

Ossory Youth

OSSORY'S HARDEST WORKING YOUTH SERVICE

5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN, SPECIAL EDITION



Delivering services is not something that just happens

It requires planning

■ Minister welcomes Strategic plan



Frances Fitzgerald TD,
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs I am delighted to contribute to Ossory Youth's new Strategic Plan.

The challenges facing our young people can often be immense. I believe it is therefore vitally important that our youth services must

be responsive to the changing needs of Ireland's young people and their communities.

Since its establishment in 1985, Ossory Youth has developed in to one of the country's leading youth services providers responding to the needs of young people and communities' right across the Diocese of Ossory, covering Kilkenny, Laois and Offaly.

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Visit: [ossory youth](http://ossoryyouth.org)



/OssoryYouth

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(Chairperson)

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Robin Hood and his Merry Men perform in the Mini Tops Talent Show

FUNDERS



Ossory Youth
Desart Hall
New Street
Kilkenny

Ph: 056 776 1200
Fax: 056 775 2385
Web: www.ossoryyouth.com

Facing the challenges head on



Padraig Fleming
Chairperson

Over the life of the last strategic plan we focused on three key areas, delivery of services to young people, strengthening and developing relationships with our partners and building our intellectual and physical capacity to deliver a quality youth work service for young people and their families. On our review of this plan we can say that we have come a long way in significantly improving in all of these areas. We've faced the challenges of the past head on and more importantly we've learnt from our mistakes. This learning, along with a team of vibrant and creative young people, staff and volunteers has equipped us for the coming years. Although this strategic plan will operate in a period of severe economic difficulty in our history, we think we're ready to support a generation of young people and their families affected by it.

Our approach to this plan was different. We could have easily sat down and developed a document that was jargon packed and boring. That doesn't reflect the organisation we're striving to be. We wanted to use this opportunity to represent and truly reflect where we want to be in 5 years time and provide a high bar for young people, volunteers and staff to aim for.

We envisage that in looking back in 5 years time, that we'll have reached the heights we set for ourselves. The environment that young people are living in has changed over the period of our last five-year plan and will continue to change over the next years. So whilst our principles remain constant, our priorities will change to meet the needs of young people.

Ten things we know to be true

1. Young people can blow your mind
2. Volunteers are like oil in an engine – it can't go without them
3. It takes a village to rear a child
4. 'With' is better than 'for'
5. If we make youth work look easy, we're doing a good job
6. Labels belong in shops
7. Lady Desart knew what she was doing
8. Relationships with young people don't go in one direction
9. An expert is one who has made all the mistakes. We're all experts
10. A cup of tea costs 13 cent. A conversation costs nothing. Youth work's future is secure

How we see things for the future

“it is about being bold and confident”

Mary Mescal
CEO



1.0 Youth Work Profession

There is an ongoing debate about what youth work is. There is an inherent tension¹ between what it is we do as youth workers and the expectations of other professionals and policymakers in relation to youth work. We need to embrace these tensions and ensure that the true essence of youth work is not lost while at the same time recognising that “youth work is clearly one of the spades in the policy garden². This means not being precious and defensive, or feeling misunderstood and undervalued, it is about being bold and confident and protecting the integrity of youth work as well as ensuring that it is understood and used appropriately within the wider range of services available to young people.

2.0 Socially Excluded Young People

Young people can be excluded from mainstream society for different reasons. Our priority over the course of the strategic plan and in line with national policy³ is to increase access for marginalised, vulnerable and ‘at risk’ young people in the areas of sport and leisure, education and employment, participation, youth justice, mental health and drug misuse.

3.0 Volunteering

It is important that volunteers continue to be pivotal to the growth and development of Ossory Youth. Volunteers bring passion, commitment and innovation, they broaden the reach of the youth work opportunities for young people in communities, and they provide connections and opportunities to leverage resources for young people. Without them youth services would not function.

For that reason, we take volunteering seriously. Preparing and supporting volunteers to work with young people is a serious commitment and it involves vetting, training, support and management. There are financial costs associated with every level of volunteer engagement. So we can’t be afraid to name the commitment needed by volunteers and neither can we be afraid to turn potential volunteers away if they are not up to the task.

Underpinning our work with youth club volunteers is an understanding of their autonomy, independence and their commitment to their community. We respect that.

4.0 Balance between ‘Targeted’ and ‘Universal’ Work

Youth work continues to be drawn into initiatives designed to manage specific groups of young people⁴. Whilst we recognise the importance of being ‘at the

table’ regarding cohorts of young people who may be particularly vulnerable or at risk, all young people will experience part or all of their adolescence years as challenging and can benefit in being part of an empathic and safe environment. Our priority over the next five years is to ensure we provide that environment to as many young people as we possibly can, no matter how they access our service.

