

Report of the Workshop Discussions Comhairle na nÓg Showcase November 2016

“Comhairle is like one big family”

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Executive Summary

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) enshrines young people's voice within an international legally-binding agreement, positioning children's rights at the core of the decision making process, particularly in relation to having their views heard about matters that directly impact on their lives. Since the ratification of the convention in Ireland in 1992 the Irish government has sought to provide the structural (such as the establishment of the Ombudsman for Children and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs) and policy measures to ensure children's rights are embedded, practiced and realised. These policy measures include the *National Children's Strategy* (2000), *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People* (2014-2020) and the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making* (2015-2020).

Comhairle na nÓg (child youth council) were established in 2002 under the *National Children's Strategy* (2000) and are a mechanism for realising Article 12 of the UNCRC, providing children and young people with both a forum for exploring issues relating to their lives and for interacting with decision-makers within the social, economic and political systems in Ireland. Comhairle na nÓg are funded and supported by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs through its Citizen Participation Unit and many are also funded by Local Authorities, which ensure links with adult decision-making bodies. Under the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making* (2015-2020), the DCYA has undertaken to oversee a five-year development plan for Comhairle na nÓg and it is within this remit that the workshop discussions were held at the Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase in November 2016.

The Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase is a biennial event at which the young people from the 31 Comhairle na nÓg have the opportunity:

- To strengthen the national profile of Comhairle na nÓg through a showcase of the work underway in each of the 31 Comhairle na nÓg.
- To network with each other and share experiences of what has worked and what they have learned in their Comhairle na nÓg.

- To provide key policy makers, service providers and politicians with an opportunity to visit the Showcase stands and get a better understanding of the work and achievements of the 31 Comhairle na nÓg.

Young people from Comhairle na nÓg are part of the National Showcase Steering Committee and are involved in all major decisions about the format and running of every Showcase event.

458 children and young people from 31 Comhairle na nÓg attended the 3rd Biennial Showcase event in Croke Park on 24th November 2016.

The workshop discussions held as part of the National Showcase enabled young people from the network of 31 Comhairlí to discuss the opportunities and challenges they experience in Comhairle na nÓg. There were three phases to the workshop including (1) exploration of young people's experience of Comhairle (including likes, dislikes and things to improve, (2) the identification and categorisation of improvements, with the top 5 selected for more in-depth exploration at the World Café and (3) the World Café where young people identified good practices, challenges and solutions related to each of the 5 themes. Young people facilitated the discussions at each phase of the methodology. Additionally, young people were asked to identify the issues impacting on their lives today which they recorded on a postcard and placed in ballot boxes located at the event¹. A total of 458 young people attended the event and participated in the workshop discussions.

The young people identified a broad range of things they liked about Comhairle including *having a voice, making new friends, doing projects, meeting new people, the food, socialising, and feeling part of a family*. Things they disliked about Comhairle included *meeting organisation and structure, lack of funding, issues relating to membership, the lack of awareness of Comhairle, topics and workload, the term for membership and age limit and school interaction with Comhairle*. Suggested improvements which could enhance their experience of Comhairle were related to *publicity and awareness, better organisation of meetings, finding, membership, activities, workload, increased collaboration with other Comhairlí and better links to schools*.

¹ See Appendix 5 for a detailed overview of the issues identified by the young people impacting on their everyday lives.

Having prioritised the 4 themes they wished to explore, categorisation of suggestions resulted in the identification of 5 themes to be explored in more depth at the World Café. This included (1) school involvement, (2) meetings and attendance, (3) funding, (4) trips and events and (5) publicity.

School Involvement

Young people identified best practice when increasing Comhairle na nÓg’s involvement with schools, including *schools promote Comhairle to their students, introduces us to a facilitator, when attending an event we get marked as school activity instead of absent, and our Comhairle always contacts the school ahead of days out.*

The challenges and solutions relating to school involvement in Comhairle are illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Challenges and Solutions – School Involvement

| Challenges | Solutions |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Schools don’t know about Comhairle | Informing schools |
| School/Teacher/Student disinterest | Comhairle representation in schools |
| Lack of understanding | Increasing visibility in schools |
| Missing class | Involving teachers |
| Involving schools | Involving schools |
| Getting involved | Link student councils to schools |
| Promoting and informing schools | |
| Representation in school | |
| Not Taken Seriously | |

Meetings and Attendance

Best practice identified by the young people relating to meetings and attendance included having *transport for people to get to meetings, have a reason for not going to a meeting, the more people that call in the more work that gets done, being told about meetings a few weeks beforehand, getting food every meeting and discuss(ing) our topic for the year.*

The young people also identified the challenges and solutions associated with meetings and attendance which are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 Challenges and Solutions – Meetings and Attendance

| Challenges | Solutions |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Travel and Transport | Organisation |
| Barriers to Engagement | Scheduling |
| Scheduling | Attendance |
| Attendance | Communication |
| Organisation | Travel and Transport |
| Membership and Engagement | Engaging Members |
| Communication | |
| Cost/Funding | |
| Work of the Comhairle | |
| Behaviour | |

Funding

Funding was also highlighted as an issue for improvement in Comhairle na nÓg. Best practice related to funding identified by the young people included being provided with *extra funding*, having *trips and transport paid for*, and being *compensated if members have to travel into a location for a meeting*. Funding was seen to *expand our goals for our projects and it allows members to become better at planning and budgeting*.

The challenges and solutions identified related to funding in the Comhairle were identified by the young people (Table 3).

Table 3 Challenge and Solutions - Funding

| Challenges | Solutions |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Funding event, trips and resources | Events and resources |
| Level of funding | Distribution of funding |
| Distribution of funding | Accountability |
| Funding for participation | Having a say |
| Allocation of funding | Funding mechanisms |
| Accountability | Promotion |
| Publicity/Promotion | |
| Having a Say | |
| Fundraising | |

Events and Trips

Some examples of best practice related to events and trips identified by the young people included that they *were good for team building and make friendships and strong bonds, and are good to meet new people and bring people together. Collaborations with other Comhairles* provides an opportunity to *learn from each other and to come together as a Comhairle*. Indeed, organising events *allows Comhairles to reach and meet people who wouldn't know what it is*.

The challenges and solutions related to events and trips and suggested by the young people are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4 Challenges and Solutions – Events and Trips

| Challenges | Solutions |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Funding | Events and Trips |
| Events and trips | Funding |
| Organisation and planning | Collaboration between Comhairlí |
| Travel and transport | Organisation |
| Participation and involvement | Team building |
| Time | Participation/Involvement |
| Schools | |
| Communication | |
| Facilitation/Personnel | |

Publicity

The young people identified examples of best practice related to publicity within the Comhairle na nÓg. It was indicated that *public events give information and show what we do*. Being profiled in the *newspaper and making a good impression on people* also contributes to the positive publicising of the Comhairle. A concern raised by one young person was that the *Irish name- hard to actually know what it is when you hear it*. Indeed, attracting publicity was *the reward and credit for all the hard work we have done*.

Table 5 illustrates the challenges and solutions relating to publicity within the Comhairle na nÓg identified by the young people.

Table 5 Challenges and Solutions - Publicity

| Challenges | Solutions |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Lack of public awareness | Social Media |
| Social media presence | Raising Awareness in Schools |
| School Involvement | Raising Awareness among the Public |
| Funding | General Media Publicity |
| Practicalities | Fundraising |
| General media advertising | Events |
| Events | Networking with Others |

Summary Overview

Consultation with the 458 young people at the workshop discussion of the Comhairle na nÓg showcase 2016 has highlighted particular issues for consideration in the 5 year development plan for improving the facilitation of young people's voices through the Comhairle na nÓg structure. The issues most pertinent for the young people included increasing school involvement and engagement with Comhairle na nÓg, the organisation and management of meetings and attendance, addressing issues related to funding, improving the quality and frequency of events and trips, and increasing the visibility of Comhairle na nÓg through publicity.

Context

The importance of listening to the voice of children and young people is underpinned by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) which states that;

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Having ratified the convention in 1992, Ireland has worked towards realising this Article through the establishment of structural bodies with specific responsibility for listening to children and young people and taking their views into consideration in terms of both policy and measurable actions at both local and national level. The implementation of the National Children's Strategy in 2000, along with the Ombudsman for Children Act (2002), the Office for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (2005), and most recently, the establishment of a Ministerial Department, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, in 2011.

The development and implementation of government policy relating to children and young people's lives has actively engaged interdepartmental and cross-sectoral collaboration in the realisation of children's rights within the Irish context. Most specifically, the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures framework (2014) aims to listen to and involve children and young people (Goal 3) in decisions which affect their lives.

Children and young people have a right to have a voice in decisions that affect them, both individually and collectively. Failure to listen to children and young people in the past resulted in a failure to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect. The Government is committed to strengthening efforts to ensure that children and young people have this right and that they are supported to express their views in all matters affecting them and to have those views given their due weight, including those of 'seldom-heard' children (DCYA², 2014, p.8)

The development of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making 2015-2020 has sharpened the focus on children and young people's engagement in the decision making process.

² Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) (2014) *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures; The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020*, Dublin

A fundamental aspect of this strategy is the;

recognition that children and young people are not ‘beings in becoming’, but rather are ‘citizens of today’ with the right to be respected and heard during childhood, their teenage years and in their transition to adulthood (DCYA³, 2015, p.12).

Indeed, this fundamental conceptualisation is reflected in the name of the body who oversee children and young people’s participation in decision making in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs; the Citizen Participation Unit. A primary objective outlined by the DCYA (2015) is that;

the strategy commits to the development of a 5-year Development Plan for Comhairle na nÓg and to develop guidance for Children and Young People’s Services Committees on engaging children and young people in their work (p.12).

An initial stage in the development of this plan is the consultation with young people on the issues, challenges and proposed solutions for improving the way in which they interact with and experience Comhairle na nÓg across the country.

Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg is the network of child and youth council in Ireland and are the responsibility of the 31 Local Authorities. Comhairle na nÓg is the nationally recognised structure through which children and young people have a voice in the development of both local services and policies. They were set up in 2002 as a mechanism to realise the rights of children and young people to have a voice in matters affecting their lives as stated in Article 12 of the UNCRC. Comhairle na nÓg are funded and supported by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs through its Citizen Participation Unit and many are also funded by Local Authorities and other local organisations, which ensure links with adult decision-making bodies. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs also funds three regional Participation Officers to provide information, support and training to the Coordinators of Comhairle na nÓg. Each year children and young people (aged between 11 and 17) are invited to attend their local Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meeting (AGM) and to identify topics or issues they wish to explore over the course of the year. Over 4,000 children and young people attended an AGM held across 30 Comhairle na nÓg in 2015. The two primary mechanisms through which Comhairle na nÓg

³ Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) (2015) *National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020*, Dublin

engages children and young people’s voices are (1) working on topics relevant to their lives and (2) acting as a consultative forum (Table 7).

Table 6 The Work of Comhairle na nÓg

| Topics Relevant to Young People’s Lives | Acting as a Consultative Forum |
|--|---|
| Young people select and work on topics of importance to them | Local agencies consult with Comhairle na nÓg to get their views on (1) development plans and (2) policies |
| <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health • Bullying • Transport • Sexual Health • Facilities for Young People | <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage plans • Play and recreation policies • Policing • Location and type of sports facilities |
| <p>Work includes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • getting views of others • doing background research • meeting decision-makers • developing surveys • organising meetings • making videos • producing leaflets • developing online materials • social media | <p>Comhairle na nÓg has also being consulted on and informed the development of national strategies and research including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education for Sustainable Development • Cyber-crime • Ireland 2016: Imagining our Future • Growing Up in Ireland • Ombudsman for Children • Digital Strategy |

An overview of the activities and engagement of young people in Comhairle na nÓg 2015 is outlined in Table 8.

Table 7 Activities and Engagement of Young People in Comhairle na nÓg 2015⁴

| Key statistical data gathered under the evaluation of the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund 2015: | |
|--|-------|
| Number of young people across Ireland who attended Comhairle na nÓg AGMs | 4,176 |
| Total number of Comhairle na nÓg meetings held across the country | 747 |
| Average number of meetings of individual Comhairle na nÓg per annum | 24 |
| Total number of young people elected to Comhairle na nÓg committees | 1,070 |
| Average number of young people elected to Comhairle na nÓg committees | 35 |
| Percentage Female Membership of Comhairle na nÓg | 60% |
| Percentage Male Membership of Comhairle na nÓg | 40% |
| Percentage breakdown of Comhairle na nÓg membership 12 – 15 yrs. | 38% |
| Percentage breakdown of Comhairle na nÓg membership 16 – 18 yrs. | 62% |

The National Comhairle na nÓg Showcase is held every two years and provides young people across the network to come and showcase their work while also providing an opportunity for them to interact with decision-makers. Young people themselves play a central role in organising each biennial event and approximately ten young people from a number of Comhairle na nÓg are members of every Showcase Steering Committee. A key element of the Showcase is the facilitation of workshops that explore issues and topics relevant to the young people's lives.

⁴ Data sourced from <http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2FChildYouthParticipation%2FComhairlenanog.htm&mn=chig&nID=2>

Workshop Methodology

Young people from across the network of 31 Comhairlí na nÓg were invited to attend the National Showcase in November 2016. A total 458 young people attended from 30 of the 31 Comhairlí across the country. The day was structured under 4 distinct activities;

1. The Showcase Session in the morning
2. The Opening Ceremony
3. The Workshop Discussions
4. Celebratory Closing Ceremony

This report presents the findings from the workshop discussions held at the Comhairle na nÓg showcase.

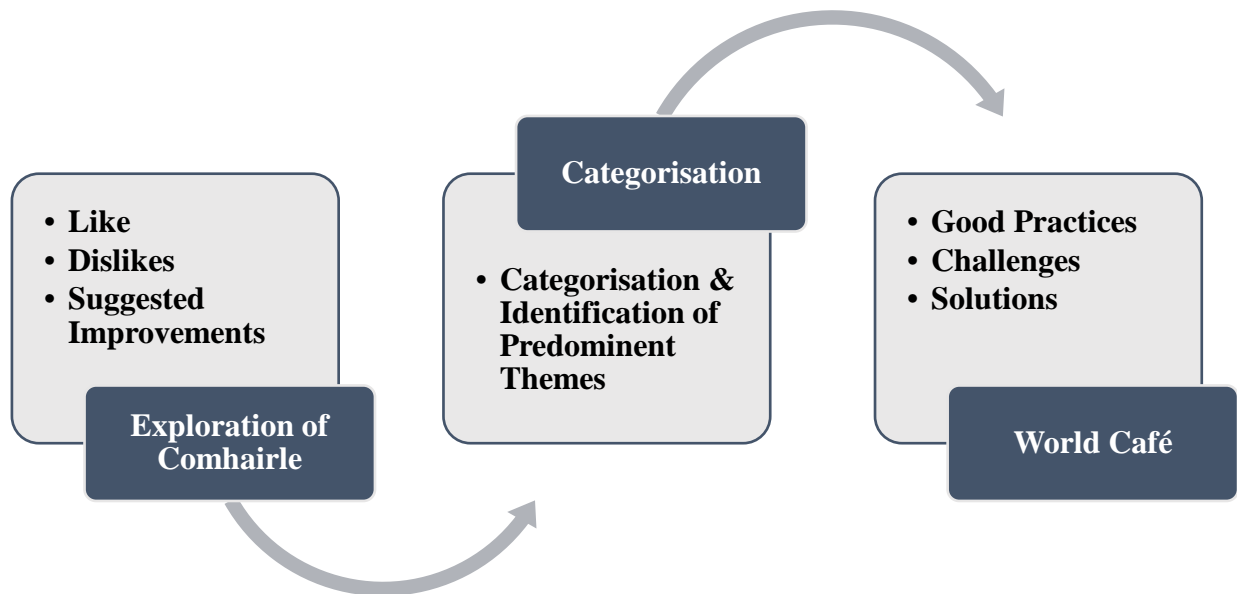
A key aspect of the workshops at the Comhairle na nÓg Showcase 2016 was the placement of the young people at the core of the process. This was achieved by the identification and training of young facilitators whose role it was to host and direct discussions both at the identification and exploration of themes during the workshop. Two members from each of the 31 Comhairlí (62 young people) were invited to participate in facilitator training. The Comhairle Coordinator was asked to nominate two young people from their Comhairle and a total of 46 young people⁵ attended this training hosted across the regional networking groups of Leinster (Dublin), Munster (Limerick) and Connaught/Ulster (Sligo). This training took place a week prior to the National Showcase and involved a two hour session exploring the participatory process and the methodology for the workshop discussion. The focus of these training sessions was to build young people's capacity⁶ in facilitating discussions within large groups.

The methodology employed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and facilitated by the young facilitators encompassed three phases (Figure 1).

⁵ 16 young people attended in Leinster, 21 in Munster and 14 in Connaught/Ulster. 4 more young people were asked to step in on the day of the Showcase who had previous experience in facilitating discussion to host the workshop discussion.

⁶ Evaluation of these preparatory sessions for the young facilitators indicated that 90% felt adequately prepared to facilitate at the workshops.

Figure 1 Workshop Discussion Methodology Comhairle na nÓg Showcase 2016



The first phase of the methodology focussed on *exploring young people's experience of Comhairle na nÓg*. Each Comhairle worked together at a placemat for this stage of the workshop. The young people identified what they like and dislike about their Comhairle, while also suggesting improvements which could be made. They chose their top 4 suggestions for improvement, identified by the placement of a sticky dot beside those they believed should be prioritised. The top 4 suggestions identified overall were recorded on flashcards. This session lasted for 30 minutes.

