

ANNUAL REPORT





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Introduction

NATIONAL

OUTCOMES

ACTIVE AND

HEALTHY

ECONOMIC

SECURITY

ACHIEVING

CONNECTED AND

RESPECTED

As the CEO of Ossory Youth, I am often humbled by the generosity of volunteers, as well as the achievements and successes of young people we work with. As you read through the Annual Report, I hope you too will see this 'generosity of spirit' reflected in every page. Over the past number of years, the Board has been determined to protect the energy, drive and commitment of young people and youth workers (voluntary and paid) against a backdrop of ever increasing bureaucratic measures. Indeed, if the frustrations of duplicate accounting formats and an ever increasing administration burden are not immediately obvious to those of you reflecting on 2014 with us, then we have done our job well and maintained the focus on what matters - outcomes for young people.

In that respect, 2014 was another busy year where we have endeavoured to allocate resources to where there is evidence of need and a desire for change. We were pleased to assist both the Graignamanagh and Rathdowney communities to access significant youth café funding through Pobail, raised our volunteer numbers to above the 150 mark, facilitated young people to create a Gay/Straight Alliance group called 'Open Door' and with the support of the HSE we began providing Family Functional Therapy, an evidence based response to adolescence experiencing difficulties within the family. We also increased our support to clubs with the addition of 'health checks' in preparation for the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) in 2015 and replaced the mini-bus after 11 years of service thanks to funding from the Department of Children & Youth affairs (DCYA) and the support of our local Carlow Kilkenny Education & Training Board (CKETB) Youth Officer.

So, against a backdrop of issues in the sector nationally, I am proud to say that in 2014, Ossory Youth continued to be forward thinking in its approach. Whilst our funders provide the fuel for our service, it is our young people, volunteers, staff, Board and colleagues from other agencies that ignite and drive the work every day. For that, I say thank you.

Mary



Highlights of 2014



- 18 young people spent 8 very special days on a youth pilgrimage in Taize, France with over 3000 young people from Europe and the rest of the world
- April marked the beginning of the "Open Door" youth group in Ossory Youth. Open Door is a gay-straight youth alliance
- 28 young people, volunteers and staff participated in the Cycle Against Suicide in April
- 7 unique community projects were successfully completed, with young people taking the time to improve their community, making it a better place to live
- A new beginners active group was developed to encourage teenagers to make healthier lifestyle choices. This group meets on a weekly basis to exercise, eat healthy and have fun!
- Our journalism/media group succeeded in making a short film, a promotional advertisement for the movie on KCLR and wrote a 2 page spread in the Kilkenny People, all over 10 weeks!
- 10 applicants took part in the "Work to Learn" Programme with 6 successfully completing their full work placement
- Ossory Youth won the inaugural Liam Behan Cup, a bilateral competition with Carlow Regional Youth Service comprising of 3 elements: pool, table-tennis and football
- Friday Night Youth Café members raised €155.50 for the Irish Cancer Society through a hilarious 'Shave or Dye' event!
- Sarah Gittens, our competitor in the Irish Youth Music Awards 2014, was the youngest to perform on the day. That was no barrier though as she came in the top three in the country in the song writing competition

- Ossory Youth was represented in the Kilkenny Arts Festival for the first time with an amazing week-long exhibition showcasing the work of approximately 30 young people
- 3 youth clubs came together to perform a flash mob at Youth Work Irelands' National Conference in Dublin Castle in October. 14 young people put on a fantastic performance to highlight the value of volunteerism
- A wet and cold December night saw 20 members of "Youthink" and "Open Door" sleep-out under the Town Hall in High Street from 8pm to 8am to raise awareness of homelessness and raise funds for Focus Ireland
- Our website underwent a revamp in 2014 and is now more interactive, informative and user friendly



Artist: Barry Smith Desart Hall Art Exhibition 2014

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Mission Statement

Ossory Youth is a voluntary youth work organisation, which has young people at its heart. We will provide the opportunities and environments where young people can grow, experience and learn 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.

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.

Aim 3: To ensure that the organisation is equipped to meet current and future challenges in the youth work sector.



Overview of 2014

As a Board, we are immensely proud that we were able to continue to deliver on our Strategic Plan in 2014, despite a further cut of 3.5% to our core funding and the adverse 'ripple effect' that has had on our capacity to deliver.

Youth clubs continue to be an integral part of what we do. We see first-hand the exceptional work of local volunteers, in local communities, providing spaces for local young people. As an organisation, we are committed to promoting youth clubs and volunteerism at local and national level. I am proud of a number of our youth club's involvement in the DCYA's Value for Money & Policy Review and how they articulated and evidenced the valuable contribution they make to their respective communities. Hugginstown, Johnswell, Moneenroe and Goresbridge have a lot to be proud of. Significantly, their contribution to that review has influenced thinking at national level and again highlights the importance and contribution of volunteers in youth work.

2014 saw the continued development of our individualised support programme for young people (Mentoring, Here for You) and highlighted to me that the economic downturn did not just affect adults. The nature and sources of referrals to the programme evidences a growing need to support young people who are struggling to cope with "normal" life. We said in our Strategic Plan that 'a cup of tea costs 13c, a conversation costs nothing' and we continue to hold that true.

I am overwhelmed by the development and progression of the school based 'Evolution' Programme and the level of reach that schools have afforded Ossory Youth, to roll out the programme to as many young people as possible. In 2013, we took the decision to increase the reach of our youth information service and focus our energy on where the need and demand was highest. I am delighted with the results so far and feedback from young people and teachers vindicates that decision.

This year more than ever, green shoots are beginning to appear regarding our economy. I welcome the end of a tough and arduous recession and am hopeful that young people can avail of more opportunities in all aspects of their lives. However, the Comprehensive Review on Spending 2014-2017, has indicated that funding to the youth sector will remain at the same level until at least 2017. Therefore, it is important to continue to build a service which is sustainable and affordable through the smart use of resources, increasing reach through a strong volunteer base, develop and maintain good relationships with other agencies and be clear and pragmatic about how, where and why we work.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our people; the Board for their unwavering commitment to the work of Ossory Youth, the energy of our young people and the dedication of our volunteers, partners and staff.

addaig Flemming

Padraig Fleming Chairperson of Ossory Youth



What our members have to say



"I really enjoyed the day out at the National Conference in Dublin Castle. The dance instructor was so nice and amazing at dancing! Doing the performance was so much fun and I made new friends. I totally enjoyed the whole experience."