5.0 The Culture of Ossory Youth

If we are to claim meaningful impact on the lives of the young people we work with, we need to build a culture that understands and accommodates the tempo, changing circumstances, unreliability, disorder and unpredictability that exists therein⁵. In this context and in that environment, the need for us to be ‘present’ and ‘centred’ is a simple but important prerequisite. We also have to trust that given the space, the right environment and the right approach, young people are extremely capable of achieving what they want and need. We will continue to create a “high support high control environment” underpinned by an “empathic and fair” staff team⁶.

6.0 The Value of Association

An open door, a welcoming environment and empathic worker/volunteer can work wonders. Youth work’s longstanding concern with how young people associate and the quality of that association can make a direct and important contribution to the development of social networks of young people and their human and social capital⁷.

7.0 A Collective and Strong Youth Voice

The United Nations⁸ declared the right of young people to express their views and have their opinions heard. We’ve been involved at local and national level to ensure that decision makers are hearing that youth voice. Our vision over the next five years is simple - to give the youth voice a loudspeaker. There are structures in place such as ‘Comhairle na nÓg’ but we endeavour to make them noisier and more effective.

8.0 The ‘Whole Child’ Perspective

Across the board, an inclusive approach to working with young people ensures the best possible outcomes. “Children not only benefit from but actively contribute to the mix of relationships, mutual support networks, local knowledge and know how that make for vibrant communities⁹.” Our work over the course of this plan is to ensure that we continue to work in a way that’s inclusive to families, peers, communities and other agencies.

9.0 Frontline Work

The challenges of funding or the lack of is nothing new to the Youth Work Sector, even during the ‘boom’ years. But this doesn’t mean reduced access for young people. For us it means being more creative in how we do things. We recognise there are opportunities in difficult times. National volunteering rates are increasing¹⁰. Our dependence on and use of part-time, sessional and volunteer youth workers is increasing, as is the overall access to youth activities and programmes for young people. Our focus is to continue to increase frontline work by increasing the capacity of current staff to engage, train, support and supervise non-fulltime workers.

10.0 Relationship Building with Young People

Developing an adult-youth relationship that is open, honest and caring is paramount and central to youth work¹¹. We think by mentioning it here we remind ourselves and others of the true value of what we do. It is also our sole responsibility to clearly articulate at every level the principles underpinning our work.

11.0 Quality and Standards

Meeting quality standards for Youth Work Ireland and the National Quality Standards Framework¹² is important to us for a myriad of reasons. Over the course of this plan, we’ll be disappointed if we don’t achieve ‘Excellence’ in Youth Work Ireland’s Quality Youth Service Framework.

12.0 Desart Hall Youth Centre

The Kilkenny County Development Board highlighted that there is “an inadequate provision of youth services” in Kilkenny City¹³. Young people have a basic right to choose where, when or with whom they associate with. For a city youth population of just under 5000, the number of non-sport facilities is simply inadequate in providing young people with a reasonable level of choice to associate with and participate in. The development of Desart Hall Youth Centre is an integral part of an overall approach to provide a ‘Type 3 Youth Facility’¹⁴ for young people in Kilkenny City.



Youthink entertain the crowds on The Parade, Kilkenny to promote mental health awareness.

Appendix

¹ Work with Young People: Theory and Policy for Practice edited by Jason J Wood and Jean Hine 2009 Sage Publication: Chapter 19 Managing the Tensions by Mary Tyler

² Work with Young People: Theory and Policy for Practice edited by Jason J Wood and Jean Hine 2009 Sage Publication: Chapter 19 Managing the Tensions pg235 by Mary Tyler

³ National Action Plan for Social Exclusion 2007-2016. Government Publications

⁴ See Bradford, S. in Roche et al (2004) Youth In Society. 2nd Edition. Sage. Also, Bradford, S. in Harrison & Wise (2005) Working with Young People. Sage

⁵ See Spence, J., Devanney, C. & Noonan, K. (2006) Youth Work: Voices of practice: A Report by Durham University and the Weston Spirit. National Youth Agency.

⁶ National Institute for Restorative Practices (2008). Facilitator Skills Training Workbook.

⁷ Holland, J. (2008) Young People and Social Capital – What Can It Do for Us? Families and Social Capital Research Group

⁸ Article 12 in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. www.childrensrights.ie

⁹ The National Children’s Strategy – Our Children Their Lives. Government Publications. www.dohc.ie

¹⁰ Volunteering in the Republic of Ireland – Facts and Figures. www.volunteeringireland.ie

¹¹ Ingram & Harris (2005) Chapter: Defining Good Youth Work. Working with Young People. Sage.

