Report on the Consultations with Minority Ethnic Young People

Deirdre Fullerton Insights Health and Social Research

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASD</td>
<td>Autistic Syndrome Disorder (Neurodiversity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOBF</td>
<td>Better Outcome Brighter Futures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYP</td>
<td>Children and Young People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCEDIY</td>
<td>Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Direct Provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAL</td>
<td>English As second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAA</td>
<td>Gaelic Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNN</td>
<td>Hub na nÓg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAP</td>
<td>Housing Assistance Payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTI+</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPO</td>
<td>National Participation Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYCi</td>
<td>National Youth Council Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POC</td>
<td>People of Colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPSN</td>
<td>Personal Public Service Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSE</td>
<td>Relationship Sexuality Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUSI</td>
<td>Student Universal Support Ireland (3rd Level Grant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of Tables**

Table 1: Profile of attendees attending each of the groups.

Table 2: Summary of messages on burning flames ordered by mentions
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Figure 1: Diagram used to explain the process of audience and influence

Figure 2: Examples of the messages from Activity 1: Burning Issues

Figure 3: Example of completed Tablemat
Summary

REASON FOR CONSULTATION

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is currently developing a new framework for children and young which will place children and young people at the centre of policy. As different groups of children and young people may face specific difficulties, DCEIDY felt it was important to seek the views of groups of children and young people who may not have been included in recent Government consultations on this topic. These groups include children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, young carers, and homeless young people. This report presents the findings of the consultations with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

AIM OF THE CONSULTATION

The Government wanted to hear the young people’s views on living in Ireland today, what was good, not so good, and what could be improved. The consultation asked the same questions which were developed and piloted by young people for the UNCRC ‘What We Think’ consultation.

The Consultation Questions

1. What is the best thing about being a young person in Ireland today?
2. What do you not like about being a young person in Ireland?
3. What is the one thing you would change for young people in Ireland?

HOW WERE THE YOUNG PEOPLE CONSULTED?

The consultation took place in Dublin in July 2022. The consultation approach was designed by the DCEDIY National Participation Office and the National Youth Council Ireland’s Equality and Intercultural Team. The consultation used activities designed to place young people at their ease and to ensure they felt comfortable expressing their views and opinions.
Consultation Activities

Activity 1: Burning Issue (individual task)
Activity 2: Open Space activity (in groups) to explore the three consultation questions
Activity 3: World Café – to explore the themes in greater detail

In Activity 1 and 2 the young people discussed what was good and not so good about living in Ireland. In Activity 3, they put forward ideas to solve to the issues they raised.

WHO WAS CONSULTED?

In total, 102 young people aged between 11 and 25 years, from across the country including Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laoise, Longford, Meath, Waterford, Westmeath, and Wicklow attended the event. Young people from different ethnic minorities including Roma, Traveller, African, and Asian communities took part. Young people from three Direct Provision centres attended.

CONSULTATION FINDINGS

What is good about being a young person in Ireland today

Participants’ responses on what is good about being a young person in Ireland centred on having some of their basic rights met. These included: having access to education (2nd and 3rd level), healthcare, freedom of speech, religious freedoms, and youth voice. Some mentioned the absence of war and good discipline and laws

Participants were appreciative of some of the youth and recreation services available to young people in Ireland and described specific activities e.g., sport (football), ethnic minority clubs, clubs for socialising/creative activities, and gaming.

A small number of young people mentioned the good transport in cities and cheaper travel for children and young people, and at one table the participants talked about acceptance of gender equality in Ireland. A few mentioned the beauty of the country and the warmth of the people. However, not everyone was positive in their assessment of life in Ireland today referring to the pressures on young people and challenges of being a person of colour living in this country.
What is not good about being a young person in Ireland today

Whilst access to education featured in participants’ views of the positive aspects of being a young person in Ireland, problems with the education system and schools dominated the responses to this question. These problems included:

- Poor mental health in schools / pressure to achieve
  - Examination system/Pressure to achieve (from school/home)
- Popularity issues especially in all girl schools.
- Need for support
  - Need to address students’ basic needs before expecting them to do well
  - Not enough support for students at risk of early school leaving
  - Travellers with good attendance in schools still having literacy problems
- Discrimination in schools
  - Lack of support for minority students
  - Young people from Traveller community feeling they don’t belong in schools
  - Racism from staff and students
    - Use of slurs in schools
    - Teachers disrespectful/dismissive of racial issues
  - Teachers making assumptions on students’ ability based on appearance
  - Teachers neglecting students with ASD/additional needs
- Segregation in schools (gender)
- Problems with the curriculum and subjects
  - Not enough choice in subjects
  - Not enough preparation for ‘real life’ e.g., taxes, loans etc
  - Limited support/resources to help learn Irish
- Third level education
  - Cost/ SUSI grant requires parental means test
  - Not enough Universities/places

Reflecting some of the issues of discrimination raised within the school system, participants described a lack of acceptance in Irish society including transphobia, discrimination and prejudice (specifically against the Traveller community), gender inequality, and ableism. Some mentioned racism in education, housing, and workplaces. Young people described
experiencing culture and language barriers, finding it hard to fit in and to make friends. Some experienced challenges with the English language when they arrive in Ireland. Some are bullied for their accents. They described how different cultural backgrounds (clothes, accent, culture) makes it difficult to mix, resulting in young people staying within their own community.

Young people described shortcomings in the leisure and recreation facilities available for young people. They described a dearth of free leisure activities, particularly in rural areas. Other gaps included not enough to do during the bad weather, lack of options to take part in minority sports e.g., boxing. The young people described some of the barriers they face to accessing available leisure and recreation facilities which included not enough of a mix of people in clubs, a lack of youth services for young Travellers, poor transport and poor links between Direct Provision and youth services.

The high cost of living and problem with housing in Ireland was discussed across a number of tables. Participants talked about inflation and increasing cost of living without increases in wages. They talked about the housing situation (shortage and high costs) and lack of housing for refugees. Specific issues included:

- Poor accommodation for Travellers
- The HAP scheme – long waiting lists and no clarity on how the system works
- Direct provision houses far from towns (with poor transport connections)
- Segregation in housing
- High rent for students

Some of the young people also described problems with Direct Provision. This group talked about “bad facilities”, “restricted freedoms”, not having a PPS number and not being able to attend university until they have been in Ireland for 3 years.

Other issues raised by the young people included a lack of youth voice (e.g., no vote at 16, adults not taking young people seriously) and abuse of power with minorities by people in authority (e.g., Garda and security guards).
Suggestions of changes for young people in Ireland

Participants’ suggestions of changes focused on addressing the issues/problems they identified.

