

PRIORITIES FOR YOUTH
SUMMARY OF PRIORITY AREAS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

VISION, AIMS AND ACTIONS

Priorities for Youth	
DE Vision	Every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development.
Strategic aims of Youth Work in Education	To contribute to raising standards for all and closing the performance gap between the highest and lowest achieving young people by providing access to enjoyable, non-formal learning opportunities that help them to develop enhanced social and cognitive skills and overcome barriers to learning
	To continue to improve the non-formal learning environment by creating inclusive, participative settings in which the voice and influence of young people are championed, supported and evident in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes.

Raising standards for All				
Priority 1: Youth Work contributing to Raising Standards for All				
Priority 1: Rationale	Youth work has an important role to play in raising standards in education. To achieve this, youth work should be planned and delivered in response to the assessed need for a youth work intervention.	There should be stronger strategic planning, supported by a composite assessment of need at local, sub regional and regional level. Planning should include an assessment of statutory and voluntary capital requirements. This will provide a clear framework for the delivery of youth services.	Robust qualitative and proportionate reporting systems, along with clear performance indicators and measurable evidence of progress and achievement of the young people will demonstrate the contribution of youth work to improved educational outcomes for young people and, consequently, its public value.	The current age range for youth work goes nine years beyond the compulsory school age. Given the pressure on the education budget for the foreseeable future, the current age range is too broad to provide a consistent level of services for all those in the age range 4 – 25.
Priority 1: Action 1	Planning, funding and delivery of youth work will be based on the ESA composite (local and regional) assessment of need and will support requirements linked to the DE key priorities at local, sub-regional and regional level.			
Priority 1: Action 2	ESA will develop a strategic three year Regional Youth Development Plan (RYDP) for DE approval, which will be implemented via Annual Youth Development Plans across all levels. This will address the DE priorities and will be informed through stakeholder engagement in the form of Advisory Groups established in line with emerging RPA District Council structures. DE will determine the membership and function of these groups and will issue guidance, if necessary.			
Priority 1: Action 3	ESA will support and encourage the development of robust quality assurance systems in all parts of the youth service.			
Priority 1: Action 4	ESA will design a framework of expected outcomes for all types of provision, proportionate to the support provided and in line with the RYDP.			
Priority 1: Action 5	ESA will design and implement an appropriate management information system (MIS) for all DE-supported youth work which will inform future planning and evaluation and will consider the IT infrastructure requirements for funded provision.			
Priority 1: Action 6	ESA will develop an annual report for youth work to provide a high level summary of investment, activities, and outcomes achieved.			
Priority 1: Action 7	<p>There will be four distinct age bands for ESA funded youth work, 4 – 8, 9-13, 14-18, 19-21. Services for young adults in the age range 22-25 will only be considered where there is a compelling and evidenced need for youth work interventions for this age range.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus for the younger age range of 4 to 8 will be through general youth work provision linked to the Youth Work Curriculum. • The priority age bands will be 9 to 13 and 14 to 18 for the provision of youth work activities, in line with the priority needs identified. • The focus for the older age range of 19 to 21 will be either issue-based programmes or volunteering and leadership opportunities. 			
Priority 1: Action 8	The RYDP should include actions designed to ensure greater progression for young people in the revised age ranges. For the 16+ age range the focus should be on programmes that provide access to leadership/training opportunities or apprenticeships. Young people should also			

	have access to recognised and/or accredited programmes to volunteer either within units or in the wider community.
Priority 1: Action 9	ESA will develop robust and proportionate quality assurance systems to monitor and evaluate youth service provision taking into consideration ETI standards and inspection findings.

Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equity					
Priority 2: Youth Work contributing to Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equity					
Priority 2: Rationale	There is a significant gap in achievement between the highest and lowest achieving young people, and those most and least disadvantaged.	Specific groups of young people are more likely to experience barriers to learning, participation and progression and consequently be at risk of achieving poor educational outcomes.	There is a need to address and minimise root causes of educational disadvantage and barriers to learning that young people face.	Youth work in statutory and voluntary youth settings, schools and through detached and outreach work provides additional opportunities to support young people's learning and development and improve employability by re-engaging them with education.	It can also equip children and young people with the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to recognise, understand and respect difference; and provide opportunities for children and young people to put these skills into practice.
Priority 2: Action 1	<p>DE will allocate the global youth work budget to ESA on the basis of a funding distribution mechanism, weighted according to disadvantage, which will determine a notional distribution amount for each District Council level. This funding mechanism will replace the existing population based Youth Assessment of Relative Need (ARNE) exercise used for the ELBs, and the non-ARNE ELB and YCNI allocations. It will be for ESA to determine actual allocations.</p> <p>Funding to support Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations (RVYOs) will be capped at no more than 10% of the youth budget available to support local units, programmes and projects operating at a local level (excluding ESA admin which will also be kept to a minimum to ensure a focus on frontline delivery).</p>				
Priority 2: Action 2	There will continue to be an element of non-targeted/generic youth provision, particularly for those in the 4 – 8 age group.				
Priority 2: Action 3	<p>Targeted provision will be supported to help meet the needs of specific groups of young people, within the Section 75 grouping, or those who may be at greater risk of social exclusion, marginalisation or isolation because they experience a combination of barriers to learning, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, or at greater risk of social exclusion; • Young people engaged in risk taking behaviour; • Young people who live in areas of deprivation or in interface areas; • Young people not in, or who are at risk of disengaging from, education, employment or training; • Young people with a SEN or with disabilities; • Young people who are newcomers or have English as an additional language; • Young people in care; • Young carers and young parents; • Young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender; • Young people from the Traveller Community; 				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people living in rural isolation.
Priority 2: Action 4	ESA will reflect, in the planning and delivery of youth services, key actions for youth as set out in other relevant DE policies, including the CRED policy and recommendation 18 of the Review of Irish Medium which states that <i>'The Department of Education should encourage and support informal opportunities for learning through the medium of Irish in the youth sector'</i> .
Priority 2: Action 5	ESA will prioritise access to, and longer opening times for, centres or units operating within areas of disadvantage and on or near interface areas including during periods when community tensions are heightened. ESA will review the current use of standardised contracts or agreements for schemes of assistance. The opening times and staffing levels should be determined on the basis of assessed need, taking account of the need for flexibility and contingency for unforeseen events.
Priority 2: Action 6	ESA will ensure that outreach and detached youth workers are deployed in response to the need identified, rather than historic deployment patterns.

