in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.