Summary of suggestions within the themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Suggestions of changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve equality</td>
<td>More acceptance and fairness in all aspects of life including education, employment, health and housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address racism and discrimination</td>
<td>Policies and legislation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Zero tolerance policies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Justice policies to address hate crime</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Gender equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>A more inclusive society</td>
<td>Training on racism and discrimination for professionals and people in authority</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gardai &amp; people in authority</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Businesses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encourage community building – prepare for systemic change</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Involve the community/more dialogue</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work with those affected by inequality, racism and discrimination.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building bridges between communities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teach people about different cultures</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More ways to bring communities together and to celebrate each other/ Creativity as a platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Food, language, clothes, music and traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and asylum system</td>
<td>Provide support and help for everyone who comes into the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide Refugees and asylum seekers with support and advice with forms/documentation and help to explore options.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural representation in society</td>
<td>More opportunities for minority community to gain professional qualifications e.g., teaching, Gardai, civil service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Free Irish language lessons for EAL students to make the entry requirement to teacher training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Funding to widen access to further education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Employ more ethnic minorities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• More black people/people of colour teachers in schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>More representation in the media</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• More public speakers focusing on minority ethnic issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Suggestions of changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveller and Roma Communities</td>
<td>More support for the Traveller / Roma community&lt;br&gt;• More referrals to support &amp; therapies&lt;br&gt;• Support with self-care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More support in schools&lt;br&gt;• More cultural awareness&lt;br&gt;• Provide alternative education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better accommodation for Travellers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A greater voice in decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (equality / acceptance)</td>
<td>A more inclusive school space&lt;br&gt;• Fair and equal policies in schools&lt;br&gt;• Schools to implement policies to address racism, homophobia, transphobia, bullying etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action to create more respect among students in schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater acceptance of difference and individuality in schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandatory vetting of teachers on their bias before employing them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (curriculum and support)</td>
<td>Reform the junior and leaving certificate&lt;br&gt;• Have open book exams&lt;br&gt;• Remove requirement to pass English/Maths for entry to 3rd level courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allow EAL students the opt out of English for leaving cert</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expand the curriculum&lt;br&gt;• Offer more subject choices and offer more non-gender based subject choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More RSE in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources and supports for students with additional needs&lt;br&gt;• Teachers to focus on students that require additional support&lt;br&gt;• Train teachers on special needs and how to approach different learning styles/Create different classes to support different learning styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have mentors /tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve the quality of teaching&lt;br&gt;• Good governance in schools&lt;br&gt;• Teachers to be graded/assessed for their performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make teaching fun/Employ different methods of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve mental health support in schools&lt;br&gt;• Reduce pressure on students/promote mental wellbeing in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Suggestions of changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better mental health services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education and training (3rd level)</strong></td>
<td>Improve access to 3rd level education  • Adopt a different entry system for 3rd level  • Remove university fees  More university places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manage expectations on young people</strong></td>
<td>Support to manage expectations  • Help parents to understand this generation and the issues they face  • Help parents to understand that success comes in different forms  • Provide freedom to pursue own career  • More support from schools to help young people who do not have the support from home  • More mental health support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More inclusive/safe social spaces</strong></td>
<td>More amenities / opportunities to mix  • Range of clubs/activities  • Improved transport to access services  Improve safety in streets / night time  • More lighting/security  • Emergency alarms  • More deterrents for anti-social behaviour  • More causal garda patrols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment and jobs</strong></td>
<td>More representation in the workforce  • Improve job opportunities  • Provide alternative routes to employment e.g., more apprenticeships  • Provide training on the job / more opportunities for work experience  Stop ‘job shaming’ (e.g., looking down at other jobs)  Inclusive workplace policies  • No micro-aggressions  • Freedom to express culture e.g., hair, food etc.  Implement better laws to protect the worker  • Increase minimum wage  • Education on employment law and tax system  • More unions  Working visas to allow asylum seekers to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
<td>Reduce rent prices  • Stricter laws/regulations for landlords  • Reduce cost of emergency B&amp;B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Theme Suggestions of changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Suggestions of changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Improve Social housing** | - Build more houses/Develop the rest of the country  
- Improve the quality of social housing |
| Refurbish old houses | |
| More homeless shelters | |
| Build more student accommodation | |
| Help with costs | - Improve benefits to allow people to afford rents  
- Reduce mortgage costs / provide support to help people buy homes |
| Increase public awareness and understanding of homelessness | - Provide support for homeless people e.g., clothing charities, public bathrooms, covered areas. |

### Healthcare (including mental health care)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have properly trained staff to deliver mental health services</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Improve the work conditions of health care workers | - Train more doctors in Ireland  
- Employ more nurses  
- Take action to keep Irish trained health workers  
- More hospital beds |
| Have counsellors from people from different cultures | |
| More research | - More research on mental health of minority ethnic young people  
- Invest in research to develop medicines |
| Provide free healthcare or offer more affordable healthcare | - Make medicines cheaper |
| Educate people about healthy lifestyles | - Teach more in schools e.g., healthy eating, sexual health etc. |

### SUMMARY

The young people’s deliberations of what is good in Ireland, what is not so good, and what might be improved covered a broad range of issues including education, recreation and leisure, employment, health, and housing.

The young people described several positive aspects of living in Ireland including access to education (including 3rd level), freedom of speech, absence of war, and access to recreation and youth services.
In response to the question on what was not so good about living in Ireland, the young people identified problems with education, healthcare, recreation and leisure, work, high cost of living and housing problems. A number of cross cutting themes emerged in their discussions including mental health problems, a need for equality (e.g., gender, race, LGBTI+, disability), the lack of acceptance of difference, the need to remove racism and discrimination in a range of settings (e.g., school, work, healthcare, and housing).

Participants called for action to create greater diversity and representation in different professions and in the workforce. They also called for actions to address the healthcare problems and the housing crisis in Ireland.
1. Background and Introduction

1.1 Background

The Government’s cross departmental policy on children and young people, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF): the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020*, concluded at the end of 2020. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is currently developing a new policy framework for children and young people to cover the period from 2023 to 2028. This new policy framework is intended to support cross-government work for children and young people over the period 2023-2028, and support children and young people to realise their rights. It strives to place children and young people at the centre of policy, while also addressing the most pressing issues for children and young people, now and over the lifetime of the framework.

In order to develop this framework, DCEDIY carefully evaluated the many recent consultations that Government has undertaken, particularly with children and young people. This includes the recent “*What WE Think*”\(^1\) suite of reports, conducted to inform Ireland’s reports on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities and the Universal Periodic Review, and in the context of the development of the new policy framework. Many recent consultations agree on the most pressing issues facing children and young people, and it is important that these views are reflected in the policy framework.

