

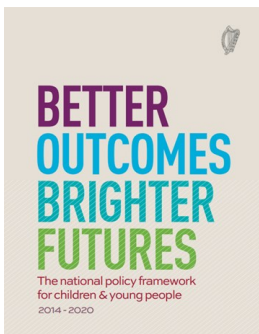
The Annual Information and Networking Event for Comhairle na nÓg Organisers Gresham Hotel, 7 May 2014



Comhairle na nÓg
Young Voices. Local Issues.

The annual information and networking event for Comhairle na nÓg organisers was held on 7 May 2014 in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin. This year the event focused on linking with schools and guidance on working on the topic of mental health.

Secretary General of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Jim Breslin gave an opening address and presented the recently launched "Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the national policy framework for children and young people" to the Comhairle na nÓg organisers. He highlighted where the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive fit into the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium and noted that this framework is for all of Government.



Following Jim Breslin's presentation, Anne O'Donnell, Head of Citizen Participation, Play, Recreation and Culture, presented on the development of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's participation in decision making. She spoke about how the strategy has been formulated and about the model of participation that the Department use.

Ciara Mc Garry Quinn, Coordinator of the Longford Comhairle na nÓg, and Clive Byrne, Director of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals, both presented on linking with schools. Ciara spoke from the perspective of a coordinator and gave some practical tips about getting buy-in from schools, including giving back to them through workshops in the schools.

Clive Byrne spoke from the experience of being a principal himself. He encouraged coordinators to engage with schools in multiple ways. He was surprised that there has been an issue with young people being marked as "absent" when involved in Comhairle- related work and committed to looking into that.

Participants took part in group discussions on 'linking with schools'. They looked at two questions: 'What works well?' and 'What are the challenges?'. For a summary of the responses please see p. 2 of this report.

Martin Donohoe presented the results of the Coordinator's Survey and the responses he and the other Participation Officers are piloting (see p.4).

Professor Louise Gallagher, Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Dr Gillian O'Brien, Director of Training and Education in Headstrong, gave some guidance on working on the topic of Mental Health (see p.3)

The final session of the day looked at the National Showcase event and participants were asked for their ideas on how to best get the information out to delegates and how to engage decision makers to attend the event (see p.3).



Linking with schools

What works well?

Below is a summary of the main points that came out of the discussions (for the full comprehensive list see the Coordinators Corner of the website).

- * Good working relationships— take time to build relationship with principal/ teachers
- * Keep trying/have continuous communication— personal contact and follow up phone calls are essential
- * Try to identify a designated Comhairle teacher
- * Send a physical information pack about Comhairle na nÓg and the AGM to each school
- * Time your AGM well—try and suit the schools
- * Comhairle members link with their own schools
- * Be specific in the group that you recruit (ie. Age, gender)
- * Have a database of contacts
- * Have events in your Comhairle throughout the year to promote Comhairle to the wider community of



Challenges

- * The biggest challenge identified during the discussions was getting schools to identify a balanced, representative group of young people to attend the AGM and not just cherry picking from the student council
- * Resource issues—both school and Comhairle
- * There are geographic challenges
- * Transport issues—child protection
- * Building relationships with schools is very time consuming and resources are limited



- * Lack of guidance from Department of Education/ DCYA—make Comhairle an obligation for schools
- * Inconsistent commitment from students and teachers
- * Competing / busy schedules in schools and for the young people
- * Image of Comhairle na nÓg
- * Lack of awareness of Comhairle na nÓg

Note: For full list of ideas from these discussions please go to coordinators corner:
<http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/resources/coordinators-corner/>

Guidance on working on the topic of mental

Professor Louise Gallagher, Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Trinity College Dublin, and Dr Gillian O'Brien, Director of Training and Education, Headstrong, presented to the Comhairle Organisers' about how to approach the topic of Mental Health.

Professor Gallagher spoke about her experience of working with young people who have accessed mental health services. Prof. Gallagher has a clinical practice which deals with autism spectrum disorders and provides a pre-school assessment service in the National Children's Hospital and a community based Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service in Clondalkin.

Dr O'Brien spoke about her work with Headstrong, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health in Ireland. She spoke about the importance of promoting One Good Adult for young people in Ireland. We know that the presence of One Good Adult in a young person's life has a positive influence on their mental health. Be it a parent, teacher, football coach or school bus driver, we all have a role in supporting the young people around us.



Evidence from the My World Survey (Dooley & Fitzpatrick, 2012), highlights the positive influence that One Good Adult can have in the lives of young people. 70% of young people growing up in Ireland today said they receive high or very high support from One Good Adult. These young people in turn are more connected to others, more self-confident, future looking and better able to cope with difficulties than those young people who reported that they did not have the support of One Good Adult.

Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase

The National Showcase 2014 will be held in Croke Park on 20 November. At the Annual Information and Networking Event the Comhairle organisers discussed and gave feedback on two important aspects of the event. Below is a summary of the feedback:

(1) How can young people be better informed in advance of the Showcase? What do we all need to do differently?

- * Earlier preparation is key: having the display boards well in advance; POs to inform young people on what to expect from the event; know what photos, videos and other information is needed by participation team for the event well in advance
- * Having a clear and concise agenda in

advance of the event,

- * Coordinators to put the Showcase on their meeting agendas from now until event.
- (2) How can Comhairle organisers and the DCYA get more adult decision-makers to attend?
- * Have a set time in agenda for decision-makers to attend
 - * Showcase work of CNN at local level first
 - * Have a mid-week date (not Friday)
 - * Incentivise them - coordinate other reason for decision-makers to be there (eg. A meeting)



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of
Children and Youth Affairs



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Visit us at:
www.comhairlenanog.ie
Please check out the
coordinators corner
and interactive forum

Participation Officers Presentation

Senior Participation Officer, Martin Donohoe, made the presentation on behalf of the three Participation Officers.

The presentation focussed on the results of the Coordinators survey in 2013 and the responses to the survey from the participation team.

- * 30.4% of respondents said that there are additional services that the Participation Officers could provide to support their Comhairle. See table below for a summary of what was asked and what the responses have been.
- * 75% feel that the Comhairle na nÓg is seen locally as a Consultative Forum
- * 100% of respondents answered "yes" that they feel the young people are working on topics which are most important to them

For a copy of this presentation and the other presentations from the event please go to the coordinators corner of www.comhairlenanog.ie.

What you've asked for:	Our responses:
Linking Comhairle na nÓg together who have worked on similar topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The Coordinators' corner on the new Comhairle na nÓg website - in particular the forum ·New regional networking events
Regional networking events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Piloting new regional networking events - beginning with Leinster in July, Connaught/Ulster in September and Munster in September. Events will be informal chat setting where Comhairle Organisers can set the agenda for discussion ·This can also be an opportunity to chat in person about progressing the topics amongst other topical issues
More training programmes on facilitation skills and for adults working with young people on committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There will be two days of training in September 2014 covering the usual induction training but also 'facilitation skills', 'running an effective AGM' and 'progressing the topic' - these will be available for all Coordinators and Local Authority organisers of Comhairle to participate ·Your PO is available locally to provide trainings for both your Comhairle and the adult organisers - JUST ASK!!!!