Developing the Non Formal Education Workforce				
Priority 3: Youth Work contributing to enhancing the Non-Formal Learning Environment				
Priority 3: Rationale	Youth work supported by DE relies on a wide range of qualified and unqualified staff, including a significant bank of over 20,000 volunteers. It is made up of a range of statutory and voluntary provision, each with different employers, practices and ethos.	Sustaining and supporting the levels of volunteers, strengthening governance and accountability arrangements and supporting improved practice will be key to delivering this priority.	Training and support for the youth workforce is fundamental to achieving and maintaining a consistently high quality of service to young people. In order to implement the Priorities for Youth, the workforce needs a range of support systems to enable sharing of practice, driving up quality standards, accessing enhanced support for specific issue based youth work and administration and governance.	Staff development and training should enable youth workers, volunteers and managers to: articulate the value of the service and celebrate its educational achievements; evaluate their work effectively through evidencing progression, measuring the learning outcomes for individuals and demonstrating the positive impact of youth services on communities; support the active and meaningful participation of young people in various youth work settings; and provide on-going and specialised training for specifically identified needs.
Priority 3: Action 1	A Practice Development Unit (PDU) will be established and managed by ESA. It will identify, coordinate and secure the provision of a range of functions, such as relevant and proportionate training, continuous professional development opportunities, application of the non-formal curriculum and its links to the revised curriculum, advice on governance, legal and regulatory requirements, participation and development and support for self-evaluation. A separate unit for developing the curriculum will no longer be required.			
Priority 3: Action 2	Proportionate support may be made available where practice has been evaluated as needing development, or where inspection findings have evaluated the provision as inadequate or unsatisfactory. ESA will commission appropriate additional or specialist support where necessary.			
Priority 3: Action 3	The PDU will establish a forum for the sharing of information across all education sectors, including a range of relevant higher education providers, commission or develop support materials, and assess the need for senior managers, youth workers, volunteers and voluntary Management Committees to develop their capacity for good governance and continuous improvement through best practice.			
Priority 3: Action 4	ESA will support a continuous professional development programme to enhance the leadership and management competencies for youth work staff and provide opportunities for managers to keep pace with education policy overall.			
Priority 3: Action 5	ESA will explore the potential for youth workers to have access to elements of support services deemed necessary, which are currently available to schools for young people with additional needs.			
Priority 3: Action 6	ESA will agree a system with employers for linking the management and reporting arrangements for youth work staff to the achievement of agreed outcomes in the RYDP. The need to recruit, train and retain volunteers will be reflected in the duties of the Management Committee/Leader in Charge, built into Service Level Agreements and contracts with units, projects and programmes they either deliver or support.			

Improving the Non-Formal Learning Environment

Priority 4: Youth Work contributing to Improving the Non-Formal Learning Environment