DCEDIY also acknowledged that further consultations specifically on the new policy framework were necessary, with children and young people, parents, and those working in this sector. In January 2022, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman T.D. launched an open, public consultation on the framework seeking the views of the public on what is going well for children and young people, what is not going well, and what the priorities of the new policy framework should be.

As there may be specific adversities faced by different cohorts of children and young people, developing a greater understanding of these issues will help to address these. As such DCEIDY felt it was important to specifically seek the views of some groups of young people the Government may not have specifically consulted on these topics before. These include children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, young carers, and homeless young people.

The new policy framework for children and young people is due for publication early in 2023. Recently, the department published a blueprint, setting out the approach the department will take with the policy framework. As well as setting out the vision and principles of the framework, the blueprint provides more detail on the aims it will pursue, and the ways in which we can realise these aims, ultimately to improve the lives of children and young people.

1.2 Profile of Ethnic Minority Young People Living in Ireland

According to the National Youth Council Ireland (NCYI) almost 1 in 7 young people (15%) aged 15-24 living in Ireland are minority ethnic, with this rising to 16% for those aged 5-14. This represents over 200 different nationalities (Central Statistics Office 2017a: EYO29). In addition, an increasing number of young people from a minority ethnic background also identify as having a dual nationality. In 2016, 34,761 of those aged 0-14 years old and 14,384 of those aged 15-24 identify as having dual nationality with one of these being Irish.

1.3 This Report

This report is one of a series of consultations with young people undertaken to inform the development of the new policy framework for children and young people. The report provides an overview of the consultation methodology before presenting the findings from face-to-face consultations with minority ethnic backgrounds from across Ireland.

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2. Structure of the Consultation with Minority Ethnic Young People

2.1 Recruitment of young people to the consultation

The recruitment process was designed to uphold the best interest of the young people, and to make the consultation a positive experience for them. To capture the views of a range of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, Hub na nÓg and the NPO team worked with the National Youth Council of Ireland’s (NYCI) Equality and Intercultural Team to recruit a cross section of ethnic minority young people to the consultation. The NYCI team reached out to youth organisations working with ethnic minority young people from across Ireland to help with the recruitment (see Appendix 1 for example of organisations approached). They also invited minority ethnic young people who had attended their Young Voices event in May.³

The recruitment flyer provided information on the consultation (see Appendix 2), why it was being conducted, who was conducting the consultation, as well as information about the venue, travel reimbursement etc. The registration form asked for some details about the young people, their age, gender, county, minority ethnic status, religious minority status, LGBTI+, disability, education and employment status.⁴

2.2 Design of the consultation

The consultation approach was designed by the DCEDIY National Participation Office and the NYCI Equality and Intercultural Team (see Appendix 3 for Project Team). The consultation asked the same questions which were developed and piloted by young people for the UNCRC ‘What We Think’ consultation (See Box 1).

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**Box 1: The Consultation Questions**

1. **What is the best thing about being a young person in Ireland today?**

2. **What do you not like about being a young person in Ireland?**

3. **What is the one thing you would change for young people in Ireland?**

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³ In May 2022 NYCI hosted a Young Voices event with over 50 minority ethnic young people.

⁴ In line with GDPR applicants were asked for permission to store this information.
Working from a children’s rights-based approach and reflecting Lundy’s Model of child participation and the recently published Participation Framework\(^5\), the consultation used a series of activities designed to place participants at their ease and to ensure they felt comfortable expressing their views and opinions (see Box 2).

**Box 2: Consultation Activities**

**Activity 1:** Burning Issue (individual task)
**Activity 2:** Open Space activity (in groups) to explore the three consultation questions
**Activity 3:** World Café – Further discussion of themes emerging from the Open Space

Activity 1 and 2 explored the young people’s views on what was good about living in Ireland, what was not so good and what could be improved. Activity 3 further explored the themes emerging from the Open Space activity by asking participants to discuss the issues and/or challenges before suggesting solutions to these problems.

### 2.3 Format of consultations

The consultation took place on Wednesday 25\(^{th}\) July in the Gresham Hotel Dublin. NYCI’s Youth Voices team came together with the NYCI’s Equality and Intercultural team to plan the format of the consultation. The approach they used was based on the NYCI’s [Youth Voices – EU Youth Dialogue Framework](https://hubnanÒg.ie/participation-framework/).

After registration, the young people were seated at tables with similar aged young people. Each table had two facilitators (including one peer facilitator).\(^6\)

Fatima Halawa (Development worker with the NYCI’s Global Youth Work Programme) and Dermot O Brien (EU Youth Dialogue Lead Facilitator) were the MCs for the event. They welcomed the young people to the consultation, before introducing a DCEDIY Official (Dr Linda O Sullivan) who provided an overview of the consultation, why DCEDIY is seeking their views and opinions, and explained what will happen to their views (see Figure 1).

\(^5\) [https://hubnanÒg.ie/participation-framework/](https://hubnanÒg.ie/participation-framework/)

\(^6\) The Equality and Intercultural team brought along the peer facilitators for the event
2.3.1 Icebreakers

The introductions were followed by some icebreakers to place the young people at ease and to bring them into the space and thinking about the topic while having fun. The first icebreaker was a short drama-based exercise where the participants worked in pairs/small groups people share their typical day. They created frozen images of what brings them joy and what is a challenge. The drama activity helped young people to come into the space, to loosen up and start to think about their lives and the key aspects of it as lived experience. This activity also served to form trust and to connect the ‘thinking brain’ to the ‘experience’.

In the second activity, the daily lifeline, participants were asked to think about their daily lives and to provide a short description of this in words or on a drawing.

2.3.2 Activity 1: Burning Issue

The first consultation activity, the “burning issue” activity, was an individual and optional activity completed by participants when they had settled into their groups. Each young person was given a piece of paper in the form of a ‘flame’ and were invited to share their one burning issue that they were coming in with event. They were not asked to share this with the group, but to add it to a flipchart. This activity was designed to capture the topics/issues the young people want to influence when they arrive and before they have been discussed by the groups. The messages from the completed ‘flames’ were collated by the note taker and are presented in the findings alongside the findings from the World Café deliberations.
2.3.3 Activity 2: Open Space

In the Open Space activity, participants at each of the tables were asked to consider each of the 3 consultation questions (Box 1). The three questions were posted around the room on separate large sheets of paper. The facilitator asked each question separately and encouraged the young people to share their ideas at their table before sharing it on the post-its. To deal with literacy issues, the facilitator invited to 2 or 3 young people to share their thoughts while second facilitator wrote it these on the post in notes. Once they had discussed the questions, the young people/facilitator posted the responses on the relevant flipcharts. In addition to the post-its, the second facilitator noted the main messages from the discussion.