¹² NQSF for Youth Work 2010. Office for the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs.

¹³ Source: Kilkenny 2002-2012. A Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development. Kilkenny County Development Board

¹⁴ Youth Café Toolkit. Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2010).

Delivering services is not something that just happens



Brian Barcoe representing Ossory Youth at the Youth Work Ireland Concensus Conference with Francis Fitzgerald, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

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I am greatly impressed with the fantastic and innovative range of youth work activities being provided by the many clubs, services and projects run by Ossory Youth and I wish to commend the entire organisation, led by your Chairman Pdraig Fleming and CEO Mary Mescal.

However being responsive and delivering quality services is not something which just happens. It requires planning. I am therefore delighted that Ossory Youth have been to the fore when it comes to multi-year strategic planning. This latest Strategic Plan sets out the vision and objectives of Ossory Youth for the next five years and provides a clear road-map for all involved. I commend everybody involved in the preparation of this Strategic Plan and I wish the organisation every success

in implementing its provisions over coming years.

“Ossory Youth have been to fore when it comes to multi-years strategic planning”

The need for forward-looking strategic planning does not just apply to local services. It applies to all of us, including the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. One of my Department’s immediate priority objectives is to prepare a high-level, overarching policy framework for Children & Young People, reflecting a coordinated, seamless approach to the whole-of-childhood and youth. This

will be followed by the preparation of three more detailed strategies for early years; middle childhood and youth.

We recently concluded a dynamic consultation campaign in which we received a large number of submissions relating to youth policy. This will help inform the strategic planning for the youth sector over the next five years.

The coming year will also see the ongoing progression of reforms to youth work funding stream to ensure that youth organisations such as Ossory Youth have the flexibility to refocus and prioritise, in particular in the context of the financial constraints facing us all.

The past year has seen the opening of many new youth cafés. I place a particular importance on the provision of youth cafés and the evidence I have seen from around the country proves the

benefit of providing such facilities for young people, in particular given the increased focus by Government on providing healthy, alcohol-free venues. I have secured additional capital funding for both 2012 and 2013 to support the continued development of new youth café facilities.

Finally, I believe that by working together we can continue to support our young people to achieve their aspirations, to become active and responsible citizens and to create a society we can all be proud of.

I wish Ossory Youth every success in your continuing good work and I look forward to working with your organisation and the broader youth sector over coming years.

Mission Statement

- **Ossory Youth is a Voluntary Youth Work Organisation, which has young people at its heart.**
- **Ossory Youth will provide the opportunities and environments where young people can grow, experience and learn.**
- **It will do this through a shared commitment to and understanding of Youth Work.**

Strategic Aims

Aim 1:

To journey with young people in a way that positively contributes to their lives and well-being.

How will we know that we are getting there?

One

We can demonstrate and articulate a rationale at all levels for who, why and how we work with young people (needs driven, evidence based & outcomes focused) while at the same not compromising on "how we see things"

Two

Our work with young people is characterised by a respectful relationship that acts as a conduit to support, challenge and motivate them to think, do, reflect & learn. (Youth Support & Development)

Three

Our work with young people can demonstrate value for money in terms of outcomes for young people, resources employed and its contribution to wider society. (National Children's Strategy)

Four

Our work with young people is integrated in the community and within the systems (i.e. family, peer group, education services, health services etc.) that young people interact and engage with throughout their lives.

Five

Our work is unique, creative and flexible enough to reflect the rhythm, moods, energy and pace of young people lives (reflecting the integrity of youth work principles and approaches).

Aim 2:

To attract and support Volunteers and enhance their time, energy and commitment so that there are sustained for the benefit of young people

How will we know that we are getting there?

One

Our work and ultimately the experience of young people will be the same whether it is delivered by volunteers or paid staff.

Two

We have clearly defined how the organisation works with volunteers to meet the needs of young people.

Three

We can demonstrate with clear and comprehensive policies that the organisation has attracted, trained, supported and monitored volunteers to realise our aims relating to young people.

Aim 3:

To ensure that the organisation is equipped to meet current and future challenges in the youth work sector.

How will we know that we are getting there?

One

All of our work with young people is continually needs driven, evidence based & outcomes focused.

Two

Our governance structures meet the statutory, legal & procedural requirement as set out under Company Law, funding requirements and best practice.

Three

The organisation protects and upholds the capacity of young people, staff and volunteers and affords the time for innovation, with sometimes unknown or uncertain outcomes.

Four

We are represented on key decision making fora locally, regionally and nationally.