Alana, Age 15

"The Community Awards was a huge commitment and we spent weeks working hard, but the results are amazing. The whole village were delighted with us. We made sure it was finished for the Communion so the whole area looked beautiful."







"I like playing pool on Friday nights and I liked the FIFA PlayStation game when it was there! I found making the robot arm interesting, especially the wires and motors. It was hard though and a bit slow but I actually liked it. It's fun here, there's a few good activities you can do here. I would like to change the two pool tables into one big snooker table though!"

Padraig, Age 15

"I really enjoyed taking part in the haunted house. It was so much fun decorating the different rooms and designing costumes but I mostly enjoyed scaring everyone I saw coming through the doors, especially all my family and friends."

Shannon, Age 15





"The art exhibition was a great way to display young people's creativity, while still being really professional and enjoyable. It was a fantastic opportunity for both the public and us artists. I loved being part of it." Anna, Age 16

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"From what perhaps began as a leap of faith, the pilgrimage to Taize became one of my greatest experiences. Meeting young people from across the world, bringing their cultures, ideas and enthusiasm, adding to the atmosphere, music and solitude that Taize has to offer, made my visit one which I will never forget."

Patrick, Age 17





"I originally started going to Ossory to attend the Media and Journalism course. The class got along well from the start and many of the people from it I'm still friends with today. I then did my transition year work experience in Ossory Youth which really was a big highlight to my year and something I will fondly look back on."

Ben, Age 17

"The Masterchef Competition is a great way to express yourself through cooking and to show off your talent. I love that it is done in a very friendly and stress-free atmosphere. I thoroughly enjoy it!"

David, Age 18





"I'm currently part of "The Minions" group but I was also part of HQ before. I have the best time of my life. You might be having the worst day but when you come in to group, all your problems go away. It's great to do something different each week and make new friends along the way. It's like a big family and we get to go on trips and work in the qarden on Saturdays together."

Tara, Age14

Desart Hall What's happening at a Glance

St Johns Youth Group

This group of young people can be seen in Desart Hall every Monday. The group provides a space where young people are supported through activities to build positive self-image, confidence and learn new skills. The group are very artistic and there were some fabulous funky pens, creative clay bowls and wicked wall décor created in 2014. The group also learned some amazing dance moves, baked plenty of tasty treats and learned a lot about health and beauty.

HQ

HQ had a busy year! They filled their Tuesday evenings with a wide range of activities. A health and fitness course saw the group trying out self-defence, yoga, nutrition and a trip to an outdoor adventure centre. There were some very crafty members in the group this year, we made everything from Valentines crafts to clay projects. Some of the HQ members got stuck into the Green Teen Garden project on Saturdays throughout the summer, lots of hard work and fun! Later in the year we completed the "Mission Transition" programme which is a four-week programme helping to ease the transition from sixth class to first year.

Minions

The group formally known as Sapphire welcomed some new faces this year and planned lots of new activities. Art was a big theme and the group designed, with the help of local artist Ross Stewart, a beautiful new welcoming 'Hello' mural, which can be seen on display in Youth Information.

The group chose 41 languages to say 'hello' in and various graffiti fonts to use. We chose to use material as our medium so that it can hang out from the wall and draw people in. Over Halloween the group went on a "spooky" camping trip down to Inistioge, which was a great outdoor experience. Some of the group got their hands dirty in the Green Teen Garden project also and prepared the whole area for planting.

Lunchtime Drop-in

Each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday during the school year, we operate a vibrant drop-in for secondary school students during their lunch break. In 2014 this was very popular and very busy with an average of 20-25 young people attending each day.

During the year it was very noticeable how much the skill levels of the participants have improved particularly in pool and table tennis. This has led to some 'friendly' competition between staff and young people with all-important "bragging" rights at stake. We have certainly given rise to a generation of pool and table tennis sharks!



Friday Night Youth Café

The youth café had another busy year, with average attendance maintained at approximately 35-40 young people. Paddy's domination of the table sports continued when he successfully won both the pool and table-tennis tournaments; a first in the history of the tournaments. Well done Paddy and congratulations to Timmy and Peter for coming second. Interestingly, the popularity of table-tennis has grown and we are pleased with the standard of play and rise in interest. Maybe it's because the playstation broke down!

Dylan continued to run the kitchen without fuss and his chips are getting a very good reputation! We were delighted to welcome two new volunteers on board – Nicole and Tommy. Along with Mairead, Declan, Marie and Joe we had a formidable team! Thanks to some brave young people, we managed to raise over €155 for the Irish Cancer Society by hosting a 'Shave or Dye' event. Well done to everyone involved.

The Intercultural Group held their meeting in parallel with the youth café and they were a great addition to the atmosphere of the café.

Saturday Youth Café

Desart Hall Youth café operated weekly from January to June and late September to December in 2014. The café is staffed each week by members of the Youthink youth group, but predominantly by two hugely dedicated young people in Rhiannon and Dylan- you guys are awesome!

It's a youth space for young people in Kilkenny city, with good food, live music and free wifi on Saturday afternoons.

Youthink

'Why can't young people in Kilkenny have someplace to exhibit their art during the Kilkenny Arts Festival'? That was the question posed by a member of 'Youthink' during a Saturday evening meeting early in the summer, and the result only four months later – an amazing week long exhibition of the work of approximately 30 young artists from Kilkenny during the Kilkenny Arts Festival.

Early in the year in February, over fifty young people gathered to discuss what it is like to be a LGBT young person growing up in Ireland today and the challenges facing them. The gang followed this event by organising a group of LGBT young people and friends to participate in the St Patricks Day parade. Within two months the Open Door gay-straight alliance group was up and running.



Youthink and Open Door organised an overnight sleep-out in Kilkenny Town Hall to raise awareness and funding for Focus Ireland. 20 young people and leaders spent 12 hours on High Street under the limited shelter provided by the Town Hall... brrrr!!!