The report writer collated the post-it notes and the messages from each of the tables and grouped them into themes and subthemes.

Figure 3: Examples of images of the flipcharts from the Open Space
2.3.4 Activity 3: World Café

In the World Café activity, the young people were asked to explore some of the issues/themes in more depth. The Open Space Activity generated 12 themes (see Box 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3: 12 Themes Emerging from the Open Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.    Racism, Discrimination and Inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.    Traveller and Roma community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.    Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.    Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.    Teachers and teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each table had a tablemat with one of the 12 themes at the centre. The facilitators began by asking more about the issues and challenges to do with the table theme, before seeking suggestions of practical solutions for the issues raised.

- Outermost circle: Tell us more about this issue – how does it play out?
- Middle circle: What impact does this issue have?
- Inner circle: What is needed to create change?

After 20 mins the facilitator moved the mat to the next table (allowing the participants to explore the next theme without moving table). The facilitator provided the next group of young people with a brief overview of the discussions to date before spending 10 minutes seeking their views and suggestions which were added to the mat.

The facilitators moved one more time to give the tables the opportunity to input into three themes. At the end of this session, the young people were invited to select one last theme/table to have their say. This allowed them to physically move to the table with the theme which they wanted to share their views.

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7 The table with the younger members of the Traveller and Roma community did not rotate, and the peer facilitators stayed with the group for the duration of the activity.
2.3.5 Activity 4: Evaluation

In the final session, participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire to evaluate how the consultation went, with specific questions on Space, Voice, Audience and Influence.
3. Findings

3.1 Who took part?

In total, 102 young people participated in the consultation (Table 1 for profile). The children and young people were aged between 11 and 25 years, and came from across the country including Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laoise, Longford, Meath, Waterford, Westmeath, and Wicklow.

Table 1: Demographics of participants (from registration forms)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Under 14 years n=8</th>
<th>14-17 years n=61</th>
<th>18+ n=27</th>
<th>Not answered = 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female n=61</td>
<td>Males n=39</td>
<td>Non binary n=2</td>
<td>Prefer not to say n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious minority</td>
<td>Yes n=45</td>
<td>No n=20</td>
<td>Prefer not to say/not answered n=28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTI+</td>
<td>Yes n=2</td>
<td>No n=89</td>
<td>Prefer not to say/not answered n=12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education status</td>
<td>Yes n=80</td>
<td>No n=10</td>
<td>Prefer not to say/not answered n=13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Yes n=21</td>
<td>No n=70</td>
<td>Prefer not to say/not answered n=12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in Employment, Education</td>
<td>Yes n=7</td>
<td>No n=74</td>
<td>Prefer not to say/not answered n=22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst the ethnicity was not asked of the young people at registration, at the event there was representation from Roma, Traveller, African, and Asian communities. Young people from three Direct Provision centres attended and there were also a small number of Ukrainian young people.
3.2 Activity 1: Burning Issues

As they entered consultation room or sat at the discussion tables, each participant was given a ‘burning flame page’ to write down any thoughts or messages they considered important for the consultation. This provided the young people with the opportunity to share their ideas/thoughts before the group discussions. The report writer assembled the messages and grouped them by theme. Table 2 below provides a summary of the messages shared from this activity, with examples of some of the messages within each theme.

Some of the dominant messages emerging from this exercise included:

- Discrimination and racism
- Gender inequalities
- Homelessness
- Discrimination against the Traveller community
- Schools and education (stress, bullying, lack of supportive teachers)

Table 2: Summary of messages on burning flames ordered by mentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example of message on flame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination and racism</td>
<td>“Some people make fun of other people’s colour or accent. I think this makes the other person feel bad”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Racism, xenophobia, cultural appropriation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Don’t judge people or treat us different because of my minority”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Failure to accept ethnic minorities in Europe”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness/Housing</td>
<td>“Rent prices” “Moving houses” “Lack of housing for asylum seekers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools and Education</td>
<td>Stress Bullying “the amount of overload we have in school, especially exam years. We don’t ever have time to take care of our mental health”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Teachers under-estimating student learning therefore not teaching them enough”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender inequalities &amp; Misogyny</td>
<td>“not enough opportunities for women” “not being able to talk because I am a girl”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“safe spaces for women” “Violence against women and girls”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate/Environment</td>
<td>“Warming” “Climate Change”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty/Cost of living</td>
<td>“Poverty” “Money” “cost of living”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth services</td>
<td>“Lack of youth services” “places to hang out with friends” “Always at home doing nothing that will help me forget how I was treated in my country of origin. I need something to distract me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>“Being cut off the internet” “Not being able to study online during the summer” “Not being able to go places alone as I don’t have GPS map” “Being discriminated against because you don’t have internet or because you are black”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness &amp; respect</td>
<td>“a small little respect counts” “Adults need to respect children too”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTI+ inclusion</td>
<td>Transphobia “Poor trans health care” “Not being able to go to toilet as no gender-neutral toilets”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health/Bullying</td>
<td>“Stop bullying and stop judging people”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination against Traveller Community</td>
<td>“General and systemic discrimination against all Travellers” “Lack of youth groups for Travellers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural freedom</td>
<td>Hijab “Halal food in supermarkets” “Places to pray” “Lack of religious sites for Muslims”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships/Inclusion</td>
<td>“to make friends” “not being accepted in friend groups”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages difficulties</td>
<td>“Not being able to speak English” “English – difficult to learn and speak” “I’m sorry I am not good at speaking English/understand” “Don’t feel uncomfortable cause English isn’t your first language”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of jobs</td>
<td>“lack of job for U16 year olds” “YP looking for average paid jobs”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Care</td>
<td>“children in residential homes” Child protection. Foster Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Refugees</td>
<td>“Afghans or other people come to Ireland, they don’t know how the system works and where to receive the help when they need it” “Healthcare for refugees”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (1-2 mentions each)</td>
<td>“Transport not inclusive” “I love football. It’s my dream to play football. In my life I am not allowed to do what I want because of my elders, no peace/freedoms. Always in doors” Use of drugs among teens” “Responsible drinking” “When children are being treated like babies when they should be trained for and told how the world is and for the bigger challenges they are going to have to face when they grow up” “Autism awareness” “War”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Activity 2: Open Space

In their groups (tables consisting of up to 11 participants), the young people were asked to consider three questions.

1. What is the good about being a young person in Ireland today?
2. What is not good about being a young person in Ireland today?
3. What would you change for young people in Ireland?