Five

The "audit climate" in which we operate has not compromised "how we see things".



Youth Bank showcase their work through the art of film making.

Keeping the dream Alive!

Ellen Odette Cuffe, Countess of Desart, née Bischoffsheim (September 1, 1857 to June 29, 1933) married William Cuffe, the 4th Earl of Desart from Cuffgrange in 1881. She was the daughter of Henri Louis Bischoffsheim, a wealthy Jewish banker of German origin. Lady Desart was an unassuming woman, with drive and vision, and her acts and deeds saved lives by funding transport of Jewish Children from Berlin to Tel Aviv in 1933. She enhanced people's lives through providing facilities and buildings. Lady Desart funded the building of Kilkenny Library, Aut Even Hospital, Desart Hall, Kilkenny Theatre, Suspension Bridge, Talbots Inch and Kilkenny Woollen Mills.

Lady Desart's aspiration for Desart Hall was forward thinking and clearly articulates a vision that resonates with Ossory Youth's vision for young people



"It was not to be merely a lounge or a refuge from boredom for the youth of the town. It was to educate them in citizenship, to teach them responsibility towards each other, not merely as individuals but as a corporate body, to awaken in them a sense of independence of knowledge and dignity."

Lady Desart 1857 - 1933.

Ossory Youth has a duty to honour the legacy of Lady Desart by developing Desart Hall into a centre of excellence where young people can grow, develop, learn and provide a space that will serve generations of young people living in the diocese of Ossory.

Renovation of youth space

The development of Desart Hall, both the existing building and the planned extension began with the previous strategic plan and continues to be an integral part of the plan for the coming five years 2013-2017. Once the first floor became vacant in 2009, the Board and Staff were forthright in their belief that the space should be dedicated solely to meeting the needs of young people in the City and environs. Subsequently, the space has been developed into a top class youth centre hosting a fully functional youth café with free wifi, an acoustic stage, film club, poolroom, games room and performance space. The ground floor remains an administration hub to coordinate youth and community activities both City and County based, but the exciting development in the coming years is the planned extension of Desart Hall.

Ossory Youth has been granted full planning permission to almost double the size of Desart Hall by expanding into the carpark area and creating a part self-

sustaining youth centre that is linked to Desart Hall by an architecturally designed glass bridge. The youth population in Kilkenny City has grown significantly over the past number of years and continues to grow with what most commentators describe as a 'post Celtic Tiger baby boom'. The Board of Ossory Youth is intent on not only ring-fencing existing resources for young people but also future proofing Desart Hall for generations of young people to come. According to CEO Mary Mescal, "We always need to keep a few steps ahead. If the youth population keeps growing at the current rate, then we know from experience that what we are providing now will soon be inadequate for the sheer number of young people living in Kilkenny. And already, we are seeing a rise in the number of young people wanting to access our service." A significant challenge lies ahead in fundraising for the development. Maintaining Desart Hall alone as a building with 'architectural, historical, social and technical' significance whilst



making it an appealing space for young people has been a huge challenge and hugely rewarding. The challenge for the coming years in future proofing Desart Hall should not be underestimated. But then, neither should the needs of young people.



Why not volunteer in your local youth club

What would i get from it?

- Getting involved in your local community and getting to know people.
- Sense of fulfillment and fun working with young people in the area.
- Training will be provided and support offered to you by qualified staff.
- Good experience for you and your CV

Who could I Volunteer with?

- Ossory Youth have a number of different youth clubs throughout the diocese. (check our website www.ossoryyouth.com for a list of these clubs) Most youth clubs meet one evening a week for 2 hours.

What would be my role/responsibilities as a volunteer?

- You want to volunteer and like spending time with teenagers.
- Establishing good working relationships with the young people and other volunteers/staff.
- Good sense of humour and enjoy having fun.
- If you have any specific talents or interests that would be of benefit and/or interest to young people we would love to utilize that in our groups and clubs.
- Help plan activities and encourage participation in the club programme.

How much time would i need to give?

- 2 hrs per week –we ask that people commit for at least a 6 month period to have consistency for the young people and to be reliable and punctual

Anything else i should know?

- You must be willing to undertake Ossory Youth's 12 hour volunteer training programme.
- As we ask it of the young people it's only right the adults must comply to being friendly, courteous and accepting of each other.
- You will never be left with a group on your own.

How do i get involved? Where do i sign up?

- If interested or want more information contact Ossory Youth on (056) 7761200 or check out the club/ groups page on the website to contact the lead person.



FREE
WiFi™



VISIT US AT:
Desart Hall Youth Centre
New Street,
Kilkenny.