Open Door

In developing our current strategic plan in 2013, we identified the need to actively and openly include LGBT young people in our work. Our approach, which is implied in the name was simply to broadcast to young people in Kilkenny that our door is open to LGBT young people and this began with our involvement in the St. Patrick's Day parade in March of this year.

We felt that if we are thoughtful and genuine in how we go about setting up this group, that the local need would become apparent. Once young people felt they could walk in the door, the rest was easy.We were right. The strength in Open Door is the young people involved in the group and the steering committee and why it has been growing in membership since April.



Intercultural Group

The Kilkenny Intercultural group comprises of young people from a diverse background, they are almost the United Nations of Ossory Youth. The members come from Sudan, The Philippines, Poland, Latvia, Nigeria, Ghana and Ireland. They meet every fortnight and talk about issues that affect them as young people in their communities, in particular racism/ discrimination and social inclusion issues. They also celebrate their cultures through dance, music and food.

Youth Service Programme What's it all about?

When young people were asked what did they gain from engaging in the youth service programme, they spoke about achievement, new skills, friendship, confidence and belonging. This is accomplished through projects that emphasise and encourage community involvement, creative expression, health & wellbeing and sports.

In 2014, Ossory Youth worked with 147 volunteers on a local level to ensure these opportunities were available to young people throughout the diocese, through direct project work and via youth clubs.

The youth service programme encourages young people to be more involved in their area and engage in activities and projects that have a positive impact on their lives and their community. This helps to foster a sense of belonging and ownership.

Their work has clearly demonstrated that young people have the ability and desire to positively contribute to life and wellbeing of their local communities. It is easy to underestimate the contributions of programmes like this, yet the experience will stand to each and every young person that participated.

There were 14 youth clubs in 12 communities affiliated in 2014 working with 480 young people, supported by 135 youth club volunteers. 12 volunteers give their time, expertise and efforts to working with our 14 youth groups and targeted work.

Mini Tops

Our annual talent competition was, once again, a success. A highly entertaining day in the Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny that saw 160 young people take to the stage to perform what they had spent months rehearsing. With singing, dancing, acting and music, there were some amazing routines. Our youth clubs are filled with talented young people and through the support of our volunteers; they can really put on a show! "It was my first year acting as a judge for the Mini Tops and wow, what a show! I know myself how much hard work goes into rehearsing, preparing and perfecting for those few

precious minutes on stage. The results were fantastic." Shauna McNamara, a first time judge in 2014, was truly impressed by our performers and paid tribute to the entertainment value of the show.

This was the first year we had junior and senior categories and it was fantastic to see the junior clubs being represented.



Ossory Games

The 2014 Ossory Games had eight different youth groups come together in the Watershed Kilkenny to battle it out in February for a coveted opportunity to represent in the National Games. 5-a-side soccer was the chosen game, with both male and female teams sweating out their best soccer skills in a bid to take home the gold!

The Mill Youth Club, Swan Youth Club and Freshford Girls Group went on to represent us in the Youth Work Ireland Programmes National Finals.

Kevin Higgins (Swan Youth Club) was delighted at the prospect of representing Ossory Youth at national level "It was great to win, a chance to represent at national level will be amazing. This was a great opportunity, I'm delighted". Jodie Dwyer of Hugginstown youth club summed up his feelings at the end of the day saying he was "banjaxed" which is probably a fair representation of all the teams, with the first match starting at 11am and the final finishing at 4pm.

We were really impressed with the team efforts shown all day long. Everyone gave it their all and it was great to see the combination of fun and competition with all the teams. A big thanks to Youth Work Ireland staff & volunteers from Ossory Youth for such a fantastic day.

Masterchef

The Masterchef competition brings the best chefs from each youth club and group together for a "cook-off" and a chance to bring home the Ossory Youth Michelin Star! They cook in pairs, meaning teamwork, communication and preparation are key. Leanne (Deenside Dolls) really enjoyed taking part "Coming second was brilliant, we were so nervous about entering but everyone was really nice. We got to taste everyone else's food and got loads of compliments on our cooking too. I'm really glad we did it."





WORKING TOGETHER TO DELIVER ON OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

Eight teams took part in the third year of this cooking competition, which was kindly hosted by Pobail Scoil Osrai. With ninety minutes to produce two courses, the teams had to work hard. However it was the delicious creations of Hugginstown Youth Club that came out on top.

Irish Youth Music Awards

We had a very successful engagement with the Irish Youth Music Awards (IYMAs) in 2014. This programme, as has been the case in our previous 7 running's, proved to be extremely popular with the young musicians and music fans of Kilkenny. There was extra excitement this year as the national final of the competition took place in the AVIVA stadium as part of Youth Work Ireland's National Programme..

"It was absolutely amazing to perform at the AVIVA stadium and to come in the top three of the competition topped off a brilliant day" Our representative Sarah Gittens (who was the youngest performer at the AVIVA) performed excellently on the day and did all in Kilkenny and Ossory Youth extremely proud. Well done Sarah.



Interclub Event

Our first inter-club bowling tournament took place in KBowl, Kilkenny at the end of March. With 70 young people taking part it was a great social mixer for members and leaders. There was plenty of competition and fun had by all.



Community Awards

Desart Hall played host to the second Community Awards event. The place was bustling with a sense of achievement and pride as youth club members, together with their youth leaders, family and friends from Mooncoin, Freshford, The Mill, Windgap, Hugginstown, Johnswell and Colaiste Mhuire presented their community projects to judges and a captive audience. The presentations from all seven groups clearly demonstrated that young people have the ability and desire to positively contribute to life and wellbeing of their local communities. All they need is encouragement support and affirmation. It is fantastic to see these young people take up the challenge of engaging in these projects. It's clear that the projects are a lot of hard work, but they jumped straight in and relished in the outcomes. This is our second year entering and we really enjoy it. The requirements are broad, allowing clubs to use creativity and innovation in choosing their projects," explained Paddy Daly, Mooncoin Youth Club Leader.