Once the young people had discussed each of the questions, the facilitator and young people posted their responses on flipcharts. The report writer tallied the messages from the post-it notes and merged them with facilitator’s notes from each table. The key messages for each question were summarised in table format grouped by theme.

**Please note:** In order to avoid duplication, the messages emerging from Question 3 *What is the one thing you would change for young people in Ireland?* have been combined with the findings from the Open Space activity where participants explored the themes in greater depth, exploring how they experience specific issues, and what is needed to create change.

3.3.1 What is good about being a young person in Ireland today

Participants’ responses on what is good about being a young person in Ireland centred on having some of their **basic rights** met. These included:

- Having access to education
  - Better education compared to some other countries
  - Free education (compared to other countries)
  - An inclusive education system
  - Access to 3rd level education

- Freedom of speech
  - More religious freedoms
  - Youth voice

- Absence of war
- Good discipline and laws
• Healthcare  
  o Medical cards

Participants were appreciative of some of the **youth and recreation** services available to young people in Ireland and described specific activities:

• Sport (football)  
• Ethnic minority clubs  
• Clubs for socialising/creative activities  
• Gaming

A small number of young people mentioned the good transport in cities and cheaper travel for children and young people, and at one table the participants talked about acceptance gender equality in Ireland. A few mentioned the beauty of the country and the warmth of the people. However, not everyone was positive in their assessment of life in Ireland today referring to the pressures on young people and challenges of being a person of colour living in this country.

### 3.3.2 What is not good about being a young person in Ireland today

Whilst access to education featured in participants’ views of the positive aspects of being a young person in Ireland, problems with the **education system and schools** dominated the responses to this question. These problems included:

• Poor mental health in schools / pressure to achieve  
  o Examination system/Pressure to achieve (from school/home)  
  o Student wellbeing crisis “Schools can make people feel low, think less of themselves”

• Popularity issues especially in all girl schools.

• Need for support  
  o Need to address students’ basic needs before expecting them to do well  
  o Not enough support for students at risk of early school leaving  
  o Without good support (from teacher, parent, adult) young people can find education very difficult  
  o Travellers with good attendance in schools still having literacy problems
• Discrimination in schools
  o Lack of support for minority students
  o Students from other countries being asked to repeat years
  o Young people from Traveller community feeling they don’t belong in schools
  o Racism from staff and students
    ▪ Use of slurs in schools “Lack of education on ‘slurs’ and why people can’t use them”
    ▪ Teachers disrespectful/dismissive of racial issues
  o Teachers making assumptions on students’ ability based on appearance
  o Teachers neglecting students with ASD
• Segregation in schools (gender)
• Problems with the curriculum and subjects
  o Not enough choice in subjects
  o Not enough preparation for ‘real life’ e.g., taxes, loans etc
  o Limited support/resources to help learn Irish (most minority ethnic young people speak two + languages)
• Cost of education (3rd level)
  o Not enough Universities
  o SUSI grant requires parental means test

Reflecting some of the issues of discrimination raised within the school system, participants described a lack of acceptance in Irish society including transphobia, discrimination and prejudice (specifically against the Traveller community), gender inequality, and ableism. Some mentioned racism in education, housing, and workplaces. Young people described experiencing culture and language barriers, finding it hard to fit in and to make friends, “not knowing how to be a person of colour in Ireland”. Some experienced challenges with the English language when they arrive in Ireland and were bullied for their accents. They described how different cultural backgrounds (clothes, accent, culture) makes it difficult to mix, resulting in young people staying within their own community “Form safety bubble with similar people”.

Young people described shortcomings in the leisure and recreation facilities available for young people. They described a dearth of free leisure activities, particularly in rural areas.
Other gaps included not enough to do during the bad weather, lack of options to take part in minority sports e.g., boxing. The young people described some of the barriers they face to using the available leisure and recreation facilities which included not enough of a mix of people in clubs, a lack of youth services for young Travellers, poor transport and poor links between Direct Provision and youth services.

The high cost of living and problem with housing in Ireland was discussed across a number of tables. Participants talked about inflation and increasing cost of living without increases in wages. They talked about the housing situation (shortage and high costs) and lack of housing for refugees. Specific issues included:

- Poor accommodation for Travellers
- The HAP scheme – long waiting lists and no clarity on how the system works
- Direct provision houses far from towns (with poor transport connections)
- Segregation in housing
- High rent for students

Some of the young people also described problems with Direct Provision. This group talked about “bad facilities”, “restricted freedoms”, not having a PPS number and not being able to attend university until they have been in Ireland for 3 years. One young person described Direct Provision as “prison world, curfews during the summer, told when to go inside. Not allowed to have friends, only at specific times. Guards called on”.

Other issues raised by the young people included a lack of youth voice (e.g., no vote at 16, adults not taking young people seriously) and abuse of power with minorities by people in authority (e.g., Garda and security guards).

3.3.3 Suggestions of changes for young people in Ireland

Participants’ suggestions of changes focused on addressing the issues/problems they identified across the nine themes:

- Improve equality and address racism and discrimination
- Cultural expression and representation
- Traveller and Roma Communities
- Education system
- Expectations on young people
3.4 Activity 3: World Café

After the Open Space exercise, the NYCI team grouped the messages from the discussions into 12 themes (see Box 3 above). In the World Café activity, the young people were asked to discuss the issues and their suggestions of actions to address them in more depth. As described above, participants moved tables to discuss up to four of the themes in greater depth. The messages from their deliberations which covered the issues and their impact on young people as well as the suggested changes were recorded on the 12 tablemats. The report writer collated the findings from the 12 tablemats from World Café and condensed them into 9 themes which are summarised below.

Each section provides an overview of the issues/problems within the theme, the impact of these, suggested solutions to these issues, and the difference this will make for the individual/society.

3.4.1 Inequality, Racism and Discrimination

This was one of the dominant cross cutting themes which was discussed at most of the tables during this activity. In their discussions about discrimination, racism and inequality the young people described how this happens obviously (e.g. exclusion, harassment, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, gender inequality/sexism/misogyny) and but also indirectly (e.g., whitewashing, micro-aggression from teachers and peers, cultural appropriation/lack of acceptance of difference). Some of the young people described discrimination or prejudice within the minority ethnic groups (e.g., lack of acceptance of LGBTI+ people in the Traveller community, or gender inequalities in some communities). Others described people in authority abusing their authority (e.g., Garda ‘overreach’ and security guards being suspicious of young people from minority communities).
‘This (schools) is one of the places that minorities encounter distinction, prejudice, and racism’
‘Whitewashing and lack of identity expression’

They described the impact of this on individual.