The second phase of the methodology involved the *categorisation and identification of themes* to be explored at the World Café. The young facilitators presented their 4 top improvements recorded on the flashcards identified by their Comhairle to an adult facilitator. These cards were laid out on the floor and categorised into broad themes. Adult facilitators worked together to identify the 5 top themes. Each theme was explored at 9 tables during the World Café discussions.

The third phase of the methodology involved discussions at the *World Café*. The young people were assigned to tables, ensuring a mix of participants from each of the 31 Comhairlí na nÓg were represented at each table. Each table was assigned a theme for in-depth exploration with a total of 9 tables exploring each of the 5 themes (n=45 overall). The table mats were structured with 3 concentric rings, with each ring focussing on a specific question. The outer ring explored

more about the theme, including the identification of good practice. Young facilitators focussed on the challenges relating to the theme in the middle ring while proposed solutions were outlined at the centre of the placemat. A timeline for the young facilitators was provided which included in-depth discussion of their first theme and then rotation around the groups to explore the other 4 themes within their section.

Table 8 Timings for Discussion at Workshops Comhairle na nÓg Showcase 2016

| Activity | Time |
|---|-------------|
| Introductions | 5 minutes |
| Question 1: Explain more about this theme/What good practice is happening in Comhairle on this theme? | 5 minutes |
| Question 2: What are the challenges on this theme? | 5 minutes |
| Question 3: What are the proposed solutions on this theme? | 5 minutes |
| Move 1 – Contribution to ideas on placemat related to theme 2 | 8 minutes |
| Move 2 – Contribution to ideas on placemat related to theme 3 | 8 minutes |
| Move 3 – Contribution to ideas on placemat related to theme 4 | 8 minutes |
| Move 4 – Contribution to ideas on placemat related to theme 5 | 8 minutes |

The young people made a total of 4 rotations and had the opportunity to contribute to each of the placemats exploring each of the 5 identified themes. The World Café session lasted for 50 minutes in total. Additionally, young people were asked to identify the issues impacting on their lives today which they recorded on a postcard and placed in ballot boxes located at the event⁷

⁷ See Appendix 5 for a detailed overview of the issues identified by the young people impacting on their everyday lives.

Phase 1: Methods and Outcomes from the Generation of Themes for Exploration at the World Café

The first phase of the methodology was facilitated by the young people themselves. Each Comhairle group (n=31) were invited to work on a placemat which was divided into three distinct sections. The young people facilitators encouraged their peers to explore and identify

- (1) The things they like about their Comhairle
- (2) They things they don't like and
- (3) The things they feel could be improved about their Comhairle

Comhairle Likes

The young people were asked to identify the things they like about Comhairle which are illustrated in Table 10 below.

Table 9 Thematic Overview of Things Young People Like about Comhairle

| Theme | No of Mentions | Theme | No of Mentions |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Having a Voice | 87 | Venue | 15 |
| Friendship | 65 | Learning New Things | 12 |
| Work Done in Comhairle | 62 | Interacting with Decision Makers | 12 |
| Developing Skills and Confidence | 52 | Brings People Together | 9 |
| Meeting New People | 48 | New Experiences | 9 |
| Food | 46 | Meetings | 8 |
| The People | 41 | Everything | 7 |
| Socialising and Peer Interaction | 34 | The Enthusiasm | 7 |
| Trips | 33 | Atmosphere | 6 |
| Coordinators/Personnel | 31 | Transport | 6 |
| Acceptance and Being Yourself | 30 | Good for CV | 5 |
| Having Fun and Banter | 27 | Inter-Comhairle Events | 4 |
| Events | 26 | Missing School | 4 |
| Activities | 26 | Meeting Other Comhairlí | 4 |
| Hoodies and Free Stuff | 26 | Representing | 4 |
| New Opportunities | 25 | Empowering | 4 |
| Having an Impact | 22 | Making Memories | 3 |
| Like a Family/Belonging | 21 | Creativity | 3 |
| Inclusive/Treated Equally | 18 | Rewarding | 2 |
| Being Involved | 18 | | |

Comhairle Dislikes

The young people identified the different things they disliked about their Comhairle on the placemats. Table 11 provides an overview of the predominant themes which emerged from the data.

Table 10 Thematic Overview of Things Young People Dislike about Comhairle

| Theme | No of Mentions | Theme | No of Mentions |
|------------------------------------|----------------|---|----------------|
| Meeting Organisation and Structure | 40 | Location | 11 |
| Funding | 39 | Impacting Policy - Interacting with Decision Makers | 11 |
| Meeting Frequency | 27 | Starting Time | 9 |
| Membership | 26 | Member's Behaviour | 9 |
| Lack of Awareness of Comhairle | 23 | Lack of Publicity | 9 |
| Workload and Topics | 22 | Trips and Events | 9 |
| Term Duration and Age Limit | 21 | Not taken seriously | 6 |
| Attendance | 18 | Lack of Bonding | 6 |
| Transport | 18 | Hoodies | 6 |
| Lack of Communication | 17 | Lack of Representation | 4 |
| School Interaction with Comhairle | 16 | Lack of Collaboration with other Comhairlí | 4 |
| Food | 14 | Lack of Time | 4 |
| Having a Voice | 12 | Insurance | 3 |
| Distance to Travel | 12 | No Recognition for Participation | 3 |
| Lack of Member's Commitment | 12 | Social Media | 2 |

Phase 2: Categorisation of Suggested Improvements

Finally, young facilitators encouraged Comhairle members to record their ideas for improvement they believed would contribute to an improved and more effective Comhairle. These suggestions are illustrated in Table 12.

Table 11 Thematic Overview of Suggested Improvements for Comhairle na nÓg

| Theme | No of | Theme | No of |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|-------|-------|-------|-------|

| | Mentions | | Mentions |
|---|----------|---------------------------------|----------|
| More Publicity and Awareness | 36 | Better Communication | 9 |
| Better Organisation and Structure of Meetings | 26 | Increased Social Media Presence | 9 |
| Funding | 25 | Involving Local Communities | 7 |
| Increased/ Improved Membership | 25 | Fundraising | 7 |
| Increase Meeting Frequency | 25 | Bonding Time | 7 |
| More Activities | 24 | More Hoodies | 6 |
| Improved Trips | 24 | More Networking Opportunities | 6 |
| Broaden Topics, Projects and Workload | 22 | Greater Recognition | 5 |
| Increased Collaboration with Other Comhairlí | 16 | More Inclusive | 5 |
| Better Links to Schools | 15 | International Opportunities | 5 |
| Better Venues | 15 | Improved Voting System | 4 |
| Increased Interaction with Decision Makers | 12 | More Fun | 4 |
| More Events | 11 | Having More of a Say | 4 |
| Better Food | 11 | Greater Commitment | 3 |
| Extend Term of Membership | 11 | More National Meetings | 3 |
| Stricter Attendance | 11 | Rules for Behaviour | 2 |
| Better Transport | 9 | Improved Peer Interaction | 2 |

The session concluded with each Comhairle choosing their top 4 improvements for Comhairle na nÓg which would help to inform the themes to be explored in more depth at the World Café stage of the methodology. These themes were identified as those with the most votes (represented by sticky dots on the mats) and were written on flashcards in preparation for categorisation by the adult facilitators. Initial categorisation of the flashcards identified 20 themes (Table 13).

Table 12 Suggested Improvements for Comhairle na nÓg – Thematic Overview

| Theme | No | Theme | No | Theme | No |
|--------------------------|----|----------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|----|
| School Involvement* | 8 | AGMs | 4 | Gaeilge | 1 |
| Increasing Diversity | 1 | Interaction with Other Comhairle | 4 | Clothing | 4 |
| Group Skills | 1 | Topics | 5 | Comhairle Term | 4 |
| Meetings and Attendance* | 20 | Transport | 4 | Interaction with Decision Makers | 7 |
| Funding* | 10 | Trips* | 9 | Publicity* | 14 |
| Events* | 11 | Organisation | 1 | Facilities | 1 |
| Increasing Involvement | 3 | Networking | 8 | | |

The five themes with the most mentions were prioritised for exploration at the 5 tables during the World Café included;

1. School Involvement
2. Meetings and Attendance
3. Funding
4. Trips and Events
5. Publicity

Phase 3: Exploring Themes at World Café

The second phase of the methodology involved the exploration of each of the 5 themes at the tables, facilitated by the young facilitators. Each placemat (n= 45) at the World Café was assigned a specific theme, with a total of 9 placemats exploring each specific theme. Each theme was explored under three headings including;

- (1) An explanation of the theme, including best practice
- (2) The identification of the challenges associated with the theme
- (3) Suggestions of solutions in order to address these challenges

Theme 1: School Involvement

The first theme presented in this report relates to school involvement in Comhairle na nÓg.

Best Practice

The young people identified that there was a variation in terms of schools awareness and understanding of Comhairle as *schools know what Comhairle is – some don't*. One young person suggested that *their school is very involved in what goes on and support Comhairle*. *Some schools promote Comhairle to their students by promoting Comhairle events – putting up posters* while one young person indicated that *our school introduces us to a facilitator when we're in TY and then we may get told about it*. Schools played an important role in *allowing students to participate in AGMs and other Comhairle events*. Schools who are *very into and supportive of Comhairle* support young people's participation by ensuring that *when we have activities/events with Comhairle on school days, we get marked as school activity instead of absent*. Indeed, one

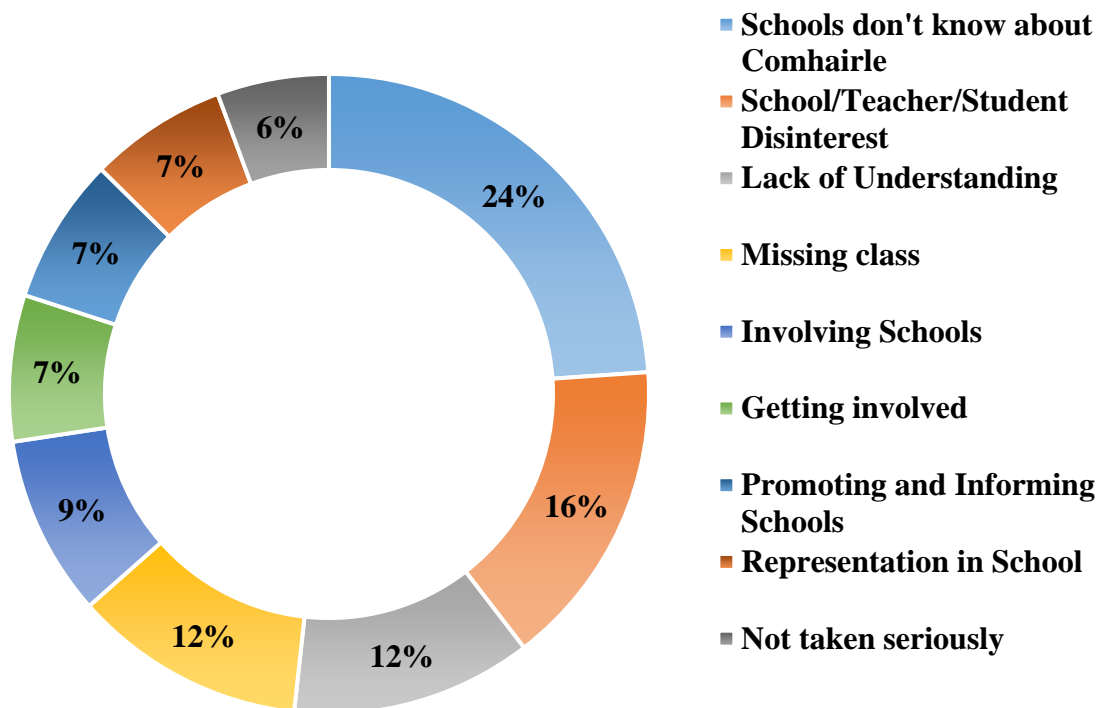
young person indicated that they *haven't got a problem with us missing school as long as we catch up on work given.*

One young person indicated that they *love my school being involved – having 1 teacher in charge*, something that was seen as important as *our county has involvement through one school via one teacher that knows about it.* Teacher involvement also included *encouraging Comhairle event every year* and letting us *survey about Comhairle in class.* Good collaboration between *student council and Comhairles* ensures *involvement in AGM* and *support (for) Comhairle.* Communication between Comhairle and school as also seen as important as *our Comhairle always contacts the school ahead of days out.*

Challenges

The young people identified the challenges relating to the collaboration between schools and Comhairle na nÓg (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Challenges to School Involvement with Comhairle na nÓg



Challenges identified by the young people included schools don't know about Comhairle, school/teacher/student disinterest, lack of understanding, missing class, involving schools, getting involved, promoting and informing schools, representation in school and Comhairle not being taken seriously. Each of these challenges will be explored below.

Schools don't know about Comhairle

One of the greatest challenges identified by the young people was that *schools don't know about Comhairle*. As a result *not many people know what Comhairle is or how to join*. Although *people have an interest but not enough known* as there is a *lack of information and a lack of communication* meaning that *no teachers or students know about Comhairle*. As a result *teachers don't encourage it because they generally don't know what Comhairle is*. One young person suggested that *either they don't know about it or think it's a waste of students' time*. However, this can have particular consequences whereby *if schools don't know/don't care they're underrepresented at the local Comhairle*.

Disinterest

The young people indicated that schools disinterest in Comhairle was a particular challenge. Schools were perceived not to be *interested in learning about Comhairle – they don't want to let the students go to events*. One young person suggested that *schools are rude to us, don't care at all, never send people*. *Principal's reluctance to engage with Comhairle* was perceived to be associated with a preconception that *it is an excuse to get out of school as they think we are dossing*. Young people suggested that schools *prefer not to get involved* as they *don't care-they think it's just an afterschool thing*. Teachers were also perceived as *uninterested and uncooperative*. As a result they *don't really know much about it or what students are on it*. They *don't really understand it*. Indeed one young person suggested that *schools do not take the time to understand nor care about Comhairle – more concerned about academically developing the student – not motivating them to build character, stand up for their rights etc*.

Lack of Understanding

One of the challenges identified by the young people was the lack of understanding about *the importance of Comhairle*. The demands of schooling including *homework, exams etc., people are marked absent for attending and hostility towards taking time out of class or days off* was of

particular challenge to young people's engagement. Indeed, one young person identified the tension between engaging in Comhairle and school demands whereby *guidance councillors/teachers* (were) *asking to quit Comhairle for Leaving Certificate*. Comhairlí were perceived *not to inform schools and schools do not support Comhairle*. One young person believed that schools *think we don't do anything worthwhile* and can *see Comhairle as a waste of time*. Comhairle was seen *not to benefit school* and *don't see the use for Comhairle and what we get out of it*. Indeed one young person stated that this lack of understanding fed into a *downgrading of a thing we are passionate about*.

Missing Class

Missing class was also perceived as a challenge to engaging in Comhairle. Fundamental to this was that *teachers don't want students missing class particularly missing Leaving Cert subjects*. *Balancing schoolwork and homework while being productive as a Comhairle member* is also challenging. One young person suggested that *teachers start getting more angry since you are missing school more often since you go to Comhairle na nÓg*. Young people indicated that they *get given out to for missing key classes, while teachers hold it against you if you do not do homework/know answer to question because you missed it due to an event with Comhairle*. Indeed, schools *might think that being out at Comhairle effects education*.

Involving Schools

The young people highlighted the need for *more support and involvement in schools*. According to them *some schools don't help or get Comhairle known to young people*. One way to achieve this was through *student councils* who *should be more involved or be in contact with local Comhairles*. Not having *events with schools* or *enough things done with it (Comhairle) in school* means that *school doesn't help or get Comhairle known to young people*. Where schools are involved *schools limit the amount of information they provide their students with about Comhairle and often choose students for AGMs instead of asking all students*. One young person indicated that it is *hard to improve youth problems when schools don't cooperate*.

Promoting and Informing Schools

A particular challenge identified by the young people was that there is a *lack of information given in schools about what Comhairle is*. Specifically, there is a *lack of advertising and*

promotion in schools. When students aren't told what it is (they) don't think it's cool so they don't try to join. Indeed a particular challenge was that schools don't send reps sometimes and that there is a lack of information and lack of will to gain information.

Getting Involved

One challenge to engaging in Comhairle identified by the young people was that it was *hard to get involved*. Schools were deemed not to be *giving everyone the opportunity to join* and were *only send(ing) their "best" to AGMs*. Recruitment for Comhairle was challenging where *favouritism* was at play. *Schools cherry pick a certain "type of person"* with those from *ty or student council* and *school prefects* being chosen. There was perceived to be a *stigma with being on Comhairle like you're full of yourself*.

Representation in School

One of the challenges identified by the young people was that there are *no Comhairle coordinator in schools*. Furthermore, there are *no representatives from each year in school so how is the Comhairle supposed to know students' issues?* Another issue identified was that *schools have Comhairle members but many students don't know what that is*. One young person highlighted their sense of unfairness around the challenge that *we are here to represent our schools and we get marked absent – IT'S NOT FAIR*. Having *no members in certain schools means no involvement* with one suggesting that *schools (are) not sending people to AGMs – make it mandatory*. One limitation identified was that *Comhairle members don't communicate back to the school* while being a *lone Comhairle member* can make it difficult to feedback to the school. Indeed one challenge identified that *schools can remove a Comhairle member from their branch*.