It is important that young people receive recognition for their work and we are very proud of what has been achieved by our clubs. We like to encourage our clubs to get involved and engage in active citizenship. We believe it helps to foster a sense of belonging and ownership. It is also their opportunity to give back to their neighbours, friends and communities. Thanks to Kilkenny Leader Partnership for sponsoring the event and in particular Alison Allan who has supported our youth clubs and projects in many ways providing encouragement,



"We see our youth clubs as the youth

service in that community, ensuring

high standard service provision"

Further work in 2014

Castlecomer Lads

2014 was a very busy year for the Castlecomer Lads Group. There were two definite stand-out activities. Participation in a soccer blitz in November in support of the 'kick it out' campaign, which aims to eradicate racism from all levels of football. The boys also participated in 'Cycle Against Suicide 2014'. As well as undergoing intensive training the lads cycled the leg from.

John Paul II Awards

In the Diocese of Ossory over 100 young people worked hard in their parishes and communities in 2014 for the John Paul II Awards. Clergy and parish personnel supported them in their work. Participants gained a better understanding of parish and communities life. Young people grew in confidence when given responsibility to develop new liturgy programmes, be actively involved in liturgy through music and singing and readings. Well-deserved awards were presented at a special ceremony in Ladywell Co. Laois in September.

School-based Work

During 2014, a selection of programmes were delivered by 4 staff in a number of secondary schools throughout Kilkenny City & County including Colaiste Mhuire Johnstown, Colaiste Pobail Osrai, Our Lady of Lourdes Rosbercon, St Kieran's College and CBS Secondary Kilkenny. All the programmes delivered in the schools were needs based and covered a variety of topics including peer education, building resilience & coping strategies, mental health, team building, faith based workshops, bullying and drug awareness.



Over 800 young people ranging in age from 12-18 years old, gained valuable life skills from these programmes. All programmes delivered enhance the work being carried out in the schools under the CSPE and SPHE curriculum.

"Evolution" is a peer education programme, designed to empower young people to become peer educators and raise awareness in their school community, throughout the school year. Transition/5th year students are trained over 4 days on topics of mental health, sexual health, drug awareness and campaign planning. They go on to deliver campaigns with their schools/ communities to highlight issues relevant to young people.

18 Transition year students from Colaiste Pobail Osrai completed the Evolution training during 2014 and showed significant personal development. 18 Transition Years students from Colaiste Mhuire Johnstown also completed their training and went on to deliver campaigns in their school on topics which included personal hygiene, drug awareness, a smile wall and internet safety. That's a lot to achieve in one year-phew!

Beginners Getting Active Group

The Beginners Active group was set up as a way of encouraging and empowering young people to make informed and healthier lifestyle choices. The aim is to get young people involved in being physically active in a fun way and to develop a routine around it.

Catering for all abilities and fitness levels, we work with young people to improve at their own pace, building confidence and strength. The group also learn how to create simple tasty and healthy snacks and receive advice and tips on how to improve their lifestyle and enjoy healthier choices. With ten young people getting involved in 2014, we envision this programme growing in strength and numbers. We're getting active and loving it!

Youth Information

During 2014, Youth Information provided a variety of services to young people and their parents, covering topics such as CAO & grant applications, cv preparation, mock interviews and career guidance. Youth Information provided information stands at the Iverk Piltown Show in August 2014, as part of their inaugural mental health services section and at the careers school fair in October in the Kilkenny Ormonde Hotel, where over 1000 second level students visited throughout the day. The centre also hosted a halloween fancy dress disco for youth clubs members and over 60 young people attended, we saw some very creative face paints!

Journalism/Media Programme

Journalism/Media workshops ran from March with a group of 14 young people from schools across Kilkenny City. The group was set up to give young people a "taster" of what it would be like to pursue a career in the area of media/journalism.

They covered many areas and you may have spotted them on the streets of Kilkenny filming 'Redheads' –a vox pop questioning of people on the streets about their opinions of redheads and hair colour.

The wonderful crew of KCLR spent a day teaching the group about how radio stations work and a behind the scenes look, as well as recording hilarious promo's with sound effects for their film 'Redheads'.



Mary Cody from the Kilkenny People guided their journalistic abilities and got the group to put their thinking caps on, providing them with some tips on being a great journalist. This was a fantastic programme that delivered on a promise to achieve a lot in ten weeks. A challenge for some young people but the achievement was worthy of the risk. One anonymous evaluation form summed up their feelings about the workshops "At first I was like, no way I'm not doing this!! But I am so glad I've done this course, I met great people with similar minds and a great team of people!"

Green Teen Youth Garden

Ossory Youth started the planning and transformation of a garden space behind the building that lay waste, into a vibrant funky upcycled garden for teenagers and groups in Kilkenny. It's a hands on project that involves young people spending

more time outside, learning how to upcycle from local waste material, being aware of their environment, seasons and having a new cool space to hang out in!

We talked to young people, got ideas and Dee Sewell from 'Greenside Up'. Dee took all our ideas away and drafted them into a professional garden vision plan that we started to work from.

We received an Amenity Grant from Kilkenny Borough Council which allowed us to start work in the garden in April, digging, replanting, clearing, mulching, putting down gravel, marking out allotments and clearing the whole space. We hope to continue work in the garden in 2015.

Our plan is to create an inclusive garden for and with youth groups, incorporating up-cycling and recycling, and low maintenance, with potential for projects over the coming years such as clay oven building,



Comhairle na nOg

In 2014, Ossory Youth was successful in its tender to facilitate Kilkenny's Comhairle na nÓg on behalf of Kilkenny County Council. With the support and backing of a strong and committed steering committee comprising of representatives from several agencies working with young people in Kilkenny, the Comhairle members worked hard on several topics concerning young people. Most significantly, the Mental Health School Flag Initiative was advanced to a point where a pilot could be rolled out in schools in 2015. They also organised an awareness campaign in the summer in conjunction with the promotion of "The Green Dog Walker's" initiative. The AGM was again a very successful and well attended event in October and combined with an additional youth conference on the UN Rights of the Child held in the Lyrath Hotel, the year turned out to be extremely busy and productive one. A contingent of members from Kilkenny were given the opportunity to showcase their valuable work at a national event in Croke Park in November with, which was attended by all 34 Comhairlí from around the country.