FILM CLUB

POOL PERFORMANCE

GAMES

PLAYSTATION

OPEN MIC

FULLY FUNCTIONAL CAFÉ AT REDUCED PRICES!

Youth Clubs in the Diocese of Ossory

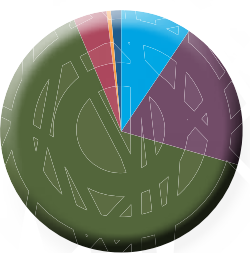
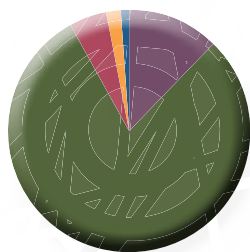
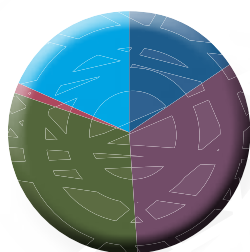
 **Ossory Youth HQ**

- 1 **Borris in Ossory Youth Club**
- 2 **Callan Street Arts**
- 3 **Clogh Summer Camp**
- 4 **Freshford Youth Club**
- 5 **Funstar Youth Club Johnswell**
- 6 **Goresbridge Youth Club**
- 7 **GB GALS Junior**
- 8 **Hugginstown Youth Club**
- 9 **Johnswell Youth Club**
- 10 **Kilmacow Youth Club**
- 11 **Moneenroe Gems Club**
- 12 **Mooncoin Youth Club**
- 13 **Mooncoin Outreach**
- 14 **Pals Youth Club Castlecomer**
- 15 **Slieverue Youth Club**
- 16 **Slieverue Outreach**
- 17 **Swan Youth Club**



AGE GROUPS

-  under 10yrs
-  10-14yrs
-  15-17yrs
-  18-20yrs
-  21-25
-  over 25



CLUBS

under 10yrs:	109 (59 male, 50 female)
10-14yrs:	229 (123 male, 106 female)
15-17yrs:	216 (120 male, 96 female)
18-20yrs:	10 (7 male, 3 female)
21-24yrs:	0
Over 25yrs:	126 (56 male, 68 female)

YOUTH INFO

under 10yrs:	0
10-14yrs:	229 (123 male, 106 female)
15-17yrs:	195 (150 male, 45 female)
18-20yrs:	1243 (687 male, 556 female)
21-24yrs:	80 (56 male, 24 female)
Over 25yrs:	29 (18 male, 11 female)

PROJECTS

under 10yrs:	113 (45 male, 68 female)
10-14yrs:	239 (123 male, 116 female)
15-17yrs:	760 (402 male, 358 female)
18-20yrs:	54 (28 male, 24 female)
21-24yrs:	7 (4 male, 3 female)
Over 25yrs:	14 (8 male, 6 female)

The H20 Group achieve their “Level 2 Sailing” in Castlewellan, Co. Down.



Programme Promoters

Thanks to the initiative of club volunteers and staff working side by side, a new programme has been developed to highlight the best of what young people have to offer. The concept of “Programme Promoters” was developed to enable young people in youth clubs gain more ownership and responsibility. The participants will be more active in decision-making and the running of their youth club and become active citizens in their own youth club and branch out within their community. “We’ve seen when young people are encouraged to play an active role in their youth club, they are also the same young people getting involved in Tidy Towns and other initiatives in their community.” says Martina Maher, coordinating staff member for the programme.

The role of the programme promoters is to ensure more awareness and promotion of their club activities and a more active role in the planning and delivery of activities. The programme promoters are also given the responsibility of being the young journalist for their youth club and have article/column space for monthly contributions to the youth club magazine. The leadership training the participants receive fosters greater confidence and skills in their role as a programme promoter and also provides an opportunity for the participants to critique and make changes to the club programme. According to Martina, “we see this as an important and more innovative direction for youth clubs to take in tapping into the potential of their young people and is the type of programme

we will be supporting volunteers to do more and more over the lifespan of this strategic plan.”

The programme promoters is an example of how Ossory Youth wants to support and positively influence a new generation of young people. As a result, their experience will contribute to their active participation in community life as adults and leaders. As Martina pointed out, “it’s not just about enabling young people to express their views; it’s about ensuring the wider society value their inclusion and opinion.”

WANTED

VOLUNTEERS

FOR YOUTH CLUBS IN
KILKENNY AND LAOIS
CONSIDERED ENTHUSIASTIC
AND FUN

REWARD

Sense of fulfillment and fun working with young people in your community
Training will be provided and support offered to you by qualified staff.

Good experience for you and your CV

CONTACT OSSORY YOUTH ON

(056) 7761200