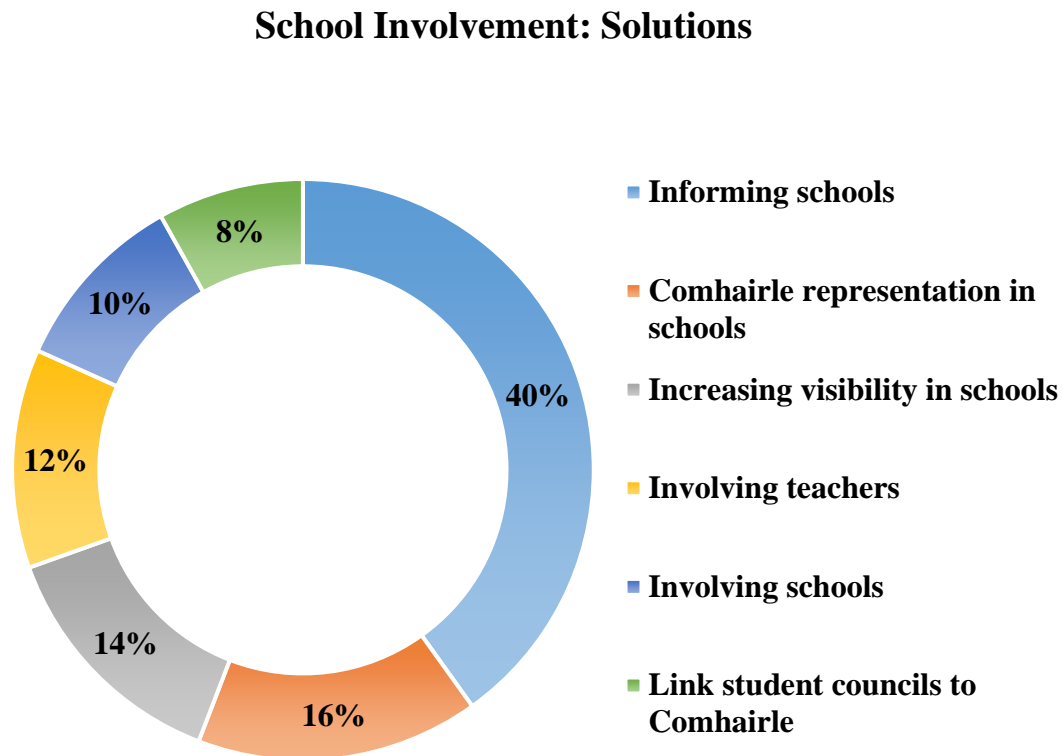
Not Taken Seriously

Schools don't take Comhairle serious – teachers give out about missing school and classes. Furthermore it was suggested that *schools don't see Comhairle as important* viewing it more as *merely an extra-curricular activity*. Teachers were also deemed not to *take it seriously enough – see it as an excuse to miss class*. Indeed *they think they have more important things to be focussing on*.

Solutions

The solutions to the challenges identified by the young people relating to school involvement in Comhairle na nÓg were explored during the workshop discussions (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Solutions to the Challenges to School Involvement with Comhairle na nÓg



Solutions provided by the young people to address school involvement in Comhairle included informing schools about Comhairle, increasing Comhairle representation in schools, increasing visibility in schools, involving both teachers and schools in the work of Comhairle and to link student councils to Comhairle. Each of these solutions will be explored in more depth below.

Informing Schools

The most predominant solution provided by the young people was to *inform all schools*. This included *going to the school to inform them about Comhairle events and AGM* and to *send information packs to TY coordinators or year heads to promote Comhairle within the school*. Giving *talks or presentations* was also seen as a way of informing schools about Comhairle,

particularly in relation to *what it's about* and *how the school can get involved*. Other suggestions for providing such information included *make video, send out email letter, send letter, workshops in schools, have speakers in, send Comhairle members to schools, having an information day, and to create a booklet of info*. It was suggested that Comhairle should *put pressure on schools to give out the information packs they received from the various Comhairlí*. The message given to schools in communicating information about Comhairle was also seen as important with young people suggesting the importance of *promot(ing) Comhairle within the school* in order to *inform principals and teachers of how beneficial it is for students of their schools*. Indeed, one key message identified was to *inform schools of the importance and vitality Comhairle has for the future of young people*.

Comhairle Representation in Schools

The importance of the presence and role of representatives within schools was also seen as a solution to encouraging greater school involvement with Comhairle. It was suggested to have a *representative from each school go to Comhairle (for at least a week) and report back to the school*. It was envisaged that this could be achieved by having *at least 2 members per school – if there's only one they might feel lonely/nervous to speak about Comhairle alone*. Involving other students outside of Comhairle was also seen as a solution by *inviting students who are not in Comhairle to contribute ideas through school Comhairle rep*. It was also suggested to *encourage people to join by choosing students based on interest, rather than based on academic exam results*. Having a *system for electing executive members* was suggested by *hosting a mini election with debates and speeches in school*. Additional approaches to increasing Comhairle representation in schools included to *encourage GAISCE TY students to join, encourage students to join/try it out and give a review of it, and to let students pick who they think would be best to bring to AGMs because teachers usually pick at random*. These reps could be *the medium between Comhairle and schools*. Finally, it was suggested that *Comhairle members should report back to school to keep them in touch*.

Increasing Visibility in Schools

Increasing visibility in schools was also seen as a solution to improving school involvement with Comhairle. Suggestions provided by the young people centred around *publicity* such as *more media coverage, advertising on social media, posters in schools, hosting events and fundraisers,*

providing *leaflets*, and having *newsletters about local Comhairle sent bimonthly to schools*. One young person suggested having a *Comhairle badge to identify*.

Involving Teachers

The young people indicated concern that there is *never enough encouragement from teachers to have students join*. Having a *teacher allocated to help with Comhairle in every school* was seen as a means for increasing school involvement. This included ensuring that *teachers come to AGM*, having *meeting with teachers* and giving them *more information* provided through a *teacher pack* and *gathering teachers/principals to show them what Comhairle is*.

Involving Schools

Suggestions provided for increasing schools' direct involvement with Comhairle included having *more planned events in schools*, keeping in contact *about the work of Comhairle and encourage them to encourage students to join* and providing *more feedback to schools*. Indeed, one young person believed *Comhairle holding events in schools for TYs, sixth years, 1st years etc.* was a solution to increasing involvement in school. It was suggested that *school should cooperate with Comhairle*, including *fund(ing) trips for educational purposes*, and *students should be marked as on a school activity when attending Comhairle events*. One young person believed there was a need to *strengthen communication between Comhairle coordinators and principals*.

Linking Student Councils to Comhairle

Although young people have previously suggested increasing involvement from all students in the Comhairle, they also called for a *direct link between student councils with Comhairle*. This included *making sure the student council is aware of it*, *ensuring that school puts their Comhairle members on the student council*, and *having student council members go to AGMs to get respectful members*.

Theme 2: Meetings and Attendance

Young people identified meetings and attendance as an issue they wanted to explore in more depth during the World Café discussions.

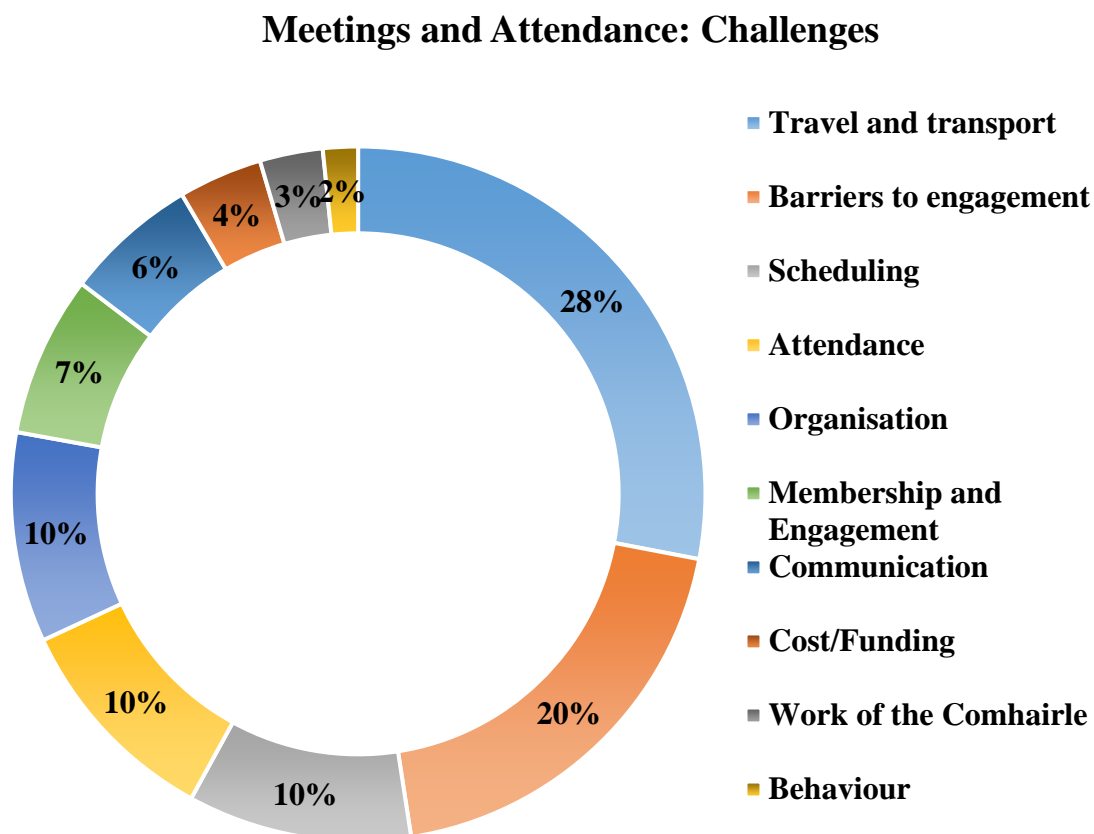
Best Practice

The young people identified some of the best practice related to meetings and attendance in their Comhairle na nÓg. With transport identified as an issue, one young person indicated that *we have transport for people to get to meetings*. Encouraging good attendance was also perceived as important with one young person suggesting that they *have to have a reason for not going to meeting*. Having good attendance means that people are *more involved and know what their group is working on* and also ensures that you *know what is going on and you can have your say*. *Proper attendance makes more productive meetings* while having *less people* means having *less ideas*. Furthermore *the more people that call in the more work gets done*. Ensuring *good notice of meetings is given* was also seen as good practice in the Comhairle. One young person indicated that *we have a good location for where the meetings take place*. Another exemplar of good practice identified by a young person was that *my Comhairle meets every Tuesday and always have a constant flow of members after the AGM – we normally have a drop in where new people can be filled with old members*. The nature of the meetings was also seen as important with one person stating that their *Comhairle meets fortnightly on Wednesdays 3-5pm – city hall, lots of biscuits, tea, council members, craic and hoodies at the end of year*. Getting notification of meetings meant better attendance with one member indicating that *we are told about meetings a few weeks beforehand and we are reminded often before the meeting happens*. Getting *food every meeting* was also seen as important. In terms of the work of the Comhairle, one member indicated that they *discuss our topic for the year and come up with ideas for our topic; we get good ideas but have to make it ourselves*. Comhairle was seen as *like one big family*.

Challenges

The young people identified the challenges related to meetings and attendance which were evident in their Comhairle na nÓg (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Challenges to Meeting and Attendance in the Comhairle na nÓg



The predominant challenges identified by the young people related to meetings and attendance in the Comhairle included travel and transport, barriers to engagement, scheduling, attendance, organisation, memberships and engagement, communication, cost/funding, work of the Comhairle and behaviour. Each of these challenges will be presented in the following section.

Travel and Transport

Transport and travel is one of the greatest challenges to young people's engagement in Comhairle meetings. Getting *transport to meeting* can be challenging, particularly for *people living too far from the meeting*. Because *it takes so long to get to the meetings nobody goes*. Furthermore, *people are often late or leave meetings early*. A particular issue is that *people*

living in rural areas there is no public transport in the country between cities and villages. Transport was seen to be expensive, time consuming which discourages them (young people) from attending meetings. It was indicated that people travel long distances. Public transport is very expensive in rural Ireland and, as such, not having enough funding to transport is also challenging.

Barriers to Engagement

The young people identified barriers to engagement which hindered their attendance at and participation in meetings. It was suggested that *both members and leaders may find it hard to attend meetings regularly due to our other activities (and) work.* Such barriers included *family life and sports and clubs, after school study, training/games, exams, people's personal lives and hobbies.* Being available to attend meetings was also identified as challenging as *people can have a lot of things on and struggle to get to meetings which can be confused with lack of attendance.* *Work and organising around jobs* was also identified as challenging. *The clashing of times* was also seen as challenging as *meetings don't suit everyone's schedule.* The tension between school and attending meetings was also seen as a barrier to engaging as *school life can prevent attendance while some people are busy with exam years.*

Scheduling

A challenge to engaging in meetings identified by the young people was that *there isn't a set time/place/day for meetings.* Members identified that there are *not enough meetings, they are unpredictable times* and are *not frequent enough.* It is *difficult to find the time and date that suits members.* One issue identified that *when meetings are planned later couple of days in advance) then people can't attend.* It was suggested that *last minute stuff created stress and less enjoyable experiences.* The young people believed that there are *not regular enough meetings* and called for *more meetings to get more stuff done.*

Attendance

Attendance was seen as a challenge to meeting with young people reporting that *attendance is sometimes very poor and is a big problem.* Lack of attendance impacts on the work of the Comhairle whereby *big events can't be helped or organised with members missing.* It was suggested that there was a need *to get everyone to attend by creating the feeling of obligation for*

attendance. There was a feeling that people still expect to be brought on trips and days out even if they never turn up to meetings and as such there was a need to have consequences for those who do not attend including being excluded from trips or monthly meetings. One member suggested that it was hard to know why people won't show up because if it is medical or mental it is a valid reason but if they are just not showing up then they should not be in the Comhairle.

Organisation

The location and length of meetings were seen as challenging to engaging young people in Comhairle. The meeting structure also impacted on the work of the Comhairle whereby meeting often descends into chatting and little gets done – possibly because the group is too big. Having a set place and agenda was also seen as important and could limit the randomness of meetings. Members suggested that there are a lack of roles which can be unstructured. Meetings aren't always appealing and were seen as boring at times. The members believed there aren't enough meetings and that they aren't long enough. It was suggested that if there were better organisation from the start like more meetings and planned would make your Comhairle closer in working together.

Membership and Engagement

There was a concern among the young people that not enough people are showing up. There was a perception that there is a lack of dedication, severe lack of membership. A particular challenge was that lots of people (are) going for interviews being accepted and then never showing up to meetings. As a result, the young people believed that people don't take it seriously as they want to put on CV but never or rarely go to meetings. One reason provided for this was that there was a high dropout – major commitment. A particular challenge was that un-attending members waste the opportunity for someone who wants it. Indeed one suggestion was that people who aren't committed to Comhairle should be replaced with someone that wants to do it. However, one member believed that people wouldn't be motivated to attend meetings due to the unproductive manner in which the meetings are spent.

Communication

Young people indicated that not knowing when meetings are and short notice can be a challenge to engaging in meetings. Furthermore, the lack of communication outside of meetings was also

deemed challenging. This meant that young people *don't get informed when meetings are on*. Modes of communication was also seen as challenging as *people that don't use Facebook for their contact and contact can be bad sometimes people don't check their phones*. Indeed, it is suggested that *more communication would lead to better planning of meetings*.

Cost/Funding

A particular challenge to meetings was the *lack of funding*. This was particularly in relation to the *low budget to spend on travel* and the fact that more meetings mean *more costs*. One member suggested that there are *not enough meetings for us cos we don't have the budget*.

Work of the Comhairle

The work associated with being a member of the Comhairle was also identified as challenging. One young person identified that the biggest challenge was *the decision on doing a project as not everybody agrees on the one thing*. A particular issue was that *people don't follow through with their responsibilities* while they were *unable to complete work in the time given*. There was feeling that there was a *lack of progress and topics* while *important issues require more than just one meeting to discuss so more is needed to figure out solutions to individual problems*.

Behaviour

One challenge identified by the young people was that *sometimes we don't get a lot done because people are messing* and that there was a need to *separate disruptive people who don't care at meetings*. Meetings *can be unorganised at times – there is a lot of messing and talking and little action at times*.