Where are they now?

On occasion, we have the pleasure of meeting or hearing from a young person who were part of our service at some point in their lives. And it never fails to interest us the choices they've made and directions they've taken. So this is our first year to share this experience and indeed evidence the impact youth work can have.

This email we received from Gary Cooke (aged 23)

"I know its been a long time since I checked in with Ossory Youth, but I am not back in Kilkenny too often. I wanted to let you know where I am at the moment and just to say thanks to all those at Ossory Youth for the help you gave me as a young person and encouraged me to get involved with things during my secondary school time.

I stayed active during my time in college getting involved in a number of different programmes and societies, going on to being auditor of the mechanical engineering society and getting an internship and involved in the community in San Diego when I studied abroad. Currently I am on the Board of Directors for an Intercultural Learning Organisation in Cork.

This varied involvement has all shaped who I am today but I think it really all started when I went to the local conference with Voice4Youth and when I first applied and got through the interview to be part of the group. This really showed me I could make a difference and how much I enjoyed being involved.

I have kept this up and I have been accepted onto the Washington Ireland Program for leadership and service. This is a really great opportunity where I spend two months over the summer in Washington D.C. interning and completing service projects.

I am after being offered a job in London to work in the railway industry following the dream I always had. I will be heading there in September. I don't think I would of got either of these two roles with out the opportunity I got back in Ossory Youth almost ten years ago."

Youth Clubs

Youth clubs are a sustainable response to local needs of young people. Our youth clubs offer a comfortable and safe space within the local community where young people can meet and socialise in a supervised and supportive manner. In 2014, we worked with 480 young people in fourteen youth clubs.

We introduced "youth club health checks" this year, as a method of providing additional, individual, tailored support to our clubs. In keeping with our Strategic Plan, we see our youth clubs as the youth service in that community and in working with our volunteers we can ensure high standard service provision.

The NQSF for volunteer led youth groups was introduced late in 2014, this began a process for all of our clubs to reflect, evaluate and plan for progression and improvements. All youth clubs will have submitted their first progress report and annual plan in 2015.



What our youth clubs have got up to in 2014

Hiking Challenge

Last year our club decided to try something different something that would challenge us and give us a new experience. After some discussion and brainstorming we came up with the idea of climbing Corran Tuathail in County Kerry, Ireland's highest peak. We were all very excited about taking on this challenge but we were also very aware that funding was needed and more importantly our gang needed to be fit and ready!



We kicked off with our walking/trekking in early May visiting Tullahought loop walk and Tory Hill. We quickly moved on to Brandon Hill in Graignamanagh, a beautiful scenic trek. Unfortunately for us it was wet and misty, but that did not dampen the spirits of the group. We had great craic and laughter as everyone was encouraged to reach the top. Our sights were now moving to Slieve Na mBan and the Comeraghs. Now the climbs were getting real and tough. I smile when I remember us all struggling in the rain and one of the "hardy lads" saying "where is the craic gone now", yet part of the struggle that day brought the group closer.

Finally our day had arrived. A group of 25 departed from the community hall at 6am. Thanks to a wonderful community we

had managed to raise enough funds to pay all our expenses. The level of interest in our climb was such that in spirit our local community were coming up the mountain with us.

We commenced our climb at 11.30 amidst laughter and jokes. We were lucky the sun shone and it was a beautiful day. Everywhere we looked the most wonderful scenery that even made the most sceptical young people look in awe. After two hours climbing we were now on a continuous uphill using our arms to pull our bodyweight up. After three hours some were struggling and doubting their ability to go on. We took this on as a group and that is how we went up the mountain "as a group" encouraging, pushing, pulling, shouting, crying, and laughing. After four and a half hours we reached the top. Words can't describe the feelings when we saw the cross and realised we had made it. There were shouts, cheers, fists punching the air and hugs. It was amazing and suddenly nobody was tired, there was a great adrenalin rush of joy and achievement.

This was a very special day a highlight in all our lives, one that will stand high in our memory box. It was so worthwhile and a magic way to get to really know young people.





Christmas Fair

When our youth club starts back every September, the top two events that are mentioned by the members are the Mini Tops and the Christmas Fair. The Christmas Fair is held yearly in our community hall. It's a big event for the club, as it's a great fundraiser. We had a big group discussion about what we'd be selling, the easiest things to make and what would bring in the most money. The members came up with some great ideas such as a cake sale, making decorations, and selling bric-a-brac, so we decided to do a combination of everything!

There is another reason we like getting involved in the fair besides raising money; we find that it's great for bonding and team building. We made reindeer heads, which held reindeer food, we also made up sweet cups and three hampers to raffle. Everyone got involved and it was great fun.

The night before the fair we had a meeting. The members drew up a rota of who was doing what and the different times they could do. The day itself was fabulous. We had Christmas music blaring and everyone had Christmas hats on and really got involved. All in all, the Christmas Fair is one of the best events in our club calendar year both as a fundraiser and a group project.

Summer Barbeque

Our Annual Barbeque was held this year on Sunday 3rd August. This has now become a very popular event on the summer calendar for all our members and the local public as well. It is advertised as "everyone welcome to sing a song, play a tune and join in the fun!!" This is indeed what happens. It has taken on a life of its own, where young and not so young join together to enjoy lovely food and entertainment.

Music this year was supplied by local artists and friends along with plenty of action from our own youth club members. All food was supplied by local shops and butchers and cooked by our own very capable leaders!

It was a great evening of music, craic and tasty food. Parents, leaders and friends enjoyed the session and joined in with plenty of songs to keep the craic going. Our own youth members also kept the flag flying and showed off their on-stage talents brilliantly. A large crowd attended and while it was a great social event to finish up our youth club year, it also was a very good and welcome fundraiser.

On evenings such as these it makes members, leaders and supporters alike very proud of our youth club.

Ice-cream Day

Our youth club members first made the decision to support Down Syndrome Ireland as their fundraiser in 2013. As it was such a success, they decided to do it every year!