- Lack of belonging (e.g., disconnection, isolation, lack of belonging, emotional damage)
- Poor mental health (e.g., stress, depression, suicide, low confidence, internal hatred)
- Impact on learning (e.g., disengagement from education)

For refugees
- Flawed direct provision (limited freedom)
- Different systems for refugees from different countries
- Limited access to services/information (no PPS number)

‘Being the only black in the class and people say things that insult through a lack of awareness’
‘Teachers go too far to not to be racist and it makes it more uncomfortable’
‘Teachers can be disrespectful, dismissive of racial issues, dismissive of opinions, and can be offensive’
‘Students from other countries can be asked to repeat years which can be unfair’
“Pressure to be the exception to live up to certain standards in order to avoid racism in school (adultification)”

They also described the impact of inequality, racism and discrimination on wider society.

- Stigma and stereotyping/harassment/lack of respect/lack of understanding of other cultures
- Lack of integration
- Women expected to stay at home/Gender pay-gaps
- Lack of job opportunities (due to ethnicity/colour, gender identity, sexuality)
- Lack of diversity in the workplace
- Exploitation
- Poverty
• Homelessness

‘Whitewashing – only some things are acceptable’
‘If you are different, you are an outcast’
‘When white people are in a group, its fine. When black people are in a group, they are seen as gangs’
‘No one to protect you except yourself and closest friends’
‘Reports not being taken seriously after racist attack’

The young people’s suggestions of ways to address discrimination and inequalities included more education in the school setting but also community education and development to promote better awareness and understanding. Other suggestions included the development of more diverse workforces to spread cultural awareness and build acceptance.

Within the education system, their suggestions included:

• Fair and equal policies in schools
• Schools to implement policies
  o Policies on homophobia, transphobia, bullying etc
  o Polices on racism and how to deal with racism in schools
• Greater acceptance of difference and individuality in schools
  o Not to stereotype
  o Mandatory diversity training for students
  o More cultural awareness education in schools
    ▪ Teach students about different cultures
    ▪ Teach students about Traveller culture
    ▪ Teach Black history/Traveller history
  o More resources for learning e.g., documentaries etc.
• Take action to create more respect among students in schools
  o Promote self-love
  o Don’t tolerate bully or racial abuse in schools
  o Have a buddy system in schools/clubs
  o Inclusive events / Culture days
• Mandatory vetting of teachers on their bias before employing them
  o Have bias checks/inspections in schools
Suggestions of actions to educate the wider community and to create a more inclusive community included:

- Policies and legislation
  - Zero tolerance policies
  - Justice policies to address hate crime
  - Gender equality – treat males and females equally
- Encourage community building – prepare for systemic change
  - Involve the community/more dialogue
  - Work with those affected by inequality, racism and discrimination.
- Building bridges between communities
  - Increase awareness of the issues to counteract prejudice
- Teach people about different cultures
  - More ways to bring communities together and to celebrate each other
  - Food, language, clothes, music and traditions
  - Creativity as a platform
- Be intersectoral – education and action on systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination “intersect”.
- Improve immigration system. Provide support and help for everyone who comes into the country.
  - Provide Refugees and asylum seekers with support and advice with forms/documentation and help to explore options.
- Do not provide funding for racist organisations
- Inclusive workplace policies
  - No micro-aggressions
  - Freedom to express culture e.g., hair, food etc
The importance of providing training for professionals and people in authority on the subject of racism and discrimination was raised across a number of the themes (e.g., education and schools, healthcare, employment and jobs, housing and safe spaces). This included education and training for:

- Teachers
  - Train teachers on different cultures
  - Train teachers on how to deal with racism and to be more culturally aware
  - Train teachers about mental health and LGBTI+ issues
- Gardai & people in authority
  - Diversity training
- Businesses
  - Supermarkets and restaurants to be more inclusive
  - Anti-bias training for employers
  - Workplace education on racism, homophobia, transphobia

‘Put more accepting people in places of power, especially those in places with children’
‘Policies exist but teachers don’t always follow them’

Within this theme, the suggestions put forward by the young people called for actions to create more acceptance and fairness in all aspects of life including education, employment, health and housing. Participants described the possible benefits of education, training and community engagement to create a readiness for change, greater mutual understanding and more awareness of intersectionality.

3.4.2 Cultural Expression and Representation

Two themes (Cultural Expression and Representation) also captured young people’s views on the lack of understanding of different minorities in Ireland. The issues identified within these two themes included:

- White centric policy making
• No representation in local government

• Little representation of minority communities in different professions e.g., Gardai, civil service, teaching etc.

• Lack of representation or misrepresentation in the media

• Lack of understanding/negative assumptions

• Lack of opportunities for cultural expression

Some of the suggested actions to address this problem have been outlined in the previous theme (e.g., education/training and community engagement). Actions to address the lack of representation include:

• More opportunities for minority community to gain professional qualifications e.g., teaching, Gardai, civil service
  • Free Irish language lessons for EAL students to make the entry requirement to teacher training

• Funding to widen access to further education

• Employ more ethnic minorities
  • More black teachers in schools

• More representation in the media
  • More public speakers focusing on minority ethnic issues

‘Increased visual representation of different ethnicities and religions’
‘Government cooperating in a way to help us strive in society and become useful and not rejected by “normal people”’

3.4.3 Traveller and Roma Communities

One of the tables focused on the specific experiences of Traveller and Roma Communities. As the facilitator at this table stayed with the young people (rather than different facilitators coming to the table), this messages on this table covered many of the themes including: health/mental health, education, violence / racism, discrimination, family problems, and
lack of voice. Where possible these messages have been integrated within the relevant sections. Specific issues for the Traveller and Roma community included:

- Poor mental health
- Negative experience in school
  - No presence of Traveller Culture in schools
- Violence and racism
- Discrimination in work and housing
- Family problems

The impact of these issues on young people from the Traveller and Roma community included: poor mental health, defensive behaviour/anger, hiding identity for fear of racism, arguments in home/families/communities, poor literacy, not being able to progress to 3rd level education, unemployment, poverty, and homelessness.

‘Looking down on us because we are bad or dangerous’
‘Verbal violence affects your mental health because of the names we are called’
‘Life time of trauma’
‘Suicide in traveller community is 5 times higher than average’
‘Lack of education = lack of opportunity= poverty’ ‘housing and health not offered’

The young people’s suggestions of ways to overcome these issues included:

- More support for the Traveller / Roma community
  - More referrals to support & therapies
  - Support with self-care
- More support in schools
  - More cultural awareness
  - Provide alternative education
- Better accommodation for Travellers
- More voice in decision making

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8 At the end of the World Café activity participants could choose a table to join, several young people joined the Traveller and Roma table at this time.
3.4.4 Education and Teachers

Two of the tablemats themes related to education and schools (Education & Teaching and Teachers) have been combined. Some of the issues within this broad theme have been captured within other themes (e.g., Inequality, Racism and Discrimination theme, Traveller and Roma Community).