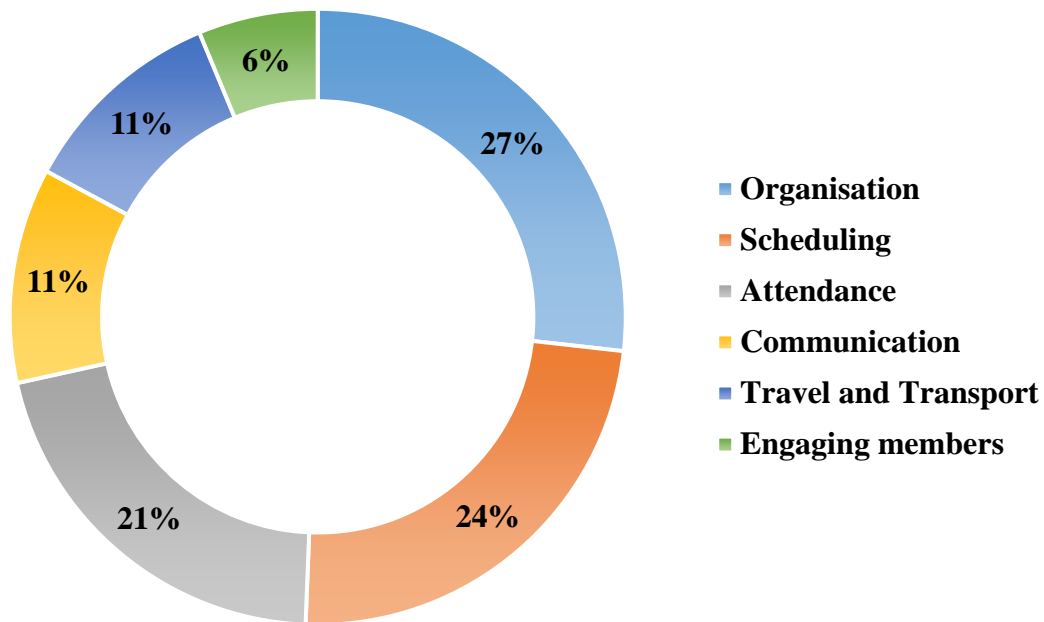
Additional challenges included peer relationships (*can be difficult to make friends*) and understanding the work of Comhairle (*misunderstanding of Comhairle, parents think Comhairle is a doss group*).

Solutions

Solutions to the challenges relating to meetings and attendance across the Comhairle na nÓg were identified by the young people (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Solutions to the Challenges relating to Meetings and Attendance

Meetings and Attendance: Solutions



The solutions to the challenges identified relating to meetings and attendance by the young people included suggestions around organisation, scheduling, attendance, communication, travel and transport and engaging members. Each solution will be discussed in the following section.

Organisation

Identifying *set venues*, and meeting in *different venues in different parts of the county* and to *position the meetings more centrally in the county* was proposed in order to improve meetings and attendance. Furthermore, hosting *lots of subcommittees close to school with meetings after school* would improve attendance. It was suggested to *plan and structure fun meetings in order*

to attract members which will increase attendance. There should also be an effort made to get a time that suits everyone.

It was suggested to have a new chairperson every year and a more authoritative chair to control the talking to moderate the debate/discussion would improve meetings. There was a call to have better focus, to plan meetings out before it happens, to stick to agenda, in order to waste less time and for them to be structured with rules in place. This would ensure very efficient use of time at meetings.

Scheduling

The members identified solutions associated with the scheduling of meetings for Comhairle meetings. This included *hav(ing) a set timetable, set out a schedule for three months of meetings at a time and hav(ing) meetings on weekends instead of weekdays.* It was suggested to *meet on a Saturday as a lot have far to travel.* There was a call for *more regular meetings including fortnightly or weekly.* Indeed, *the more meetings the better your Comhairle works as a team.* It was suggested to *meet on a regular basis and to have a form and rota to know how many people attend these meetings.* Members suggested different formats for meetings including to *have meetings on holidays, weekends and times when exams are not near and to have online meetings.* It was important to *decide dates of meetings* in order to have *advance notice.*

Attendance

Solutions for improving and dealing with the issue of attendance were provided by the young people. There was a call to *set rules on attendance* and for a *general rule for absenteeism if you miss more than 5.* There should be a *minimum amount of meetings a person must attend and tougher consequences on those missing meetings – more opportunities for those who attend all meetings.* There was a sense of injustice when people didn't attend meetings as *it is unfair for those who do attend.* One suggestion was that *unless people have a valid excuse for not attending meetings their names should be taken off the list and should be removed.* It was important to have a *good excuse when not present at meetings with absences...explained by a note from parents like school.* It was suggested to *expand notes taken for attendance and establish more suitable hours for members.* One young person suggested that *things will get done if there is stricter attendance.*

Communication

The young people proposed the importance of *communications with members more*. This included *when and where meetings are, more information including displaying the minutes online (Facebook) to keep everyone up to speed*. This includes getting a *good amount of notice before meetings* and having *reminders about meetings*. Different mediums for communication were highlighted including *messenger/WhatsApp, Facebook page/chat, a text scheme* and to *create a group chat with the Comhairle*. However, one member highlighted that *if a member is not on social media do not forget about them*.

Travel and Transport

It was suggested that there could be a *better system wherever the meeting is held being equal to all*. Suggestions included *different locations of meetings to save the same people travelling, having better transport to meeting such as mak(ing) transport to and from meetings easier and giv(ing) leap cards for the people in the city that can be used for transport*. Suggestions included *fundraising for transport, getting buses from your house to meetings and to organise carpool*.

Engaging Members

Young people believed that there needed to be greater *encouragement to participate* in Comhairle. This included *keeping a record of members, having allowances for exam students and getting more people to join*. Although *Comhairle is good craic* there was a need to *at AGM explain the commitment*. Otherwise *only the committed members attend – always a select few*. There was a suggestion that there is a *voting system to get in* and to *engage more people who can contribute more effectively*.

Theme 3: Funding

Funding emerged as a theme identified by the young people for exploration at the workshop discussions.

Best Practice

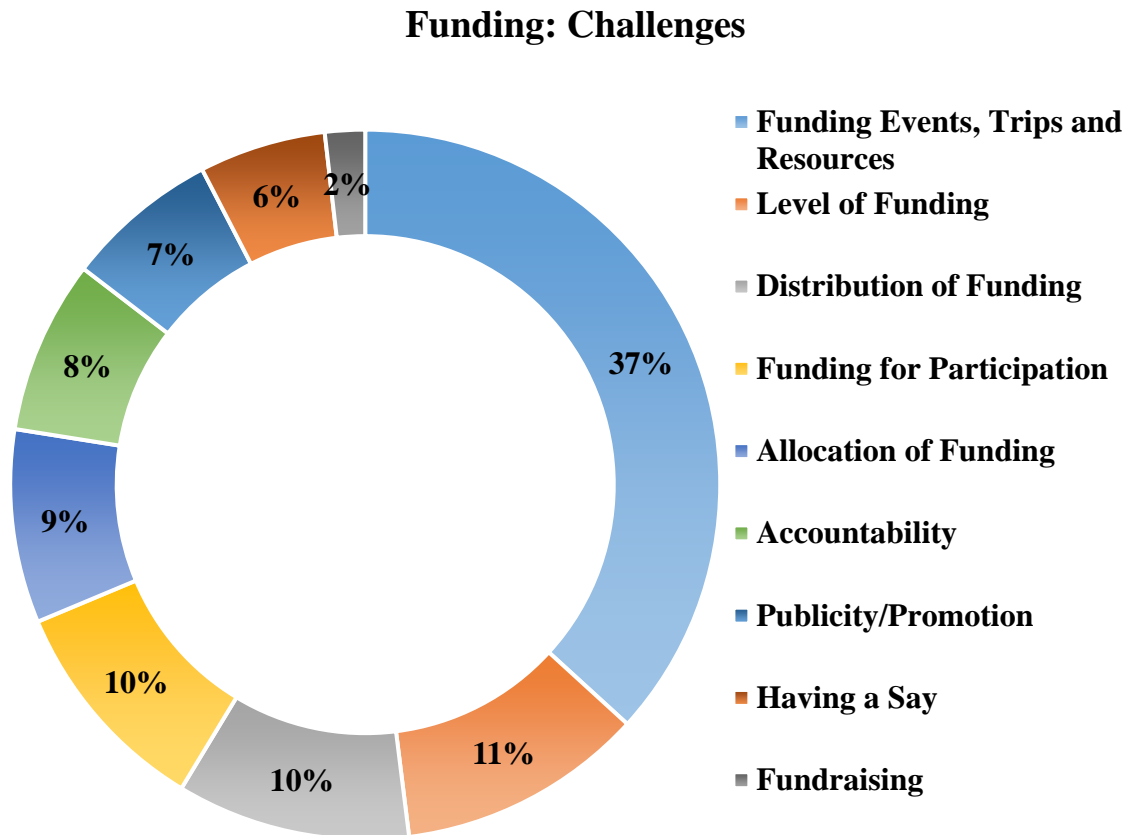
Funding is really important for Comhairle, *cos it decides how big or small your project that year will be*. The young people identified best practice around funding across their Comhairlí. *The fact that we get money from the government* was indicated as a positive, however, *more funding (is) needed*. One young person identified that their *council provide extra funding*. Funding was seen to *help pay for things we need – trips we go on and transport to each meeting*. Additional activities funded by Comhairle included *days out/bonding days, accommodation, projects, and trips*. Trips were identified as *pretty beneficial for team building*. AGMs were seen to be well organised and *transport costs for events like that are always covered*. Activities identified for *trying to come up with money to do different events and make them run as best they can* included *colour run, bake sale, sponsored walk, and local stay awake party*.

Being reimbursed was also considered best practice including getting *compensated if members have to travel into a location for a meeting*. Having *everything paid for, including travel and food, jumpers/hoodies, transport, facilities and trips*. Indeed, *funding allows more work* and facilitated the young people to be *more creative with our events*. It also allows us to *expand our goals for our projects as we have more resources to do the projects*. Having to manage funding was also seen as important as it allows the members *to become better at planning and budgeting since we have to limit what we spend our money on*. Indeed one member stated that *my parents are glad that their tax money is being spent on Comhairle and what we do*.

Challenges

The challenges associated with funding identified by the young people are illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Challenges to Funding in Comhairle na nÓg



Challenges to funding in the Comhairle na nÓg identified by the young people included funding events, trips and resources, the level, distribution and allocation of funding, accountability, publicity/promotion, having a say and fundraising. Each of these challenges will be discussed below.

Funding Events, Trips and Resources

The amount of funding available to means that you are *restricted in what you can do as a Comhairle*. There was a feeling that *we miss out on opportunities with actions/ideas limited due to lack of funding*. Because *funding (is) not enough for many Comhairlí events (are) restricted to low quality*. Additionally *there is not enough funding for basic amenities and projects, this makes trips, transport and other costs impossible to pay*.

Spending money on transport is an issue and impacted on funding meaning that we can't have enough meetings to get all our work done and leaving little to promote and produce events. More practically, there is not enough money for transport for trips.

There is not enough money for meetings resulting in shortages in the frequency of meetings. There is a need for more funding to have more meetings to discuss important topics. The lack of funding for events resulted in difficulty in attending all events due to lack of finance. Indeed more funding will allow us to experience new things. It was suggested that bonding/group activities could get more money – still don't know everybody's name. There was also a call for events to socialise with other Comhairles, see their ideas and see can we find resolutions for local/national issues.

Funding projects was also identified as challenging as there is not enough funding to make the most of our projects. It restricts the amounts and types of projects we can do and makes our projects less impressive therefore harder to get members. One member suggested that Comhairle aren't able to make our events as big or nice as possible. Indeed, funding Comhairle would give us more opportunities to hold things like events to help improve our communities and raise awareness for Comhairle.

Level of Funding

One of the challenges identified by the young people was that there is not enough funding. The level of funding is enough for small projects only and Comhairlí can't do much because of lack of funding. It is suggested that funding from county councils isn't available in some counties and where local councils do provide funding it isn't enough. One issue identified that there should be no debt carried on from the previous year, as it's unfair that current year's Comhairle are affected.

Distribution of Funding

Young people called for better distribution of money around Comhairlí. There was a suggestion that money not given out fairly whereby all funding should be equal from each council as certain Comhairles get more funding. Indeed one member indicated that each Comhairle gets a set amount from government, some Comhairles get extra funding from local organisations e.g. council, this automatically puts some Comhairles at a disadvantage. It was suggested that the

context in which the Comhairle was operating need to be taken into account when distributing funding across the network. For example, *different counties need different amounts of funding e.g. Dublin Comhairle has excess to go go-karting while Tipperary doesn't have enough for transport.* It is suggested that *the larger the group the more money it should get.* Furthermore *all Comhairles get the same amount of transport funding despite some Comhairles (mainly Dublin) not having to travel so far as others for events.* Indeed, *smaller and less low socio-economic counties get little from outside agencies and not enough to fund projects throughout the year.*

Funding for Participation

Lack of funding impacts on the young people's ability to engage and participate in Comhairle. This *puts a strain on Comhairle members who have to pay for Comhairle things themselves.* It *becomes unfair for people with limited money to have to find a way to pay for buses to meetings from our homes to the city and some people can't afford it.* Having to pay for food and transport...*is hard while members can't do what we want to do.*

Allocation of Funding

It was suggested that *money isn't being put where it needs to be.* Money is *not going to the right things* and tends to be allocated to *basic upkeep e.g. transport and food, not campaigns and projects.* There is a need to *get finances allocated to the right causes* with a suggestion that *hoodies are nice but not necessary and food can be bought from Tesco or Aldi.* One member believed that it was important to *plan how to spend the money at the beginning of the year.* One young person suggested that *allocating money to the most important things sometimes leaves very little money for fun.* As such, emphasis should be placed on *more and better budgeting.* Because *some counties are too big and half the money goes for transport.* According to one young person *funding should be spent in a more productive way...this should hopefully result in the city council being willing to donate more money to Comhairle for funding which will ultimately give Comhairle more power to make and promote productive change.*

Accountability

The young people indicated that there was a need for accountability when dealing with funding in the Comhairle. This encompassed *knowing where our funding comes from and directing where it goes.* There was a sense that *we have to be careful what we spend our funding on as it is*

taxpayers' money and should be used in the proper way. Members indicated that they have no knowledge where money is going as we're not part of that discussion. This lack of transparency meant that young people felt they don't know enough about how the money is spent. One young person believed that we should be debriefed and have access to the records.

Publicity/Promotion

Members highlighted the *lack of publicity/knowledge* as a challenge to Comhairle na nÓg. The young people suggested that there is *not enough awareness about what Comhairle is – not enough funding as a result. Indeed, Government/funding groups aren't always aware of the work of Comhairle therefore don't provide suitable funding. Securing more funding for promotion purposes* was seen as important in *trying to get Comhairle known more as there is a lack of knowledge of what we strive to achieve.*

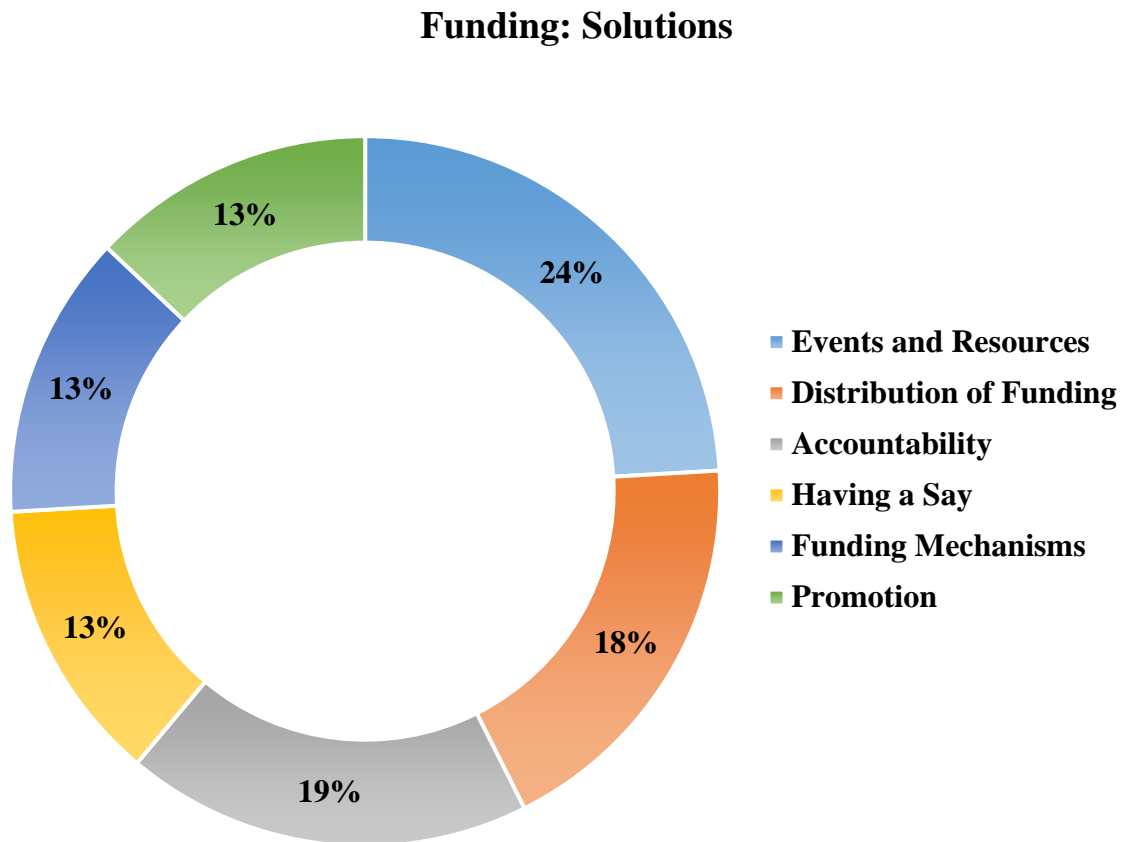
Having a Say

Having a say in all aspects related to funding in Comhairle was identified as challenging for members. It was suggested that *young Comhairle members should be more involved with panning, expenditure and getting income. As it stands, members know nothing about their budgets and don't get a say on what to do with the money. One person suggested that councils are unwilling to allow young people to control funds. Being included in funding and allowed choose what we spend funding on* was identified as important. One suggestion was that *if members knew more about funding they could plan things according to the budget.*

Solutions

The young people identified solutions to the challenges related to funding in the Comhairle na nÓg (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Solutions to the Challenges related to Funding in Comhairle na nÓg



Solutions provided by the young people to address issues relating to funding in Comhairle na nÓg included suggestions for events and resources, distribution of funding, accountability, having a say, funding mechanisms and promotion. Each solution will be discussed in the following section.