Our "Ice-cream Day", in association with Hazelbrook Farm, took place in the GAA field during the primary schools sports day in June. All members of our youth club took part. Everyone was given a time to sell the ice-creams. It is a great day for all involved while supporting a very worthy cause.



2000 PASSENGER JOURNEYS WERE MADE ON THE OSORY YOUTH MINI-BUS IN 2014 31,234km TRAVELLED BY STAFF IN 2014

4866 VOUNT EERS SPENT TAFF AND VOLUNT EERS SPENT 15,5,57,3 VOUNT EERS SPENT

WORKING DIRECTLY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

5,997 PEOPLE VISITED OUR NEW 'MOBILE RESPONSIVE' OSSORYYOUTH.COM WEBSITE IN 2014

. .

105% INCREASE ON THE PREVIOUS YEAR

24-Hour Stay Awake

This year we held our first 24-hour stay awake fundraiser with our junior group. The group had decided that they wanted to go to Courtown Adventure Centre and the 24hour stay awake had worked well as a fundraiser in previous years. In the weeks leading up to the event the members were asked what sort of games and activities they wanted to take part in on the night, as well as the most important question for everyone taking part; what food they'd be eating. It was a great success with all the youths and leaders having a great night and ending up a little sleepy!

The funds raised went towards the trip to Courtown. It was a great success with everyone commenting on how great a day out it was. The young people and leaders took part in many different activities including a sky-walk, rock climbing, leap of faith, archery, zipwire, and we used the swimming pool to chill out after a crazy day. Coming home on the bus was pretty quite as mostly everyone was exhausted, although everyone did manage to sing a few lines of "the wheels on the bus"....

Fundraiser for Temple Street

After hearing an appeal on the radio for Temple Street, the junior leaders decided to fundraise for the hospital.

It was agreed to hold a Halloween party for all the primary school children in our area. We put up posters and sent out flyers to all the schools near our village. The club members really enjoyed organising the various activities and games for the party, such as bobbing for apples, pin the wart on the witch, guess what's in the bucket, dress the mummy and many more. We also organised an inflatable slide from Airmax Inflatable's, which was a great hit with all the children. Everyone had to arrive in fancy dress so our junior leaders had the very difficult task of picking a winner in the children's category and the adult's category. The party was a great success and the children asked for the youth club to run one again next year.

Trip to Pirates Cove

As a new club we had to plan our first summer outing in July and the ideas from members were wide and varied; from trips to Disneyland to camping in the wild! After a lot of research we settled on a day trip to Pirates Cove in Courtown, Co.Wexford. When we showed the club members the Pirates Cove's website they were thrilled with the activities we had planned, such as crazy golf, bowling, boating and food.

We set out at 9am with 25 members and 10 leaders and all the talk of who was going to win at the golf and bowling. With over an hour and a half of crazy golf, the competition was fierce and every shot was counted! Then it was time for a break and all welcomed the nuggets, sausages and chips. With full tummy's it was on to the ten pin bowling competition. After that the kids played the arcade games, bumper boats, bubble rollers & karting. Back on the bus the leaders had a well-earned rest and the kids sang all the way home.



Targeted youth work

COMPASS Garda Youth Diversion Project

The project worked to support 34 young people over the course of the year, to make positive changes in their lives. We are proud to say the majority did, even in small ways.

10 young people started their placements on the 'Work to Learn' programme and 6 completed their placements fully. Declan continued to run the Friday night soccer and the huge weekly attendance is testimony to his efforts. Fair play Declan! Winning the inaugural Liam Behan Cup with Carlow Regional Youth Services was a highlight for the players and hopefully we can retain the cup in 2015.

We were extremely pleased to support the mentoring programme again this year and the benefits it has brought to individual young people who looked for some extra support over the year. Juvenile Liaison Officer Kieran Scanlon and Garda Aidan Fitzpatrick continued to put in a massive effort in assisting the work of the project and for that we have to say a huge thanks.

We also could not run the 'Work to Learn' programme without the support of Statestreet so thanks Shane and Paul! Finally, 2014 saw the conclusion of our work with the Irish Youth Justice Service trials. It was a very interesting and informative process that should benefit our work and the outcomes for young people in the long run.

Kilkenny Drugs Initiative

By the end of 2014 KDI worked with 90 individual cases. All of the service users received individualised support in tackling substance misuse. Many received opportunities for further personal development, employability, education and making healthy life choices.

KDI also delivered a total of 5 educational workshops and awareness events across Co Kilkenny.


Mentoring Programme

The programme saw 10 young people receiving one to one support during the year. With a panel of 12 volunteer mentors, we were well positioned to accommodate every young person who sought support so we are very pleased with that. However we want to do more and continue to build this aspect of our service going into 2015.

Functional Family Therapy

In 2014, 15 families engaged with Ossory Youth through Functional Family Therapy. The vast majority of these families completed the programme and achieved a number of outcomes as a result. In a very significant number of cases, young people from these families went on to receive further support through other initiatives on offer in Ossory Youth.

Recovery Support Group

The Kilkenny Recovery Support Group grew in strength over 2014. With educational workshops and a variety of social events occurring over the year which included pitch and putt, sea fishing, candle making and a visit from the Reptile village in Gowran. The highlight of the year has to be the groups attendance at the 3rd Annual Recovery Walk in Dublin.

Support of Lifeline Kilkenny

Lifeline has had a busy 2014, it was the first full year of implementation of "Our Community; Our Conversation-County Kilkenny Action Plan for Suicide Prevention 2014-18".

Among the projects supported by Lifeline in 2014 was 'Rhyme Rag'. This was a creative writing collaboration with Kilkenny County Council's Arts Office. It resulted in a huge participation from young people.

Lifeline supported a number of community training initiatives in association with a number of partners e.g. Survive (SoS) and Wellness Recovery Action Programme (WRAP).

The Mental Health Flag Project for schools is due to commence formally on a pilot basis in 3 Kilkenny schools in 2015.



In March, Lifeline welcomed Minister Kathleen Lynch, Department of Health, with special responsibility for Mental Health to Kilkenny. In October, Lifeline took part in events to mark World Mental Health Week. The week culminated with the Magenta Ball this was led by Trish Finegan and raised €12,000 for Lifeline.