Some of the young people’s discussions focused on the approach and delivery of education in Ireland:

- The model of education
  - Outdated – same model used for 50 years
  - Leaving certificate – a test of memory rather than a measure of knowledge
  - Requirement to pass English and Maths
- Focus on points
- Curriculum
  - Not enough choice of subjects – less focus on creativity
  - Some subjects are gender based
  - Not enough focus on different cultures/religions
- Support/resources
  - Not enough support for students with additional needs
  - Lack of resources for ASD students in 2nd level.
  - Some students do not progress as well as others (e.g., Travellers/Roma)
- Mental health crisis in schools and college
- Barriers to access to 3rd level education
  - Cost of education (fees and accommodation)
  - Not enough university places

Participants described some of the impacts of these issues on young people. For minority ethnic young people with English as a second language, the requirement to pass English limits their career choices and places additional pressures on these students. Some young people felt the current leaving certificate model places pressure on students which impacts on stress / anxiety levels, and overall mental health. The lack of support/resources for
students with additional needs, ASD students and for students from the Traveller community was also described as having a negative impact on mental health and limits their future opportunities.

‘Education is taught for the majority, the minority are left behind’
‘Supports feel like an afterthought’.

Suggestions of ways to address these issues included:

- Reform the junior and leaving certificate
  - Have a more flexible approach to suit different learning styles
  - Have open book exams
  - Remove requirement to pass English/Maths for entry to 3rd level courses
  - Allow EAL students the opt out of English for leaving cert
- Expand the curriculum
  - Offer more subject choices and offer more non-gender based subject choices
  - More RSE in schools
- Adopt a different entry system for 3rd level
- Resources and supports for students with additional needs
  - Teachers to focus on students that require additional support
  - Train teachers on special needs and how to approach different learning styles
  - Create different classes to support different learning styles
  - Have mentors/tutors
- Improve the quality of teaching
  - Teachers to be graded/assessed for their performance
  - Make teaching fun
  - Employ different methods of teaching
  - Good governance in schools
- Improve mental health support in schools
  - Reduce pressure on students
  - Promotion of mental wellbeing in schools
  - Better mental health services
- Improve access to 3rd level education
  - Remove university fees
Participants felt that reforming the education system would provide an improved education system and would reduce the stress on students. Improving the quality of the education provided would improve students’ performance and would make school a more enjoyable experience. Providing support and resources for students with additional needs would create more acceptance for students with disabilities and would provide a better education for this group.

3.3.5 Expectations on Young People

As well as experiencing the pressure for exam points from schools, participants described feeling pressure from their family to achieve and follow particular careers paths. They described being compared to siblings and cousins. They described a higher level of expectations from ethnic minority families to work hard and achieve. Some described these high expectations but without the family support needed due to both parents working or lone parenting. A small number talked about young people’s low expectations of getting a job after they complete their education.

Suggestions of ways to address these pressures on young people included:

- Support to manage expectations
  - Help parents to understand this generation and the issues they face
  - Help parents to understand that success comes in different forms
  - Provide freedom to pursue own career

- More support from schools to help young people who do not have the support from home

‘Work hard or get out’
‘Pressure to perform, be important, to the point that you put others first, feeling like you’re not enough or hated’
‘Thinking that you should have done things differently, even if you did your best’
‘It impacts on your education, you won’t enjoy school if it’s something you don’t want’
‘If you are supported high expectations can help you’
‘(low expectations of work) discourages you from working at school’
• More mental health support

Within the context of pressures and expectations from adults, some young people felt their voices and choices were ignored, and they have to wait until adulthood to prove themselves or follow their preferred path.

‘Teenagers have more of their own will, but are looked down on’

Some young people also talked about the cultural pressures on young people within some minority communities to marry. This placed pressure on them to appear innocent and not to have a social life. This expectation of marriage meant that some parents did not approve of their daughters expectations of a good education.

“Accept me for who I am, stop comparing me with siblings. Don’t project your expectations on us. Society needs to view young people differently, let young people be young not to solve the world’s problems”

3.4.6 Safe Space and Access to Activities

Two of the tables (Access to Activities & Safe Spaces) captured overlapping messages on the need to have activities and opportunities to meet other young people in a safe space. Young people described not feeling safe in schools (due to bullying/gangs) and feeling unsafe at night-time.

Some young people, particularly young people in direct provision, described a lack of opportunity to meet other young people from their own and other communities (as they are scattered all over the country with some in very rural areas). Where services and opportunities are available, poor transport options limits their ability to participate.

Some young people viewed youth clubs and services as serving an important function in providing young people with a place to meet new people and to spend time with their friends away from the pressures of schools. However, not all minority ethnic young people avail of such services and clubs as they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Other issues raised by the young people included the minority ethnic young people wanting different social outlets. Some young people would like to have more opportunities to
participate in different sports (non-GAA) and activities (e.g., drama). One group talked about a culture clash in expectations for social activities, with some minority ethnic groups having little interest in the Irish alcohol culture.

‘Less fear, peace of mind. More assurance’
‘More permanent youth clubs’
‘Rural Ireland has less opportunities for young people to take part in’
‘Home away from home – ability to flourish independently’

Having a safe space in schools, youth services and communities was important to the young people. Without this safety, the young people were less likely to engage and participate in available service and activities. They described this as contributing to a lack of diversity in the membership of clubs, feelings of isolation, disconnection, poor social lives, uninvolved in society, not mixing outside own group, and a lack of empathy and cultural awareness

Suggestions to address the issues within this theme included:

- A more inclusive education system
  - Take action to create more respect/acceptance in schools
  - Do not tolerate bullying/racism
- More amenities/opportunities to mix
  - Range of clubs/activities
  - Improved transport to access services
- Improve safety in streets / night-time
  - More lighting/security
  - Emergency alarms
  - More deterrents for anti-social behaviour
  - More causal garda patrols

‘Basic need of a sense of security – if you don’t have security (physically) it’s hard to think past that i.e., a place to express and discover who you are – which is secondary to physical safety.’