Events and Resources

Members suggested securing *more money for transport*, including *pre-paid transport*, *Comhairle buying its own bus as an investment*, and a *discount for Comhairle transport*. There was also a call for *funding events*, such as *more international trips*, *outings*, and *more national events*. One

young person suggested providing *funding for Comhairle facilities like a permanent place to meet.*

Distribution of Funding

Members of Comhairle believed that *fair distribution of money = equity.* It is suggested to conduct a *review for each particular Comhairle to ensure even distribution of funding* which would be *based on size.* There was a call to *focus more on rural Comhairlí* by looking at *the full amount allotted for all the Comhairles and spread it evenly depending on location.* This could be achieved by *creating a survey to ask all Comhairles what they spend most money on and divide it (the funding) based on the results.* This would mean that *money should be put where it is needed.*

Accountability

Young people recommended to have *members more included in the budget and spending.* There is a need to *let the young people know how the money is being spent and to show where the money is being spent by keeping members informed about funding for events/meetings.* It was suggested to *allow Comhairle members to have an insight into their funding and to plan what it is used for.* One member suggested having *sub committees to handle the budget and this will show us where the money is going.* *Better funding management* and having a *treasurer* was also recommended as a solution. Furthermore *more information (is) needed for the actual Comhairle members on how funding for Comhairle works/how we can improve funding.*

Having a Say

It is important to *give Comhairle members more of a say,* which will *help to teach them to be conscious.* *Having a say in where the money goes and having an input in the budget* would ensure that Comhairle members are *more involved in how our funding is spent* including getting *more involved in how our funding is spent.*

Funding Mechanisms

The young people identified different ways in which funding could be secured including *fundraisers (including battle of the bands, competitions, back packing, raffles, 24-hour football match, colour run, sports day, bake sale, family fun day), look(ing) for sponsors* including from *local business, lobbying local members of government and a campaign for funding.* Having a *dip*

in fund was also suggested as a solution to address funding issues. One young person suggested having *organisations affiliated to Comhairle na nÓg pay a small fee which will go back into the Comhairle to help young people be heard through projects, trips etc.* Another young person suggested *securing funding from the Department of Education as well as the Department of Children.* Indeed, *Money for Comhairle = happy Comhairle.*

Promotion

Promoting the work of the Comhairle was suggested as a means for increasing funding. This includes *inviting ministers to come see our work, increasing advertisement, going to a council meeting and explaining the Comhairle.* To achieve this, one member suggested *produc(ing) more mediums to interact with people outside Comhairle e.g. DVDs/A new bulletin.* One solution provided is to *raise awareness of Comhairle and what we could do more with more funding.*

Theme 4: Events and Trips

The young people identified events and trips as an issue they wanted to explore in more depth during the World Café discussions.

Best Practice

The young people suggested that events and trips were *great for getting to know more other members and therefore we gain friendships within our communities.* Trips were seen as *good for team building and make friendships and strong bond.* It is *important to form a bond with fellow Comhairle members.* *Residentials* were seen as an *opportunity to bond as a Comhairle and to get to know each other.* Events and trips are *good to meet new people and helps bring people together.* It is also important to have *banter, laughs, enjoyment, a bit of craic and fun.*

Participating in events and trips provides *more opportunity to learn about more groups, to have a chance to get inspiration from other Comhairles and to learn about what other Comhairles are doing.* *Collaboration with other Comhairles* provides an *opportunity to learn from each other as Comhairles can be more productive together.* One member highlighted the benefit of *meeting other young people who care about the same issues as you at national events.* Indeed one member suggested having *inter Comhairle events* while also valued the *opportunity to come together as a Comhairle.* This included *connecting over events such as AGM, bond, brings different Comhairle together.* Events were seen as *good for getting the message out about*

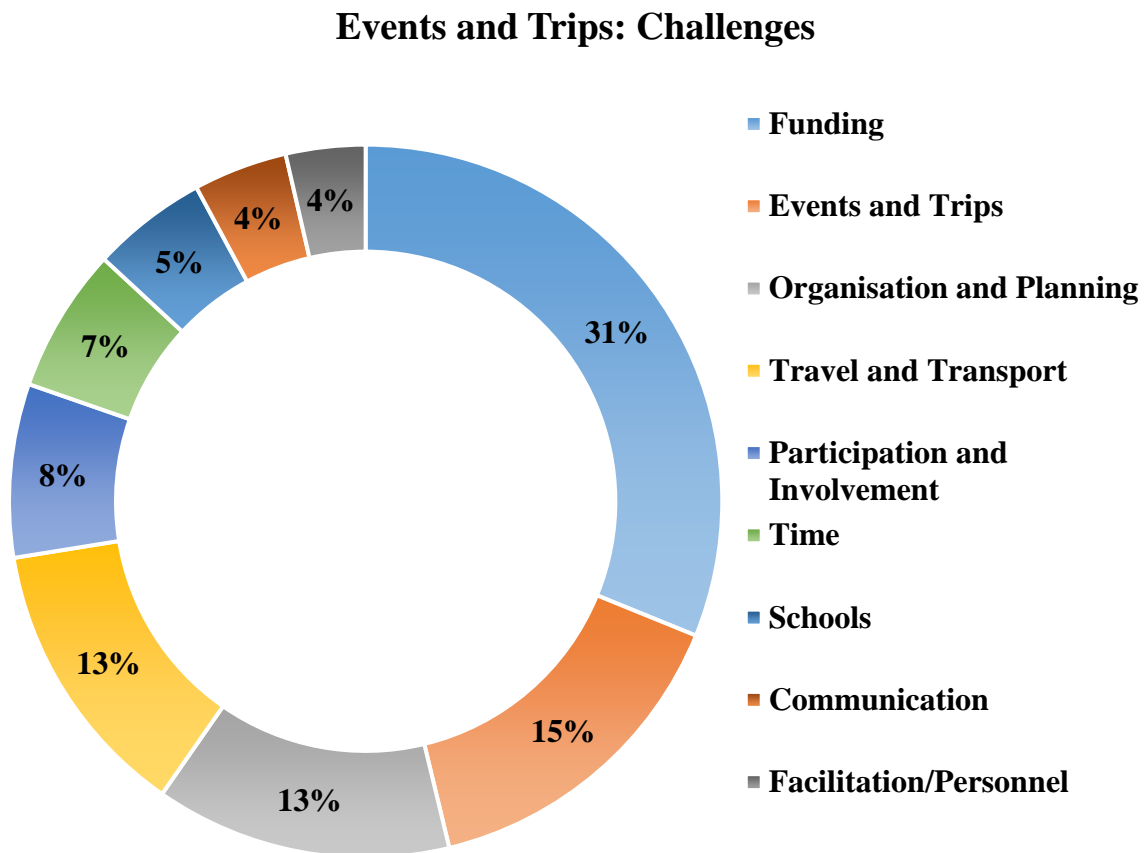
various topics. One member identified that their Comhairle *hosted a graduation for our members who were leaving and we also showcased our projects to the public at the event.* Engaging in international trips means that *it helps you see what it is like with other youth councils* while also having the opportunity to *promote the Comhairle.* Organising events *allows Comhairles to reach and meet people who wouldn't know what it is.*

Engaging in the work of the Comhairle provides an opportunity to *explore new topics, to learn new project ideas, and inspires members to work harder.* It also affords the *opportunity to improve skills, it build up confidence in members* and it means getting *new experiences and more opportunities in life.*

Challenges

The challenges to events and trips were identified in the workshop discussions by the young people (Figure 8).

Figure 8 Challenges to Events and Trips in Comhairle na nÓg



The young people identified challenges relating to events and trips in Comhairle na nÓg including issues of funding, the nature of events and trips, organisation and planning, travel and transport, participation and involvement, time, schools, communication and facilitation/personnel. The following section explores each challenge in more depth.

Funding

One of the greatest challenges identified by the young people was the *lack of funding* for events and trips. Included within this was *not enough budgets for travel, lack of funding for training of Comhairle members, for bonding events, for transport, for good accommodation on trips, to go places and for trips*. Indeed, *trips can become very expensive for Comhairles to fund*.

Events and Trips

Young people identified the challenges associated with events and trips including *no events being organised, a lack of awareness of events, no space to be able to go and not going places*. Young people indicated a need for *more events, cross border events, more bus trips, more craic and more AGM fun*. A challenge was that *we haven't planned more trips or events*, and while *ideas are always proposed, action is not taken*. Not engaging in trips means that there are *no opportunities to bond or spend more time together as a group*. Logistics were also identified as challenging to organising trips and events including *facilities being available, no accommodation for events, getting permission to hold events and safety (making sure that everyone is ok)*. There was also a lack of *recognition of benefits that trips may have* as they are perceived as “*just for fun*” when really it's very educational and benefits social and general learning development. One young person indicated that there is *too much volunteering – Comhairles sometimes seem to often take a back seat and just take part in events*.

Organisation and Planning

Members of Comhairle identified that the *organisation* of events and trips can be challenging. This included *insurance restrictions, can't make everyone happy, suiting everyone, finding the right time that suits people, planning, management of large groups, location and funding*. Events and trips were seen as *hard to organise, taking a lot of effort*.

Travel and Transport

Funding *travel and transport* were identified as a challenge for the Comhairlí na nÓg. *Transport is too expensive and is a big issue since not enough funding.* This is particularly an issue as *most events held in Dublin, further from most members.* Indeed, one member indicated that it is *too hard for Donegal always coming to Dublin, always late.*

Participation and Involvement

Members indicated that *not all people get to go on trips* and as a result it *doesn't include all members.* One suggestion was to ensure that *every Comhairle member should be able to go.* Another issue identified was that *some people only join in for the trip, not the meetings themselves.* Indeed, there was a sense that these people *only want to be part of Comhairle when we go on trips.* The group dynamic can also be challenging with *old members and new members not bonding* while some people *get into fights with new people.* It can be *difficult to avoid arguments* especially *if you are spending a certain amount of time with people from the Comhairle you usually don't spend more than a day or two with.* Another challenge was *getting everyone together, getting people to come to AGMs, the availability of people* and that the *group is too small.*

Time

Time was identified as a challenge for engaging in events and trips. This includes trying to *get a time to suit everyone* and that it is sometimes *difficult to find time and place for everyone.* *People are busy with academics and studying, clubs and extra-curricular activities and hobbies.* The work of Comhairle can mean that *sometimes too busy with a project* meaning that *we work too much with big projects to have time to go on trips.*

Schools

People have school and exams so that hinders them from being able to go on trips. It can be *hard to get permission from parents/teachers* and *schools don't let you miss classes.* Another issue in regards to being able to go on trips and events was that *schools don't know enough about Comhairle so don't tend to allow time off for it, as they don't like us missing days.* Of particular concern was that members *get marked absent for Comhairle events.*

Communication

The young people identified that there is *not enough networking or linking with other Comhairles, with not a lot of communication between Comhairles. As such we don't know what other Comhairles are doing. Receiving information* was also seen as a challenge whereby *communication is sometimes not great. This includes trying to get people to communicate and respond.*

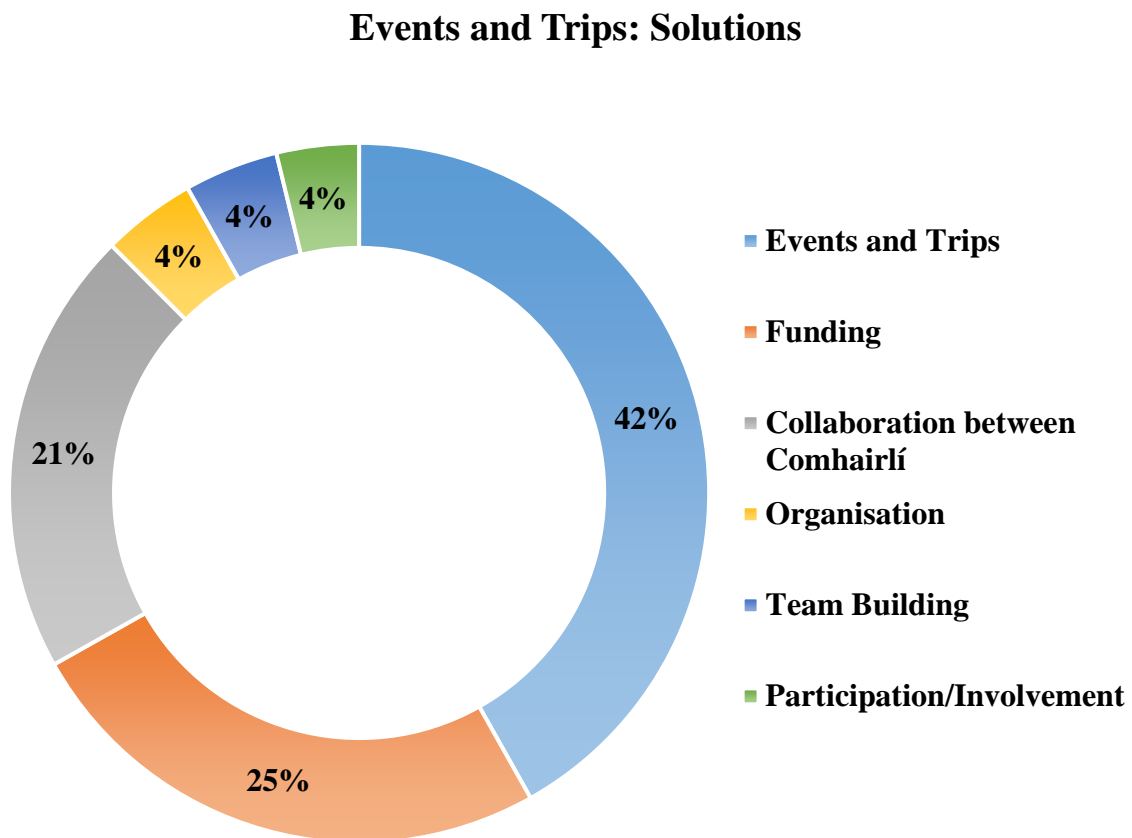
Facilitation/Personnel

One challenge identified by the young people was associated with *facilitators' lack of effort and who are not willing to do trips.* This was especially important when looking for *supervision generally and for buses.*

Solutions

The young people identified solutions for the challenges relating to events and trips in Comhairle na nÓg (Figure 9).

Figure 9 Solutions to the Challenges relating to Events and Trips in Comhairle na nÓg



Solutions to the issues relating to events and trips were identified by the young people including the nature of events and trips, funding, increased collaboration between Comhairlí, organisation, team building and participation/involvement. Each solution will be presented in the following section.

Trips and Events

The young people provided a range of suggestions for trips and activities they would like to engage in as part of their experience with Comhairle na nÓg (Table 7).

Table 13 Suggestions for Trips and Events from the Young People

| Suggested Trips and Events | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Bonding trip</i> | <i>Team building exercises</i> | <i>Trip to the Dáil</i> |
| <i>Countryside events</i> | <i>More fun time</i> | <i>Music Sessions/Event</i> |
| <i>Intergenerational events</i> | <i>Ice-skating</i> | <i>Self-defence</i> |
| <i>Public speaking</i> | <i>Fire-breathing</i> | <i>Healthy eating</i> |
| <i>Yoga</i> | <i>Canoeing and Kayaking</i> | <i>UNICEF summit</i> |
| <i>Three day trip</i> | <i>Local camping trip</i> | <i>Time Capsule</i> |
| <i>Happy Café Roadshow</i> | <i>Aras an Uachtaráin</i> | <i>International Trips</i> |
| <i>Overnight event</i> | <i>Exchanges</i> | <i>Rock climbing</i> |
| <i>Archery</i> | <i>Active puzzling</i> | <i>Orienteering</i> |

Comhairles should organise more events with summer trips or during mid-terms – do not miss school. Having more trips during holidays means that people aren't worrying about exams. One young person suggested to get trips put in place because then we will build better bonds with Comhairle and then we will work better together.

Funding

Solutions provided in order to secure funding for trips and events included *funding from government, fundraising (including colour run, bag packing, sponsored walk, bed push, onsite run, and having a concert) working with business to aid with events and money and subsidising.* One suggestion was to *pool funding to make more events happen.* Indeed, *Comhairles should be allowed to fundraise for ice breaking trips with new members or to meet with other Comhairles.*

Collaboration between Comhairlí

The young people recommended *cooperative relations with Comhairle.* This includes *visiting other Comhairles, getting support from other Comhairles and to exchange invitations between*

Comhairle to one another's events. Other mediums for facilitating collaboration were more meetings between different Comhairles, an online group which all Comhairle members are a part of to have easy access to communicate between Comhairles, to meet up to go for trips and a national sports day for all Comhairle. Indeed, if Comhairles should that are exploring the same topic linked up it could create a larger impact. Additional activities for promoting such collaboration included having a snap chat to upload and inform weekly, a newsletter, hosting event for other Comhairles, Comhairle ball, Comhairle movie night, and awards. There was also a suggestion for collaboration with other bodies outside of Comhairle including the legislative body, county council, other youth work groups and international cooperation between youth organisations in other countries.