Through ESB Electric AID, Lifeline secured €5,500 in funding to support the work of Kilkenny Bereavement Support Services. The Forum undertook a review of its work in 2014. This allowed Lifeline the opportunity to participate in new local government structures and ensured that mental wellbeing and suicide prevention initiatives could be placed on the agenda for the first time within the new Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's) and in developing local economic and community plans.

Stories of Interest

Work to Learn

Work to Learn is a programme, which enables young people to engage in a meaningful employment placement. This programme is coordinated by Compass GYDP and is currently in its fourth year.

Within this programme young people get the opportunity to practice the steps associated with seeking employment. They create a CV and submit an application form to Compass GYDP. With support from An Garda Siochana and State Street, young people are interviewed. If they are successful at this stage, they are placed in an employment role of their choice. In 2014, 9 young people were placed in a wide variety of roles. The support from local employers over the last 4 years has been crucial to the success of this programme and we have been fortunate to access employers who are willing to genuinely engage with young people. A huge thank you to State Street who have continued to fund this programme since its beginning.

Beginners Getting Active Group

Being aware of the unhealthy lifestyle epidemic in Ireland, in particular amongst teenagers, Ossory Youth decided to develop a project that would educate young people to enable them to tackle this issue for themselves.



Programmes such as "The Biggest Loser", "A year to save my Life" and "Irelands Fittest Family" have highlighted the importance of an active healthy lifestyle and brought the issues associated with eating unhealthy and lack of exercising into each living room. In Ireland the numbers of young people who are significantly overweight have trebled over the past decade and is rising at a rate of over 10,000 per year.

We believe that with the right programme, we can be successful in promoting healthy and active lifestyles among teenagers to address these issues.

In line with the national guidelines on physical activity for Ireland, the group participate in running, toning and core exercises. We really wanted to do this in a fun way, it is essential to us that the young people involved have an enjoyable experience of physical activity and place a positive value on it, so as to encourage them to integrate it into their weekly routine.

The group learn how to create simple tasty and healthy snacks and receive advice and tips on how to improve their lifestyle and enjoy healthier choices. Knowledge is power. In educating young people we are enabling them to make a lifestyle choice, not a quick fix solution. It needs to be maintainable and long term and this is a consistent aspect of the programme.

In 2014 we had 10 young people attending. We envisage this programme will grow in numbers in 2015.

Dog Training Programme

Ossory Youth ran its third dog-training programme in 2014, in collaboration with the Kilkenny Dog Training Club and PAWs animal rescue in Mullinahone. Participants travel to PAWs to work with an assigned dog for 6 weeks. Under the watchful eye of dog trainer Billy O'Hara, they are shown how to work with the dogs using positive reinforcement to achieve simple training goals such as gaining the dogs attention, sit, stay, come and walk at heel.

All this is designed to help the dogs to find a good home. Participants gain very valuable experience and knowledge about how to train a dog, joy from developing a relationship with and helping the dog they work with and personal development by gaining an understanding and appreciation for positive reinforcement as a way of achieving their personal goals in other areas of their lives.

It's not all hands on though. Each training session is followed by a theory session where Jimmy and Billy from the Kilkenny Dog Training Club guide the participants through different aspects of dog care, training and all things to do with dogs. The programme was extended in 2014 to include dog grooming. Amy from PAWs showed participants tools used for dog grooming and how to use them on a variety of dogs from huskies to greyhounds to terriers.



Cycle Against Suicide

A group of 28 set out early on the 29th April to Carlow to start our journey on the Cycle Against Suicide. With young people coming from 4 different groups, it was fantastic to see the energy and buzz around such a great cause. Arriving in St Leos College in Carlow, a well-organised team had us registered and kitted out in our t-shirts in no time. We sat down in a crowd of 500 and listened to amazing speeches which portrayed personal battles, journeys, successes and sadness.

A 40km cycle took us in to Kilkenny where we hosted a party for all the cyclists from Ossory Youth and Carlow Youth Service. An amazing project which involved weeks of training, meeting new people, achieving goals and experiencing something very different indeed.

Open Door

Open Door, which is Ossory Youths' gay/straight alliance (GSA) youth group, recently celebrated its 1st Birthday. What a first year it has been!

In early 2014, Youthink brought their own focus to LGBT issues owing from the fact that some of the members were gay or had gay friends.

The group arranged an information evening entitled "Hearts Not Parts". Over 50 LGBT young people and their friends gathered to hear discussions around what it is like to be a LGBT young person growing up in Ireland today and the social and legal issues facing them.

The evening also confirmed for Ossory Youth the extent and depth of the demand for improved LGBT youth services in Kilkenny. Almost immediately, a steering committee was formed. After a number of constructive meetings, the committee decided to form a new group under the Gay/Straight alliance model. This model allows both LGBT young people and their friends to join and so strengthens the entire support network, while also removing the barrier to entry for some young people who are not yet comfortable enough to join an exclusive LGBT youth group.



Our first event took place at the St. Patricks Day Parade. The 50 person strong group was highly visible with Open Door banners, drummers and a 70ft rainbow flag. It served as a great platform to announce the arrival of the new youth group.

Open Door had its first meeting in April and the numbers have been climbing steadily. We have had over 20 members throughout the life of the group so far which the majority of those attending regularly.

Since then we have staffed an LGBT information stand in the Light colour sound music festival in Kilkenny. We also raised over €1300 in a sponsored sleep-out in the Town Hall to benefit Focus Ireland. We have hosted a number of parties for members and their friends.

Most importantly, the group has provided the support to a number of young members who have come-out during the year and a guaranteed safe place where they can talk about the issues they encounter as a young LGBT person.

Taize Pilgrimage

Early on Sunday morning 17th August, 18 young people aged 16-18, from throughout the diocese of Ossory, set out on a long journey to Taize in eastern France. Amazingly, at the same time, about 3000 other young people from throughout Europe, were also travelling to Taize and all about to spend the next week together.