Priority 4: Rationale	<p>Improving the non formal learning environment should not only include the physical environment, but also the practice in that environment. Area-based planning is about anticipating the future education needs of an area and planning to meet those needs within the confines of the projected budget. Under the current system, the ELB Youth Service currently manages and maintains the range of statutory outdoor education centres, as well as the statutory youth estate and the Department manages the capital requirements of the voluntary youth sector through a separate scheme. This creates a disparate system for assessing overall capital requirements. Youth Development Plans will provide a means for assessing the statutory and voluntary capital requirements, in order to maximise the use of the education and wider community estate. Youth Development Plans will also consider IT requirements.</p>	<p>Participation is an integral part of youth work practice and must be embedded throughout its delivery. The opportunities for participation in the youth service have evolved significantly since the late 1970s when the Department issued specific guidance "The Greater Involvement of Young People in the Youth Service". The Model for Effective Practice has put the participation of young people at the centre of youth work and the extent and success of their participation is a major emphasis in any inspection activity. Youth workers should have the flexibility to adopt the most suitable approach to enhancing participation within their setting, reflecting the needs of the young people at each age and stage of their development, and supporting young people to participate across a range of formal participative structures where they wish to.</p>	<p>Every opportunity should be given to participate in all aspects of the youth service. The focus will be on creating opportunities for participation that meet the needs and aspirations of young people. Whilst formal participative structures may be a highly visible form of youth participation, there is a wide and diverse range of less formal, but no less important, forms of participation which involve young people as recipients, volunteers, junior leaders, partners and evaluators.</p>	<p>Consultation on proposals for a Network for Youth was completed in 2008 and a 'Network of Networks' option agreed, to use existing resources to build on and strengthen the networks and systems that are already in place for young people. This provides the context and starting point for the following actions on participation. In developing new arrangements, consideration must be given to developing a credible and accountable voice for both the empowered articulate and less empowered less articulate young people, built on strong local foundations.</p>
Priority 4: Action 1	<p>ESA will carry out a baseline audit of currently funded/supported provision to identify gaps and potential for over provision to inform the development of the needs assessment. This will include a review of the statutory youth estate and outdoor education centres.</p>			
Priority 4: Action 2	<p>ESA will administer both revenue and capital support for voluntary units/clubs who meet future funding criteria. This will be done through the Youth Development Plans. DE will no longer administer a separate Voluntary Youth Capital Scheme.</p>			
Priority 4: Action 3	<p>ESA, in collaboration with key sectoral partners, will develop options for a flexible contemporary model for strengthening participation in the youth service at a local, sub-regional and regional level. The pilot model, to be approved by DE, must take into account existing and emerging participative structures and forums, but must link effectively to the delivery of the RYDP. It will take into consideration the outworking of the Big</p>			

	Deal, including the need for participation workers at a sub regional level, the agreed 'Network of Networks' option for 'Network for Youth' and other good practice in relation to participation. Young people in youth-led or youth-governed participative forums or in generic youth settings should be enabled and supported to help further develop the proposals.
Priority 4: Action 4	Practitioners within individual units, projects and programmes will be required to demonstrate and provide evidence of how they have supported an ethos and culture of active participation, and how the young people are involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes/projects, proportionate to the support provided. ETI will continue to evaluate the quality of participation, including the culture of participation, within units during inspection. Prescriptive guidance on participative structures is no longer required, and the remaining elements of the formal guidance issued by DE in 1979 will be withdrawn.
Priority 4: Action 5	ESA will provide access to a regionally managed small grants programme, supported by one organisation or a range of organisations, which will allow for young people to administer grants to other young people. The programme will be aimed at strengthening the participation of young people as decision-makers.

Transforming Non Formal Education Management

Priority 5: Youth Work contributing to Transforming Non Formal Education Management

Priority 5: Rationale	<p>The existing administrative structures in the DE funded youth service can create inconsistency in practice and quality of provision. There are currently six different youth funding systems, with varying degrees of evaluation of the impact or public value achieved, and little or no coherence between what is being funded regionally and at a local level.</p>	<p>The Department intends to bring greater coherence to deploying youth work resources across the north through the introduction of ESA. All funding decisions, local and regional, will be based on the needs identified in the RYDP, which will provide greater consistency, coherence and cost-effectiveness in the interests of maintaining front line services for young people.</p>	<p>It will be important to set aside historic funding considerations to ensure that investment is directly relevant to the collective needs of young people, whilst at the same time addressing issues of probity, fairness and transparency.</p>
Priority 5: Action 1	<p>Historic funding arrangements for local and regional programmes and organisations will be phased out, and replaced with a converged (local and regional) approach to securing services on the basis of identified need to meet DE objectives. The new funding scheme will be developed to support local and regional services assessed as needed in the RYDP, rather than services available, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project funding - used to finance a specific youth project or outcome; • Development funding - where youth organisations are effectively supported to provide additional or enhanced youth services; • Strategic funding - that is given to, often well established, youth organisations recognised to be of strategic importance and whose continued existence and activities are considered to be beneficial to delivering quality youth services; and • Regional funding to provide services to support effective youth work practice in satellite units or groups, training or, in exceptional cases, issue specific programmes assessed as needed on a regional basis. 		
Priority 5: Action 2	<p>ESA will only consider funding those organisations who can demonstrate clearly that their services are required in terms of the delivery of the RYDP.</p>		
Priority 5: Action 3	<p>While a range of regional groups may offer support services to individual youth units, there is a need to rationalise the number of regional groups funded. ESA will support innovative schemes to effect the rationalisation of regional support structures, such as sharing of back office functions, amalgamation or clustering arrangements.</p>		
Priority 5: Action 4	<p>ESA will publish the RYDP to demonstrate the levels of demand for youth work within the framework of DE priorities, and the ESA supported provision in areas. This should enable increased engagement with other departments, inform the work of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, and philanthropic and European funding streams and, where appropriate, facilitate merged or aligned investment in response to identified need which cannot be addressed by ESA.</p>		