Organisation

The young people made a range of suggestions regarding the organisation of events and trips. It was suggested to have an *extra info sheet on consent so parents know exactly what we are doing. Having more meetings more often and on weekends, holidays rather than weekdays* would contribute to better organisation. To ensure good organisation of events and trips it was suggested to have *lots of pre-planning, to compromise on location, time, spending etc. and to shop around for insurance.* It was also recommended to *organise trips on holidays with the help of funding* and to have *less events in Dublin and more in other counties.*

Team Building

Young people emphasised the need for *annual team building for each Comhairle* which gives *Comhairles a chance to get to know its members.* Such *bonding* encourages people to *build relationships with your Comhairle leaders and other members.*

Participation/Involvement

It was suggested that *more dedication from Comhairle members* was required including *equal opportunity* and ensuring that *people actually willing to go to the events and meetings* have the opportunity to participate. Indeed, one young person recommended *restricting the trip to only the committed members.*

Theme 5: Publicity

The young people highlighted the challenges and solutions associated with publicity around Comhairle na nÓg at the workshop discussions.

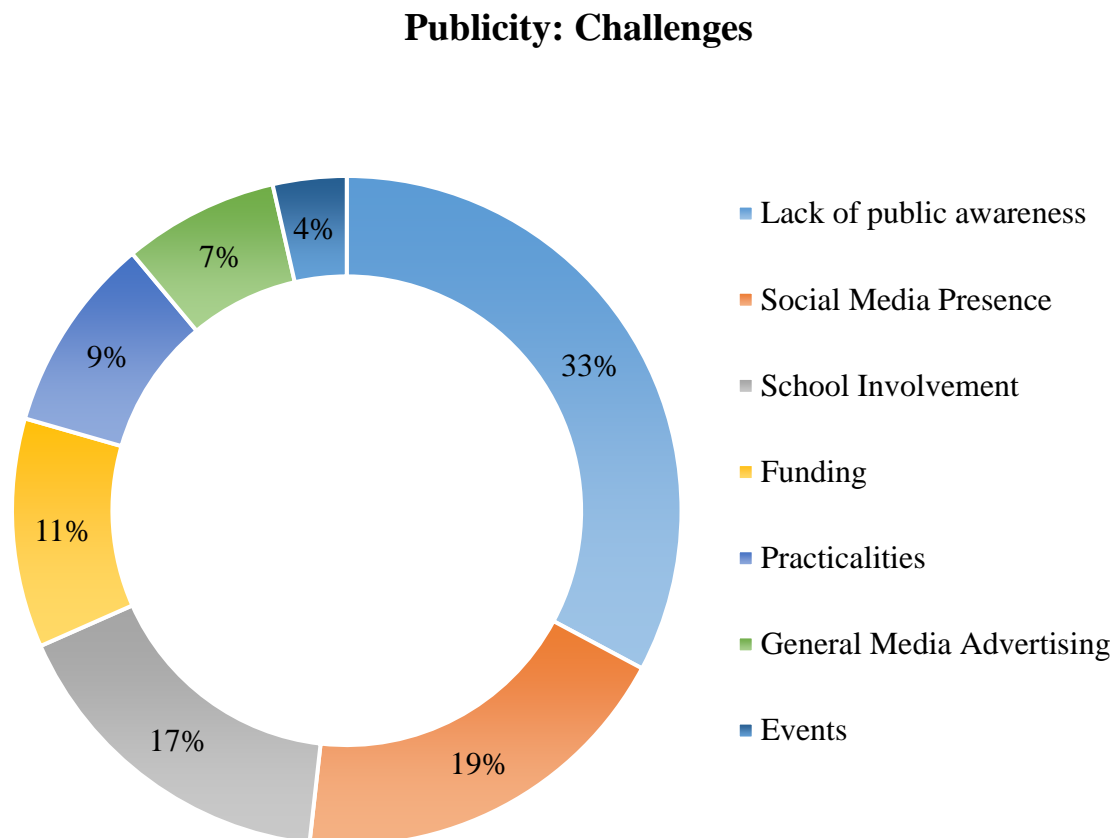
Best Practice

The young people identified best practice related to publicising Comhairle na nÓg. It was suggested that *public events give information and show what we do*. A concern raised by one young person was that the *Irish name- hard to actually know what it is when you hear it*. The work of Comhairle na nÓg contributes towards *raising awareness on certain topics not even just Comhairle*. Being profiled in the *newspaper and making a good impression on people* also contributes to the positive publicising of the Comhairle. One young person suggested that attracting publicity was *the reward and credit for all the hard work we have done*.

Challenges

The young people identified the challenges associated with publicity with the Comhairle na nÓg (Figure 10).

Figure 10 Challenges to Publicity in Comhairle na nÓg



Challenges to publicity within the Comhairle na nÓg included lack of public awareness, social media presence, school involvement, funding, practicalities, general media advertising and events. Each of these will be explored in the following section.

Lack of Public Awareness

Young people suggested that there was a *lack of publicity* about Comhairle na nÓg meaning that *less people know about Comhairle*. Although young people hear of us, (they) *don't know what we do/who we are* meaning that *nobody outside of Comhairle really knows what Comhairle is*. As a result *some people who would be really great on Comhairle don't know about it*. One person suggested that Comhairle operates by *word of mouth as there is no real publicity*. There was a sense of *people not wanting to speak or be seen by public viewers*. It was suggested that there is a *lack of connection with community, lack of interest from young people* and that *people don't care*. One reason provided was that there is *not enough community advertisement* and *no*

one hears about it. Furthermore, trying to know where to advertise for our age groups other than schools is challenging, while certain shops don't want posters etc. in their shops. There is a need to make ourselves known on a national level. It is suggested that, as it stands, people mix it up with Choir na nÓg. Indeed, it was suggested that without knowledge of Comhairle the public doesn't know how we make effect make a change.

Social Media Presence

Young people identified the challenges relating to social media including that *although we have a snapchat a Facebook, and we use it often, no one really likes any of our posts or views any of our snaps other than our own Comhairle members.* A particular barrier was that *not many people on social media – age limits, parents.* Furthermore *some people's parents may not allow their children to be featured on social media.* One member suggested that *people don't want to add us on Snapchat, because they think that adults are in charge of it.* Indeed it was suggested that *social Media accounts are not relevant to young people.* One challenge was that *people forget about Comhairle to post regularly* and one suggestion was to have *someone who's dedicated to constantly updating social media.* One member suggested that *we do not have a snapchat or insta account so it is hard to get the word out there.*

School Involvement

Publicising Comhairle na nÓg in Schools was also seen as challenging as *Comhairle isn't publicized enough in schools.* As discussed earlier in this report, young people believed that *there isn't a lot of promotion in schools about Comhairle* and that *more information in schools (is) needed.* While *schools don't know about Comhairle, some schools don't inform students about or send them to AGMs.* There was a concern that *schools don't want to be included in the Comhairle* and as a result there is *not much talk about it in schools.* Indeed, *schools seem uninterested in telling people what Comhairle is about.*

Funding

The young people called for *funding to promote Comhairle* including *money for advertising.* Indeed, one member believed that *when people aren't aware of Comhairle, they aren't going to*

support – finance. Barriers in this regard included not being able to get funds to make proper ads or for promotional materials.

Practicalities

The practicalities associated with publicising Comhairle na nÓg were identified by the young people. It was suggested that *all mechanisms of publicity have problems and downfalls*. One concern was that the *name in Irish confuses people*. Young people believed that *more pictures (need) to be taken*. It was also suggested that *people (are) embarrassed to be in Comhairle*.

General Media Advertising

One challenge identified by members related to general media advertising. There was need for *money for advertising including in newspapers, general media, radio promotions, TV and local radio*. One young person suggested to *advertise without being cheesy*.

Events

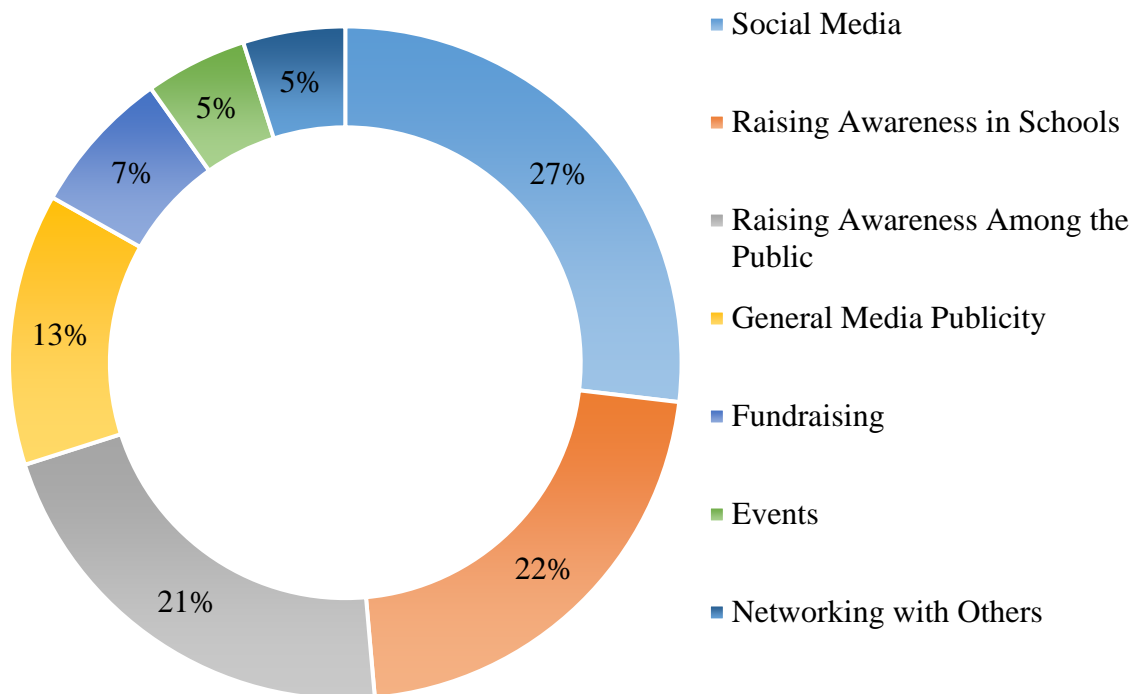
Young people believed that the *lack of publicity restricts events and projects*. Using events to *show what happens in Comhairle and having people available to go and publicise and volunteer to help with the event* was seen as a means for increasing publicity. One suggestion was to *put the Comhairle banner up at events*.

Solutions

Figure 11 illustrates the solutions provided by young people around publicity in Comhairle na nÓg.

Figure 11 Solutions to the Challenges of Publicity in Comhairle na nÓg

Publicity: Solutions



Social Media

Young people recommend having *more social media posts posted by members*. This included *mandatory blog (Instagram, snapchat etc.) for each Comhairle, improv(ing) the website*, as well as *engaging in interaction with twitter, Facebook, snapchat and Instagram*. Members suggested *hosting more online campaigns*, while also *encourag(ing) people to follow Comhairle on Facebook and Snapchat*. A key feature is to *make sure social media sites and platforms are updated regularly and by young people*. Features could encompass *posting videos on Facebook and YouTube*, to provide *education for Comhairles on how to use social media as well as video making etc.* and to have *active social media information events*. Key to its success is to *have dedicated people work on Comhairle publicity*.

Raising Awareness in Schools

Increasing publicity in schools was also seen as important by the young people. It was suggested to *let schools know about it as young people should be told what Comhairle is and what it does.* This includes having *talks, workshops, Comhairle notice boards, connecting with student council, competitions, put up flyers and have Comhairle posters on walls.* One member suggested *sending video of Comhairle to schools in area. Schools should tell students about Comhairle while Comhairle representatives should be sent into schools. Indeed, Comhairle needs to get their name out new members will not join if they don't know.* In order to achieve greater awareness in school, *cooperation from teachers is required.* One suggestion was to *get members from primary schools they have voices too!*

Raising Awareness among the Public

Raising awareness among the public was also seen as an important means for increasing publicity as *the public need to know what Comhairle do.* One member suggested that *instead of only Comhairle members having things such as wristbands, they could hand them out so that other people have something that will spark their interest and curiosity of joining Comhairle.* Another believed that *when mentioning Comhairle to other people, make sure you say that Comhairle is a Youth Council because some people don't know what Comhairle na nÓg means so they won't know what it is.* Events for publicising Comhairle na nÓg amongst the public included *debates on Comhairle, posters, leaflets, marketing campaigns, information packs, showing others our work and that we exist.* One young person called for *more member involvement in promoting your branch.*

General Media Publicity

Increased publicity about Comhairle na nÓg in the media more generally was also suggested. Suggestions included *advertising, ads for Comhairle, link with local media, wristbands, photographers at events, newspaper articles, ads, and celebrity endorsement.* It is important to *talk about it on different media platforms.*

Fundraising

The young people suggested engaging in fundraising in order to *publicise Comhairle and to raise awareness of your Comhairle.* Fundraising activities included *sponsorship, sponsorship and*

raffles. It was recommended to have a definite budget on publicity and for advertisement.

Events

It was suggested to hold Comhairle events to bring in more people and to make it more fun. To increase publicity it is suggested to organise events in local areas by Comhairle to promote Comhairle and to have open events for parents to understand what Comhairle is all about. When holding events, the young people suggested to advertise more way before event, to put up posters

In order to increase visibility of Comhairle members suggested giv(ing) a T-shirt or sticker bands at AGM.

Networking with Others

Networking with others was also seen as a means for increasing publicity around Comhairle na nÓg. Young people recommended more correspondence between Comhairle and student councils, youth groups and clubs including TY⁸ coordinators and Foróige. Organising a time for public relations with county council reps was seen as a means for forming connections between young people and politicians. This could be achieved by allocating set time where local politicians have to set time aside for youth issues - attend councils meetings or we attend their meetings +workshop with these politicians. Hosting more events with other groups and work(ing) with other communities and meeting with local community members was also seen as a means for increasing publicity about Comhairle na nÓg and the work they do.

⁸ TY –Transition Year

Summary Overview

This report has presented the findings from the workshop discussions at the Comhairle na nÓg Showcase in November 2016 and attended by 458 young people. The methodologies employed during the workshop discussions were developed in collaboration with and facilitated by the young people. The areas of improvement which would contribute to a more effective Comhairle na nÓg identified by the young people included increasing engagement and involvement with schools, improving the effectiveness and management of meetings and attendance at Comhairle, addressing issues related to funding including increasing money available and greater transparency, facilitating more and better quality trips and events, and increasing the visibility of Comhairle through publicity, including promoting greater awareness of the work they do among the general public.

Appendices

Appendix 1: About the Report Authors

Dr Deirdre McGillicuddy is Lecturer in Education in Marino Institute of Education and has experience working collaboratively with government departments in capturing the participatory process with children and young people. She currently teaches about policy and practice impacting on children's lives and has particular interest in the areas of sociology of childhood, children's rights and research methodologies with children and young people. She has worked on a number of research projects exploring children and young people's experience of their lives, including the schooling experiences of children in socio-economically challenging communities, participatory research with Traveller children, and she also has experience collaborating with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and the Department of Education and Skills (DES). She has published in the area of children's rights, teacher effectiveness and pedagogy.

Dr Malgosia Machowska-Kosciak (research assistant) is Lecturer in Sociology in Marino Institute of Education and has previously conducted longitudinal research with young immigrant children in the Irish context. She has experience in children's participation, language acquisition and socialisation. She has also been involved in international research networks and projects concerning minority children and young people's experiences of their lives.

We would also like to acknowledge Dr Katriona O'Sullivan who contributed to the collation of the data for this report.

Appendix 2: Nomination Form for Showcase Facilitation Training



Showcase Facilitation Training 2016

Nomination Form for attendance at training event:

Limerick, Saturday 12.11.2016 – max.2 Comhairle members to be invited

This opportunity is ONLY open to two of the young people who will be attending the National Showcase as part of your delegation of 15 members. This form is to be filled in by the Comhairle Coordinator with full details of the 2 Comhairle members participating in the training and submitted to Suzanne Byrne by **3rd November 2016**.

NAME OF COMHAIRLE:

| | |
|--|--|
| Comhairle member 1 | |
| Full name | |
| Date of birth: | |
| Address: | |
| Telephone number: | |
| Email: | |
| Do you have any special needs that require catering for? | |
| Do you have any special dietary requirements? | |
| Comhairle member 2 | |
| Full name | |
| Date of birth: | |
| Address: | |
| Telephone number: | |
| Email: | |
| Do you have any special needs that require catering for? | |
| Do you have any special dietary requirements? | |

Please return your completed form to Suzanne Byrne by

Thursday 3rd November 2016

E: sbyrne@youthworkireland.ie

Appendix 3: Agenda for Showcase Facilitator Training

AGENDA FOR SHOWCASE FACILITATOR TRAINING – LIMERICK 19TH NOVEMBER

- 12:00 Welcome and Introductions
- 12:05 Icebreakers
- 12:15 Run through of Workshop Agenda
- 12:20 Discussion in small groups on – *What is the difference in being a facilitator?*
- 12:30 Feedback and Clarifications
- 12:40 Placemat 1
- 1:00 4 improvements on Cards
- 1:05 Demonstration and Discussion on what will happen with cards.
- 1:15 Introduction to World Cafe
- 1:25 Placemat 2 with one change of tables
- 1.50 Review of Methodology
- 2:00 Questions
- 2:05 Final Tips
- 2:10 Logistics on the Day
- 2:15 PIZZA

Appendix 4: Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase 2016 - Young Facilitators Methodology Notes

Workshop session note:

13.10 Leave lunch and head to **HOGAN MEZZANINE LEVEL 4 (Short brief with all facilitators)**

13.20 Find your Comhairle placemat and get set up there

SESSION ONE

13.30 Your Comhairle na nÓg (Working in Comhairle groups on dedicated placemats)

- This session aims to give each Comhairle time to explore:
 - the things you like about your Comhairle
 - the things you think could be improved
 - the things you don't like
- The aim is to pick your top 4 'improvements' by end of session.