What drew them all to a small village on the hill in rural France was the Taize Community, which is an ecumenical, monastic order composed of about one hundred brothers, from Protestant and Catholic traditions, who originate from around 30 countries across the world.

The eight days there followed a similar pattern; thousands of young people filling the huge church three times each day for masses adorned by the famous Taize chants, taking part in smaller groups such as choir practice, having time for some reflection in the 'silent garden', never having as much fun queuing for food while all the time meeting and getting to know young people from throughout Europe in a week of gorgeous sunshine.

The group came home saying that the Taize 'experience' was indescribable as no words adequately captured the essence of the place.



"I feel the best way to give back is to try to provide help and support to others, even if its just to be a listening ear"

"My name is Tommy Dowling and I'm a leader in Robertshill youth club. From the outset I was involved in the setting up and running of the youth club. Obviously I was faced with many challenges being 16 when I started. I was the youngest leader and I was unsure if my opinions would be taken on board and if the members of the club would accept me as a leader. I mostly enjoy the major events throughout the year that the club take part in. This year I assisted in organising the Mini Tops show and entering a soccer team in the Ossory Games. I also gained experience by setting up and running a Youth Club website. I believe I've gained respect and made good connections in the club, community and beyond. I would highly recommend anyone to partake in their local Youth Club wherever possible."

Tommy, Junior Leader

"Ossory Youth asked for a volunteer to help out on a Thursday night with a new project they were looking to run. As I already volunteer with our local youth club it was a chance for me to gain more experience to take back to our own club. I've learned so much about myself since I started, and seeing the progress achieved by all the members of the group is something I couldn't be more proud of. It can be hard work at times but the team in Ossory Youth are a constant source of motivation to keep pushing myself to achieve more."

Shane, Active Group Volunteer





What our volunteers have to say

"I was so delighted that our members were asked to participate in the flash mob. They each gave a huge commitment to the event and attended weekly dance classes, which they thoroughly enjoyed. The day of the flash mob was something special for our members. They loved meeting other young people from different communities.

They had a real sense of achievement at the end."

Rachel, Youth Club Volunteer



"Through volunteering with Lifeline: County Kilkennys Suicide Prevention Forum, I have discovered a wealth of organisations in Kilkenny improving the lives of people with poor mental health. I have met and worked alongside some amazing people not least the youth of Comhairle na nÓg and their Mental Health Flag project. I have been encouraged and at times overwhelmed by the generosity of businesses and individuals in Kilkenny when fundraising for Lifeline. I look forward to 2015 to continuing the work of Lifeline, to reduce the incidences of suicide and improve the mental health of everyone in County Kilkenny."





Trish, Lifeline Volunteer

"I feel the best way to give back is to try to provide help and support to others even if its just to be a listening ear. The mentoring programme has helped me to develop and grow as a person through gaining new experiences"

Criostal, Mentoring Volunteer

"I have had a brilliant, fun year with our youth club, trying new activities. It's so great to be part of a team that is making such a difference, and making so many young people happy. Isn't that worth two hours a week!" Breda, Youth Club Volunteer





"I really enjoy volunteering in Ossory Youth as I love spending time with young people. However at the beginning I found it difficult to engage with the young people but with the help and encouragement of other staff and volunteers I feel more confident and right at home now and look forward to friday nights."

Nicole, Minions Volunteer

Why young people come to Ossory Youth?



Training

In 2014, we provided 7 training programmes for 53 volunteers along with Safe Guarding Training for 35 parish representatives.

The training calendar in 2014 included the following:

- Youth Club Volunteer Training
- Volunteer Assistant Training
- Safe Talk Training
- Challenging Behaviour Workshop
- Safeguarding Training
- Train the Trainer
- Motivational Interviewing
- Mediation and Consensus Building

Some Feedback from training delivered in 2014:

"The training was great, it was easy and enjoyable with a good atmosphere and well put together. I got to meet some new like-minded people and got some new ideas for fundraising"

"It made me think about my reactions to situations as a leader and raised valid points for me to think about"

"I now have a good understanding of Ossory Youth and the supports they can and will give to rural areas."

"I really enjoyed the interaction and the method of teaching. I gained an understanding and awareness of myself in difficult situations. It has strengthened my ability as a leader"

"This has made me want to be a volunteer even more"

"I gained reassurance that we are on the right road. Its great to have confidence knowing the help is there if needed."

"I'm feeling more empowered"

"I liked how it got me thinking how I could handle situations differently"

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2014

ASSETS EMPLOYMENT

	31ST DEC 2014	31ST DEC 2013
FIXED ASSETS Tangible assets	€325,894	€299,837
CURRENT ASSETS Debtors	€9,741	€24,171
Cash at Bank	€153,224	€ 137,089
	€162,965	€161,260
CREDITORS (Amounts Falling Due Within One Year)	(€43,163)	(€57,961)
NET CUREENT ASSETS	€119,802	€103,299
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CUREENT LIABILITIES	€445,969	€403,136
CAPITAL GRANTS DEFERRI	D (€57,052)	
CREDITORS (Amounts Falling Due After One Year)	_(€82,483)	(€97,180)
NET ASSETS	€306,161	€305,956
RESERVES		
ACCUMULATED SUPLUS	€306,161	€305,956
	€306,161	€305,956
On Behalf of the Board	Padraig Flemming Liz Dermody	

Date: 30th March 2015



Dept. of Children and Youth Affairs	39.2%	
Programmes Income	4%	
Kilkenny Womens Network	1.7%	
Other	6.7%	
Use of Facilitles	2.64%	
State Street	0.93%	
Dept. of Justice, Equality, Law Reform	15.5%	
Kilkenny County Council	1.5%	
Diocese	3.5%	
Donations	0.9%	
Dept. of Health	17.5%	
Youth Service Grant	5.8%	







OSSORY YOUTH STAFF

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FUNDERS 2014

Department Of Children & Youth Affairs
Irish Youth Justice Service (Inclusive Of ESF Funding)
HSE
Diocese of Ossory
Statestreet
ESB
South East Regional Drugs Task Force
Kilkenny Borough Council
Kilkenny County Council
Kilkenny VEC





ossory 🛞 youth

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Transforming Ireland