3.4.7 Employment and Jobs

Within this theme young people described some the barriers to employment facing people from minority ethnic groups. Some of these barriers were a result of poor experiences of
education (e.g., Traveller community struggles to do well and to complete education) but also were a result of discrimination and racism (described earlier). Participants also described hurdles to employment based on qualifications from outside Ireland not being accepted and limited options due to their immigrant status. They also described nepotism in the workplace, with advertised jobs going to friends or family. The poor treatment of minority ethnic people in the workplace was also discussed (e.g., lack of training, employers take advantage of them and give them more responsibilities without increase in wages, long hours, no contracts, no advice on tax). Some employers were described as taking advantage of immigration status e.g., due to the long wait for PPSN employers overtax or only offer ‘cash in hand’ jobs.

‘Already know who they are giving the job to but still have the hiring signs.’
‘Unethical/sketchy employers’
‘Take advantage of young workers who don’t know their rights and employment law’

Suggestions to overcome such barriers and / or experiences included:

- Improve job opportunities
  - Provide alternative routes to employment e.g., more apprenticeships
  - Provide training on the job / more opportunities for work experience
- More representation in the workforce (See also Representation theme)
- Stop ‘job shaming’ (e.g., looking down at other jobs)
- Implement better laws to protect the worker
  - Increase minimum wage
  - Education on employment law and tax system
  - More unions
- Working visas to allow asylum seekers to work

3.4.8 Housing

Housing and homelessness in Ireland were discussed in the general but also as experienced by minority ethnic groups. The young people discussed the low availability of houses as a result of not enough houses being built, the effect of MICA in homes, and the urban decay
resulting from neglected houses. They talked about high rent prices and the high cost of living (as well as high unemployment and low wages).

They described the challenges experience by students to get affordable housing.

‘landlords raising prices because they see how desperate people are’

Some discussed the discrimination experienced by homeless people.

‘saying it’s their own fault because of drugs and addictions’
‘being considered a pest to society’

The poor quality of available accommodation was also raised, particularly the inadequate conditions for Travellers (e.g., poor electricity supply, toilets and water facilities).

The impact of this lack of housing and the poor-quality housing on overall quality of life was discussed e.g., not being able to apply for college, jobs etc.

‘Poor housing = sickness’ ‘Homeless – death from cold’ ‘No home, can’t apply for jobs’ ‘Without housing you have a loss of basic rights’

Their suggestions for actions to address this housing crisis included:

- Reduce rent prices
  - Stricter laws/regulations for landlords
  - Reduce cost of emergency B&B
- Improve Social housing
  - Build more houses/Develop the rest of the country
  - Improve the quality of social housing
- Refurbish old houses
- More homeless shelters
- Build more student accommodation
- Improve benefits to allow people to afford rents
- Reduce mortgage costs / provide support to help people buy homes
- Increase public awareness and understanding of homelessness
Provide support for homeless people e.g., clothing charities, public bathrooms, covered areas.

3.4.9 Healthcare

The final theme discussed by the young people was healthcare. Poor mental health and the need for mental health support services was a recurrent message across the different tables. Poor provision of healthcare was also raised in young people’s discussions. A number of subthemes were discussed:

- Poor work conditions for many healthcare workers (e.g., pay, lack of rights)
  - Lack of appreciation of people of colour (POC) workers in healthcare
- Racism in healthcare
  - Judgement from staff
- Cost of healthcare
  - People trying to find alternative ways to treat problems
- Not enough promotion of healthy lifestyles

‘Better terms and conditions and they would work better’
‘Proper care of healthcare service worker – not just about working but caring’

Suggestions of actions to address these problems include:

- Have properly trained staff to deliver mental health services
  Have counsellors from people from different cultures
- More research on mental health of minority ethnic young people
- Improve the work conditions of health care workers
  - Train more doctors in Ireland
  - Employ more nurses
  - Take action to keep Irish trained health workers
  - More hospital beds
- Provide free healthcare or offer more affordable healthcare
  - Make medicines cheaper
- Invest in research to develop medicines
- Regulate advertising of health products
• Educate people about healthy lifestyles
  o Teach more in schools e.g., healthy eating, sexual health etc.

4. Summary

The young people’s deliberations of what is good in Ireland, what is not so good, and what might be improved covered a broad range of issues including education, recreation and leisure, employment, health, and housing.

The young people described several positive aspects of living in Ireland including access to education (including 3rd level), freedom of speech, absence of war, and access to recreation and youth services.

In response to the question on what was not so good about living in Ireland, the young people identified problems with education, healthcare, recreation and leisure, work, high cost of living and housing problems. A number of cross cutting themes emerged in their discussions including mental health problems, a need for equality (e.g., gender, race, LGBTI+, disability), the lack of acceptance of difference, the need to remove racism and discrimination in a range of settings (e.g., school, work, healthcare, and housing).

Participants called for action to create greater diversity and representation in different professions and in the workforce. They also called for actions to address the healthcare problems and the housing crisis in Ireland.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Examples of organisations contacted for recruitment

County Longford Youth Service
Donegal Youth Service
Foróige Tallaght
Swan Youth Service
Traveller Visibility Group Cork
Waterford and South Tipperary Youth Service
Youth Work Ireland Laois
Appendix 2: Recruitment information and Application Form

DESCRIPTION

Are you a minority ethnic young person – aged 14–24 – with something to say to the Irish Government about your lived experience, hopes for the future and how you wish to be supported?

NYCt's Young Voices Programme is inviting minority ethnic young people to attend a special event in collaboration with the Department of Children, Equality, Integration and Youth on Wednesday 27th July 10.30am to 3.30pm in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin. Transport and lunch will be provided.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth is currently working on the design and development of a new policy framework for children and young people. By sharing your views, they can help inform the next framework and what the government should focus on. See below for more info.

Will you join us in person to ensure that young people are heard and included?

If you would like to be part of this important conversation, please register below.

CAPACITY
Unlimited

COST
Free of charge

DATE & TIME
Wednesday 27th July 10:30am registration for 11am – 3:30pm, Gresham Hotel, O’Connell St, Dublin City Centre
Deadline for Application Monday 25th July 1pm
Appendix 3: Consultation Project Team

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda O Sullivan</td>
<td>DCEDIY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridget Wilson</td>
<td>DCEDIY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Quigley</td>
<td>Hub na nOg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deborah Sheridan</td>
<td>Hub na nOg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Renagh Hayden</td>
<td>National Participation Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne Walsh</td>
<td>National Youth Council Ireland</td>
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<td>Kate O Connell</td>
<td>National Youth Council Ireland</td>
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<td>Jean Marie Cullen</td>
<td>National Youth Council Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Megan Atkinson</td>
<td>National Youth Council Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deirdre Fullerton</td>
<td>Insights Health and Social Research (Report writer)</td>
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Peer facilitation and notetaking was provided by NYCI Making Links Minority Ethnic Youth Leaders Network and by NYCI’s Racial Justice Champions Network with additional support on the day from attending youth workers.