TIMINGS

13.30 Facilitators briefly introduce the session to the members of your Comhairle.

13.32 Discuss the things you like about your Comhairle

13.38 Discuss the things you think could be improved about your Comhairle

13.44 Discuss the things you don't like about your Comhairle

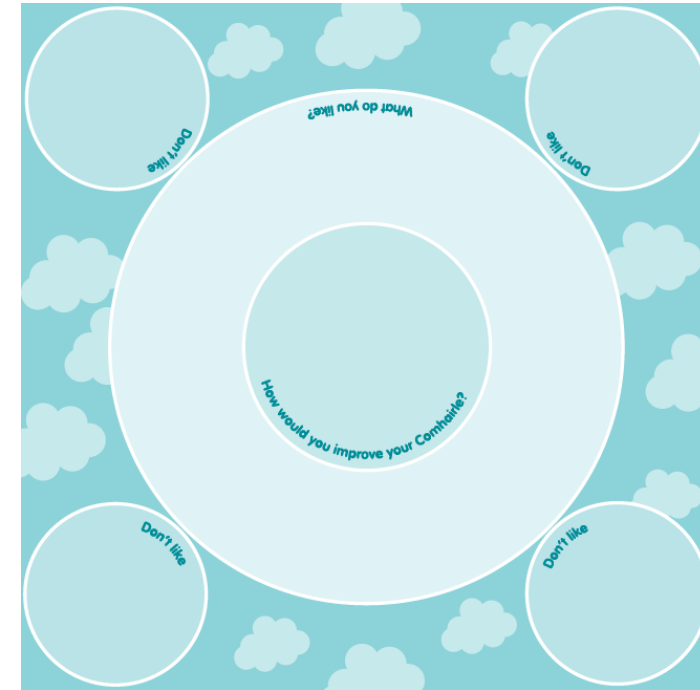
(encourage everyone to write their thoughts and ideas on the placemat)

13.52 All Comhairle prioritise the top 4 'improvement' using sticky dot voting (provided in your packs). Each Comhairle writes their top 4 improvements in on individual cards (provided in your facilitators packs).

COLLECT ALL THE SHARPIES AND BRING THEM TO THE NEXT SESSION

13.57 All improvement cards are put on the wall. Young people categorise them into five themes.

14.05 ALL YOUNG PEOPLE MOVE TO THEIR ASSIGNED TABLES WHILE THE CATEGORIES ARE BEING FINALISED.



SESSION TWO:

14.10 Improving Comhairle na nÓg – World Café

- For this World Café session, there will be 10 zones with 5 tables in each zone.
- Your assigned table number will be on your name badge. Go to this table and bring your facilitators pack with you.
- You will work in mixed Comhairle groups (they will all be assigned a table number which will be on their name badge) and get to visit all five tables in each zone.
- Each category is put on a placemat with matching cards. Write
- Young facilitators support participants to discuss the improvements using the following guiding questions:
 1. Explain more about this theme / What good practice is happening in Comhairle on this theme?
 2. What are the challenges on this theme?
 3. Proposed solutions on this theme.

Timings:

14.10 INTRODUCTIONS AT TABLE

14.15 QUESTION ONE: explain more about this theme/what good practice is happening in Comhairle on this theme?

14.20 QUESTION TWO: what are the challenges on this theme?

14.25 QUESTION THREE: proposed solutions on this theme?

14.30 FIRST MOVE

14.38 SECOND MOVE

14.46 THIRD MOVE

14.54 FOURTH MOVE

15.00 End of Consultation (young people return to Hogan Suite, Level 5 for closing ceremony)



Appendix 5: Issues Impacting on Young People’s Daily Lives

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs wanted to identify some of the issues and challenges facing young people in their lives today. The rationale underpinning the exploration of more general issues in young people’s lives was that the young people on the Steering Committee developing the Showcase methodologies indicated that often the real issues experienced in their lives do not emerge when explored in public way, such as through an Open-Space question. . In order to capture this, the young people were provided with a postcard upon which they identified “the real issues for you as a young person”. These postcards were circulated at the 31 local Comhairlí na nÓg and the young people were asked to bring them with them on the day of the showcase. There were two ballot boxes at the showcase where the young people were encouraged to place their postcards. A total of 186 postcards were returned, representing 56% of attendees at the Comhairle showcase. Figure 12 identifies the main issues identified by the young people from most mentioned (largest text) to least mentioned (smallest

Figure 12 Issues Impacting on Young People’s Daily Lives 2016



text).

Issues⁹ identified included school, drugs and alcohol, mental health, facilities for young people, relationships and sexuality, having a say (voice), transport, money, jobs and opportunities, activities for young people, bullying, peer pressure, social media, adult perception of young people, confidence and self-esteem, stress, expectations, friendship, judgement and stigma, being active, appearance and family. Each issue identified by the young people on the postcards will be explored in the following section.

Schools

Young people identified issues related to school as of particular concern to them in their lives today. *Teens nowadays are put under way too much stress with school, exams and work.* Issues included exams, stress, teachers and standard of teaching, homework and transition into third level. More generally young people highlighted concern about the *negative atmosphere* and that there is *not enough freedom in school*. Difficulty learning Irish was also highlighted, as *the curriculum is terrible and changes need to be made to the way that Irish is taught*.

Young people believed that there was *too much emphasis on exams*, such as the *new Junior Cert* and the *Leaving Cert* which is considered to be *outdated*. The *stress of study/education* and *school exams* included the *stress of the Leaving Cert*, *pressure of school – workload too much* and the *pressure to achieve good grades*, including *an over focus on points*.

Young people expressed their concern about *teachers being unfair, abusing their right of power and bullying students*. One person highlighted their frustration at the *inability to complain about bad teachers effectively and general lack of respect between teachers and students*. There was also concern at the *lack of quality teaching from teachers* and *not receiving a good enough standard of teaching from teachers*.

One young person highlighted their *fear of not getting into college after second level education*. There is a *lack of comfort in knowing you will be ok after the LC¹⁰* with a suggestion that people

⁹ It was noted by the facilitation team that the themes identified by the young people on the postcards were very similar to the issues highlighted at national consultation events, at Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meetings and at regional Comhairle meetings.

¹⁰ Leaving Certificate

should be more informed about other ways to get into college without CAO. Furthermore there is no preparation for college life in Leaving Cert – workshops should be available.

Trying to find time to relax around school work and study was also highlighted as difficult. We get so much homework that we have barely enough time for leisure and even study. One young person stated that for me the real issues are the way students are treated in school and how hard it is to get into college. I also think it is really hard for students to decide what they want to do at such a young age. I think they should be given more time.

Drugs and Alcohol

Young people indicated their concern about *drugs and alcohol*, as *young people are easily influenced by drugs and alcohol*, resulting in *getting into crime*. There was concern about *underage drinking as too many teenagers are drinking now*. One issue was that *under ages (are) getting served in pubs* and that there is *too much pressure about alcohol*.

Mental Health

Mental health, including *depression and anxiety*, is a *big issue for young people and it isn't taught in school*. It was suggested that *young people don't understand the difference between mental health and mental illness*. There are *no systems in place to help with the stress and depression that comes with it*. Indeed, there is *pressure from adults to maintain a high standard of mental health and grades in school*. Young people called for greater awareness around *suicide among young people* and *helplines for people feeling depressed*. It is suggested that *mental health should be taught in depth from 2nd year onwards*.

Facilities

Young people highlighted the *lack of facilities for young people*, including *not having a space that I can just go and be, without playing, when in town alone*. There are *no facilities or places to go* and hence, it is *hard to find places to relax and destress*. Young people suggested that *youth organisations (are) not publicised well and (are) generally in urban areas not rural*. They recommended having *more foreign places to go*.

Relationships and Sexuality

Young people highlighted their concern about their *sexual health and contraception* suggesting that there is a *stigma surrounding use/availability of contraception including oral contraception*

– *young people, particularly women, not being properly educated about their bodies and contraception.* More generally it was suggested that there is a *lack of good RSE and sex education.* One young person expressed the *pressure to engage intimately.* *Homophobia* was also highlighted as an issue for young people in their lives today.

Voice

Members highlighted concern that *young voices (are) not being heard* and there is a *lack of input in big decisions.* A particular issue was that *you have no say in school or in school decisions.* Members also suggested that *young people are often dismissed* and called to *have opinion taken seriously.* The young people highlighted their *inability to vote,* their *lack of representation in government* meaning that they are *disengaged from politics.*

Transport

Young people indicated their concern that *travel fares (are) too expensive* as they are *paying for travel at an adult price.* There was also concern about *traffic and safety* while also suggesting that that there is *not enough transport* and that *transport to different counties* is an issue.

Money

Young people indicated that *not having money to do the same thing as friends* was an issue. *Everything is too expensive so people get bored and do illegal things.* There was also concern around *college fees* and *being able to afford to attend university.* The *cost of living and trips* was also highlighted with one young person suggesting that *more student discounts should be available.*

Opportunities and Jobs

Young people suggested that there *stress to get a job* yet there are *no jobs for young people,* particularly for those *16 or under.* Indeed, *trying to get a job or work experience is hard* with a lack of *opportunities for work with a disability.*

Activities

A particular issue was that there is *nothing to do for young people* which *leads to us being bored.* There are *no fun activities for our age group* while *in my town there isn't really a place for young people in 14-17 to hang out.* As a result there is *nothing to do at the weekends.*

Bullying and Peer Pressure

Young people also highlight *bullying* and *peer pressure*, including the *influence your friends have on you* as an issue for them in their lives today.

Social Media

Social media, *cyberbullying* and *phones* were also identified as impacting on young people's lives. Of particular concern was *technology addiction*, *social media ruining privacy* and the issue of *cyberbullying*, *personal privacy* and *pressure to join*.

Adult Perception

Comhairle members expressed their concern around *discrimination by adults* whereby *older people look down on young people* and that they *are not being taken seriously because of my age*. Furthermore, *our opinions (are) often being considered of lesser value due to our age or lack of our experience*.

Building Confidence

Young people highlighted issues relating to *confidence*, *insecurities* and *self-image* are impacting on their lives today.

Stress

Issues related to *stress*, particularly from *school*, *exams*, *teachers* and *parents* were highlighted as being of concern to young people today.

Expectations

Stemming from stress was young people's *pressure to live up to society's standards*. This included *expectations of yourself*, *pressure from other people* and *expectations* related to *college*, *leaving certificate*, *diploma* and *job*.

Friendship

Making friends and *social interaction* was also perceived as an issue impacting on young people's lives. A particular concern highlighted by one member was the *social awkwardness* caused by *common separation of males and females in the schooling system in Ireland*.

Stigma

Young people highlighted their concern around *stigma* and *being judged* which impacts on their lives. They indicated that they are *afraid of being judged* with one member indicating that they are *judged or laughed at when I show an interest or care about global issues*.

Being Active

Young people highlighted their concern about *sport* and *access to fitness*. It was suggested that *sport isn't wide enough*, while there is *no great variety of sport*. The lack of *sports facilities*, having *sports for girls* and *gym fees* were highlighted as of particular concern. Indeed one young person suggested that *the PE curriculum is undiverse because it focuses too much on team sports and should focus on health related fitness to tackle the overweight teenagers in schools*.

Appearance

The *pressure to have good image* was seen as an issue impacting on young people's lives. This was particularly related to *body image* and *a picture of beautiful and how you should look*. Indeed it was suggested by one young person that *everyone appears prettier, skinnier, taller etc*. *These negative thoughts can take toll on a teenager's mental health*.

Family

Issues relating to *family* were also highlighted as of concern to young people in their lives today.

Summary Overview

186 young people returned their postcards highlighting the issues which impact on their daily lives. Table 14 highlights the issues identified by the young people.

Table 14 Issues Impacting on Young People's Daily Lives

| Most Mentions | | Least Mentions |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| School | Money | Stress |
| Drugs and Alcohol | Opportunities and Jobs | Expectations |
| Mental Health | Activities | Friendship |
| Facilities for Young People | Bullying and Peer Pressure | Stigma |
| Relationships and Sexuality | Social Media | Being Active |
| Voice | Adult Perception of Young People | Appearance |
| Transport | Building Confidence | Family |

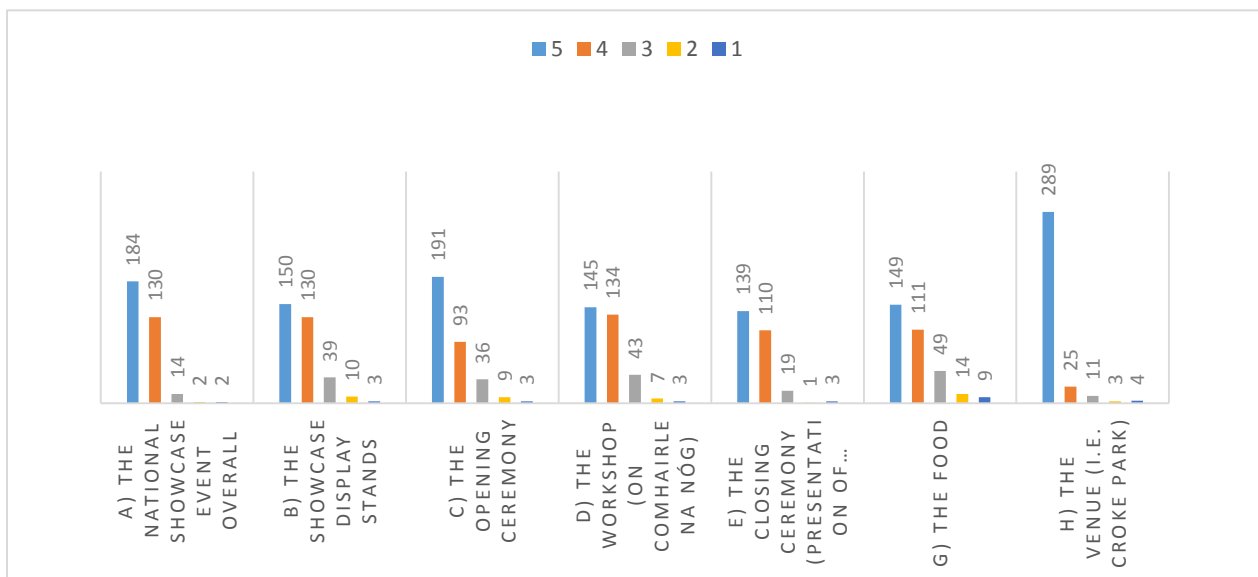
Appendix 6: Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase 2016 - Young people’s evaluation – a summary of the results

The following is a summary of the results from the evaluation forms which were distributed at the closing ceremony of the National Showcase on 24 November 2016 in Croke Park, Dublin. In total, 333 evaluation forms were collected and collated using Survey Monkey to input the results.

As question 4, 5 and 6 of the evaluation form were open-ended, we did a further analysis of these answers by grouping them into different categories to find out the most mentioned best thing about the Showcase, the thing young people want to change about the Showcase and any further comments.

Q1: On a scale of 1 to 5 (key: 1 = not good; 2 = fair; 3 = good; 4 = very good; 5 = excellent), please circle a number to rate each part of the National Showcase:

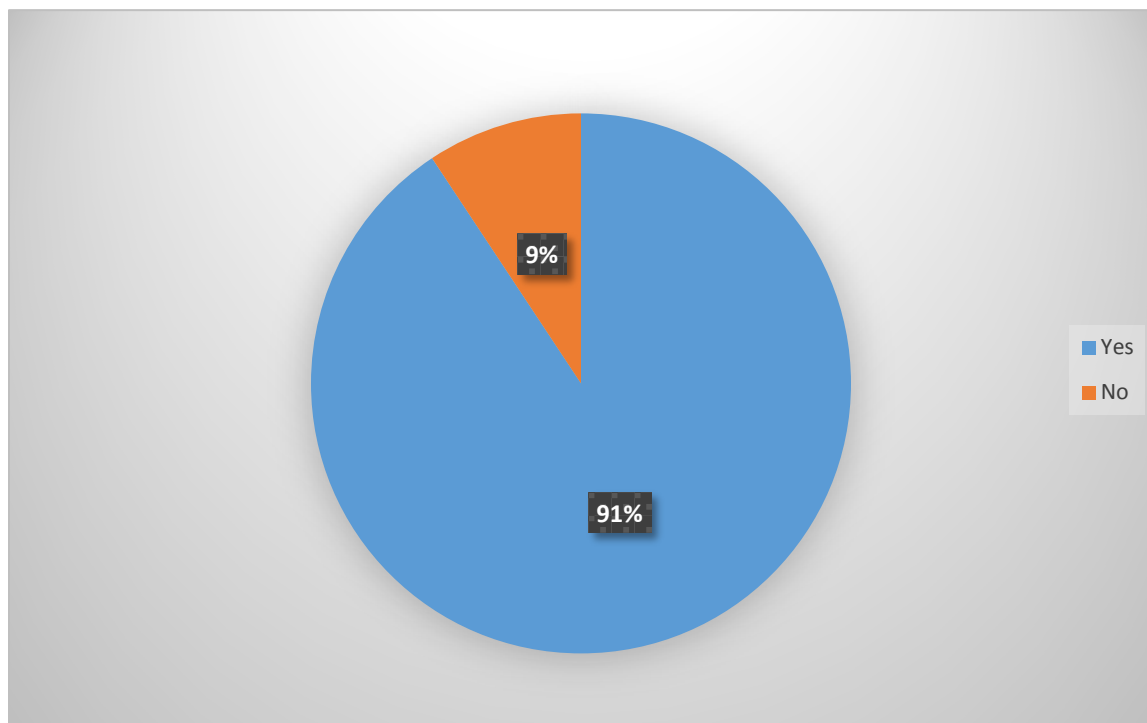
- The National Showcase event overall
- The Showcase display stands
- The opening ceremony
- The workshop (on Comhairle na nÓg)
- The Closing Ceremony (presentation of certificates)
- The food
- The venue (i.e. Croke Park)



From the above chart we can see that each part of the Showcase event was mostly rated as either a “very good” (4 out of 5) or “excellent” (5 out of 5).

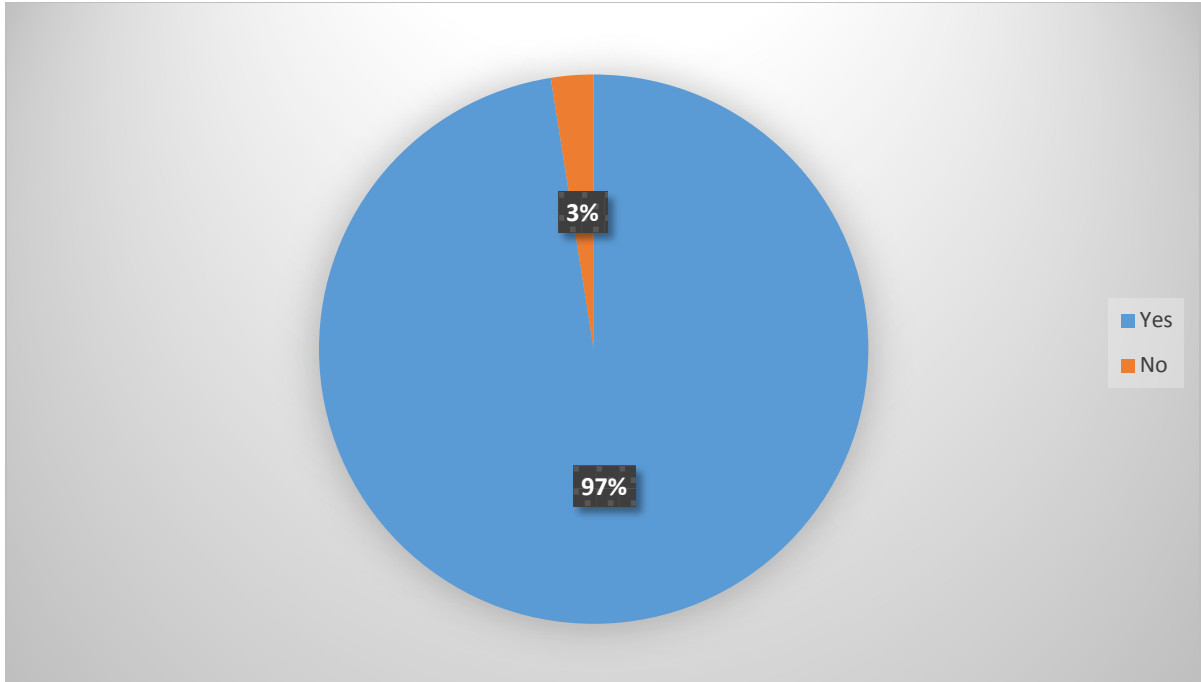
Q2: Do you feel you got the opportunity to Showcase the work of your Comhairle na nÓg today?

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Yes | 90.7% | 293 |
| No | 9.3% | 30 |

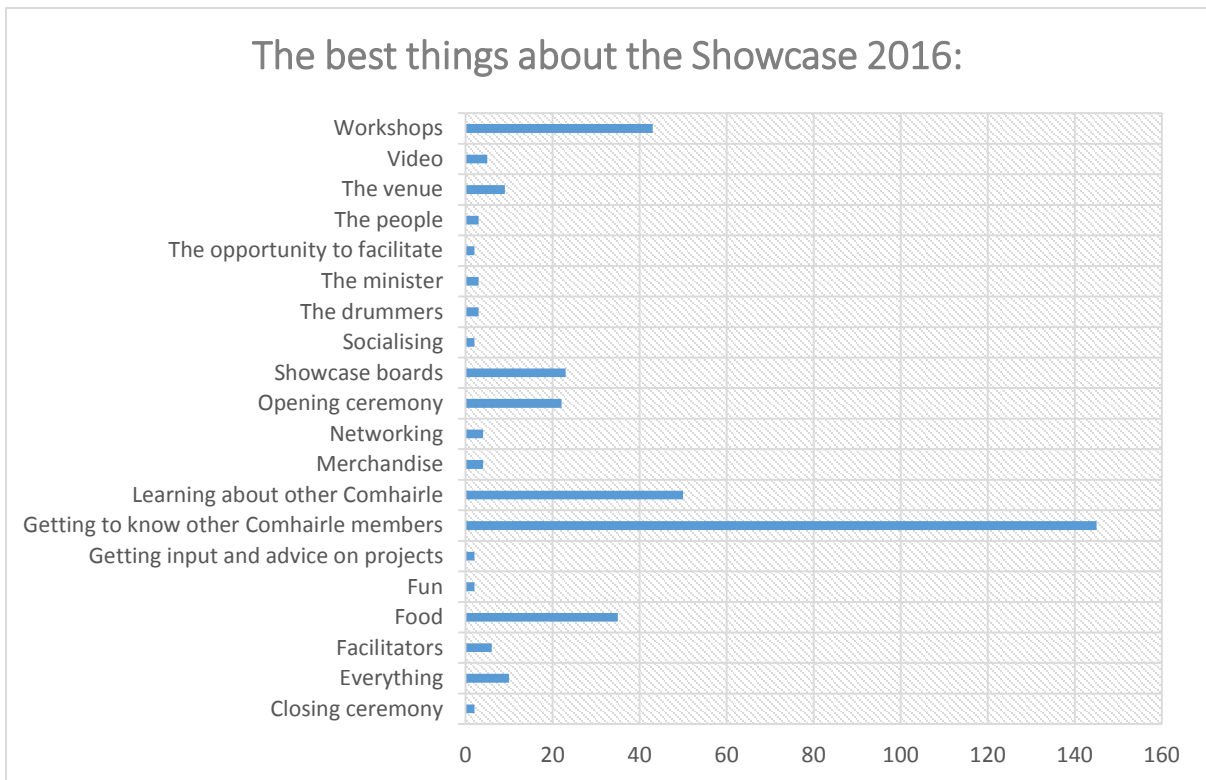


Q3: Do you feel you know more about other Comhairle na nÓg as a result of today's event?

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Yes | 97.5% | 314 |
| No | 2.5% | 8 |



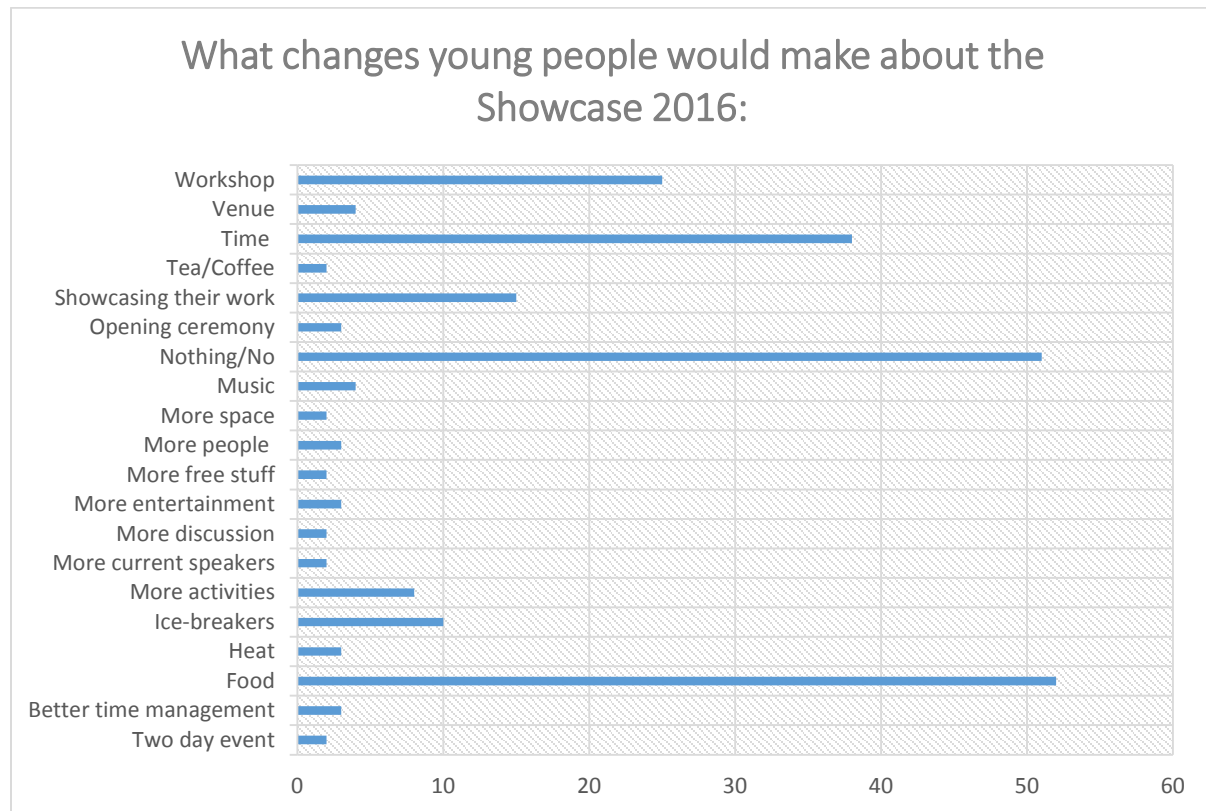
Q4: What was the best thing about the National Showcase?



322 young people out of 333 answered this question. As you can see in the above chart, “getting to know other Comhairle members” is by and far the most mentioned “best thing” about the day. It was mentioned by 145 young people. This category also includes “meeting new people”, “making new friends” and “meeting other Comhairles”.

The next most mentioned “best thing” was “learning about other Comhairle”, which was mentioned by 50 young people. Other significantly mentioned aspects of the Showcase include the “workshops”, “food”, “showcase boards” and the “opening ceremony”.

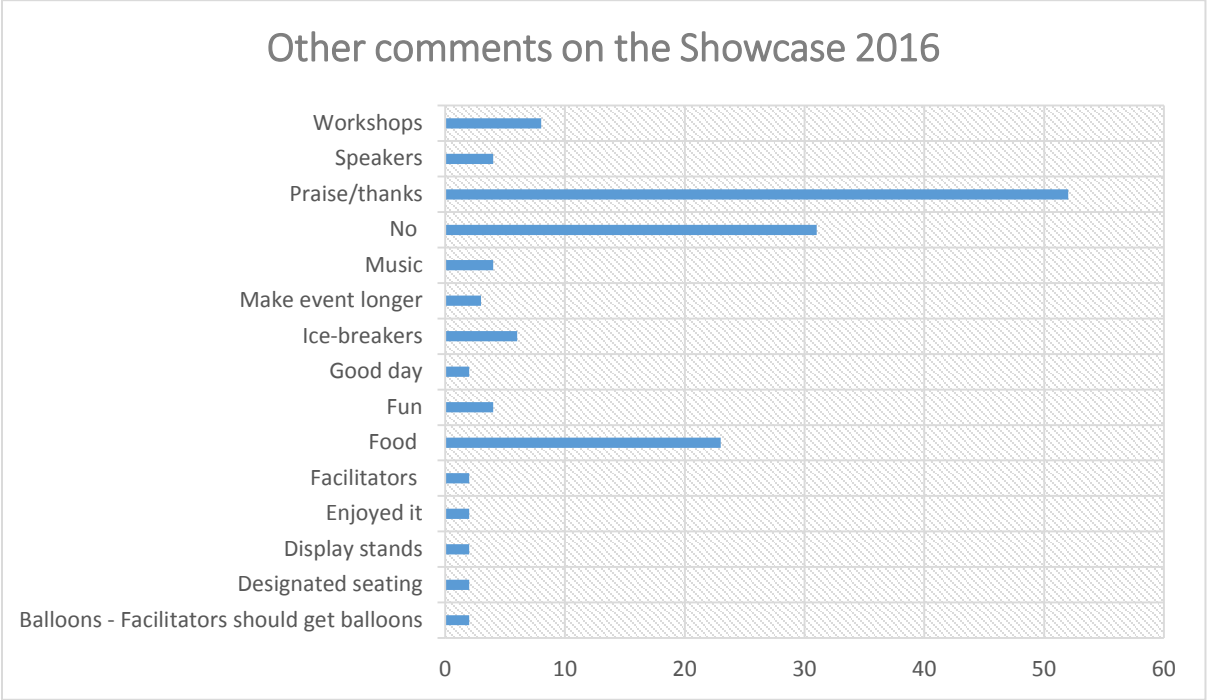
Q5: What (if anything) would you change about the National Showcase?



266 young people out of the 333 answered this questions. Young people most wanted to change the “food”. 52 young people mentioned food in their answer. This includes having a dessert, having more snacks throughout the day, having more options (especially for vegetarians and vegans).

While 51 young people said they wanted “nothing or no” changes, 38 mentioned “time” which included having more time with friends, for bonding and having less time at the showcase boards in the morning. 25 young people mentioned wanting to change the workshop. These comments included the format of the world café, it being repetitive and wanting more space in the workshop room.

Q6: Any further comments or recommendations?



Only 177 young people out of 333 left an answer under “any further comments or recommendations”. 52 of these answers were expressions of praise for the event and gratitude to the organisers. There were several requests for more events of this nature. There were more comments about food and the workshops. 6 people mentioned having “ice-breakers” as a recommendation for future years.

The intention of this summary was to find trends and groups of answers, for the full list of answers, please find the full evaluation summary from Survey Monkey.

Appendix 7: Methods for Recording and Documenting the Consultative Process

The vision laid out by the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*¹¹, states

Our vision is to make Ireland the best small country in the world in which to grow up and raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.

Integral to this is the realisation of children's rights, as laid out in Article 12 of the UNCRC¹², to have a voice in decisions that affect them, particularly in relation to their local communities, schools and wider formal and informal education system¹³. The DCYA Citizen Participation Unit have been integral to shifting Irish policy landscape to recognise children are citizens of today and not just adults of tomorrow¹⁴ by ensuring that children and young people in Ireland have a say in decisions impacting on all aspects of their lives.

The role of the researchers within this consultation was to compile this report using the data generated by the young people at the consultative workshops¹⁵. Reporting on the consultative process involved observation and synthesis of the data generated.

The following approach was adopted by the research team in compiling the data for this report on the Workshop Discussion at the Comhairle na nÓg workshops:

1. Field research was recorded using field notes and photographs in order to document the consultative process, the data generated and to note any comments made by the young people when exploring the themes at the World Café.

¹¹ Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) (2014) *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, The national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020*, Dublin: DCYA

¹² States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (Article 12 UNCRC)

¹³ Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) (2014) *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, The national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020*, Dublin: DCYA

¹⁴ <http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2FChildYouthParticipation%2Faboutus.htm&mn=chik&nID=1>

¹⁵ Details on the methodology employed at the consultations are outlined above

2. Data generated and recorded on the placemats, flashcards and postcards were collected and synthesised in preparation for this report.

Analysis and presentation of the data is organised under three themes which shaped the structuring of the consultation day.

1. The best practice related to the theme as reported by the young people as evident in their Comhairle na nÓg
2. The challenges to addressing the theme
3. Proposed solutions for the challenges in addressing the theme.

The data generated was transcribed and organised into a thematic framework using MAXQDA. In order to preserve the authenticity of the young people's voice(s) and to acknowledge the complexities involved in framing what they say¹⁶ the researcher adopted a reflexive listening approach¹⁷ to attempt to overcome over-interpretation of the data. The report is structured around the themes identified through the collation of the data generated by the young people attending workshop discussions.

¹⁶ James A (2007) Giving voice to children's voices: Practices and problems, pitfalls and potentials. *American Anthropologist* 109(2): 261–272.

¹⁷ Hohti, R., & Karlsson, L. (2014). Lollipop stories: Listening to children's voices in the classroom and narrative ethnographical research. *Childhood*, 21(4), 548-562. doi:10.1177/0907568213496655