



Foróige

annual

review

07-08



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Contents

Page.1

About Foróige	3
Foreword by the Minister for Youth Affairs, Seán Haughey, T.D.	5
Message from Billy Freeley, Chairperson, National Council of Foróige	6
Report from Seán Campbell, Chief Executive Officer of Foróige	7
Focus on Ability	8
Advanced Training for Foróige Leaders	10
Connecting Communities	13
Influencing the Future	14
Mentoring: Little Time, Big Difference	16
Then and Now - Foróige Clubs Standing the Test of Time	18
Young Changemakers	21
An Evening to Remember	22
Rising to the Challenge	24
Supporting Young People Through Tough Times	26
My Foróige Life	27
Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies	28
Working in Communities	30
Facing Facts	32
More Than Just a Space - Foróige Youth Cafés	33
Volunteer Focus	35
Foróige's Projects & Services	36

Fionnbarr Thompson, 15

Chairperson, Lacken Foróige Club

Co. Mayo

“It’s an honour to be elected to the Reference panel as it gives young people a chance to voice their opinions and really be heard. I think mental health is a really important issue that can often be neglected and forgotten about if you’re not directly affected. I intend to raise the issue in my club and discuss the lack of services available in Mayo. I was elected onto the National Council during the Reference Panel weekend and this is probably my best Foróige moment so far... the Bonniconlon interclub discos are definitely a close second though.”



Foróige in Figures

50,000 Young People (approximately 10% of 10 to 18 year olds in Ireland)
5,000 Volunteers
800 Big Brother Big Sister Matches
700 Sessional Workers
400 Foróige Clubs
250 Staff
135 Youth Development Projects and Services
28 Voluntary District Councils
1 Foróige

About Foróige

National Youth Development Organisation

Foróige is a leading national voluntary youth organisation engaged in youth development and education. The fundamental purpose of the organisation is to enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their own development and in the development of society. It does this through community-based, carefully structured, learning activities rooted in an innovative curriculum.

Foróige Services

Foróige is the largest and most successful youth organisation in Ireland. It uses a multi-pronged approach in its service provision which enables the organisation to meet the developmental needs of young people in general as well as focusing on vulnerable young people with specific needs.

Foróige Clubs are the basic unit of the organisation, which consist of young people aged 12 – 18 years and adult volunteer leaders. Foróige clubs are 'owned' by the members, allowing them to experience democracy first hand through the election of a club committee and the management and operation of the club in co-operation with adult leaders.

Local Youth Services provide general youth work services to, and promote the development of a multitude of voluntary youth organisations. They also provide specialised services to vulnerable young people.

Local Youth Development Projects provide specialised services directly to specifically targeted young people. They assist young people in developing confidence and communication skills and foster participation, collective activity and the voluntary activity of young people within their communities.

Big Brother Big Sister is an international one-to-one mentoring programme, hosted by Foróige in Ireland, which matches an adult volunteer with a young person. The basic idea is that a friendship will form and that in turn will promote the positive development of the young person.

Youth Information Centres provide free, confidential information services to young people and adults on a wide range of youth-related topics.

Structure of the Organisation

National Council / Executive

The National Council is the governing body of Foróige, which determines its policy and controls the business and affairs of the organisation. One club leader from each county and four reference panel members are elected to make up the council. From among its members, the National Council elects a National Executive, which meets regularly to discuss the day to day running of the organisation and is accountable to the National Council.

Reference Panel

At Regional Conferences, held in 11 designated regions throughout the country for club committee members, 44 members are elected to form a Reference Panel. This panel meets twice yearly and gives members direct input into the running of the organisation at national level. Four members are elected to the National Council.

District Councils

Foróige Clubs in a particular area may, with the permission of the National Council, form District Councils. Each club may appoint two voting delegates to sit on the District Council. The functions include: exchanging ideas; co-ordinating and developing activities; helping in the formation of new clubs and making representations to the National Council and National Executive on matters relating to Foróige.

Management / Staff

Foróige employs a full-time professional staff to assist and enable communities and voluntary youth workers in their youth work endeavours, and to work directly with young people as necessary and appropriate.



Foreword

by the Minister of State with responsibility
for Youth Affairs, Seán Haughey, T.D.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to acknowledge Foróige's work in meeting the ongoing challenges of modern youth work provision, both in urban and rural settings. Foróige has been working for over 50 years to effect change for the better, by providing relevant and positive experiences to young people through its youth work provision.

One of the strengths of youth work is its voluntary ethos. This spirit of volunteerism, supported and underpinned by the professional worker, has been, and continues to be, core to the provision of youth work programmes and services in Ireland. Foróige has always been an enabling organisation which provides extensive supports for the training and up-skilling of its volunteers and staff. This support has facilitated the tremendous work of Foróige's many clubs and projects and has led to the development of a diverse range of programmes and models of youth work that enable young people to involve themselves in their own development and in the development of society. I was delighted to present the permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards last November, which allowed me to learn first hand about some of these projects and the achievements of the young people involved.

2007 was indeed a busy year for everybody involved in youth work. Steady progress was made in two key policy areas- the further roll out of the Youth Work Act, 2001 and the National Youth Work Development Plan. Youth Officers assigned to the VEC sector are currently carrying out an audit of youth work provision in each VEC area. This work will help inform the further development of a coordinated youth work response to local youth needs.

Youth Officers will also play a key role at local level in the implementation of the Quality Standards Framework Initiative (QSF), both at pilot and later stages. The Assessor of Youth Work has been consulting with the youth work sector as part of the process of developing the QSF. Foróige's input into this initiative, at all stages, is essential. I look forward to the outcomes of this crucial initiative. I think it is important that we all understand that the

fundamental aim of the QSF is to provide a support and development tool to the youth work sector to help establish standards in the practice and provision of youth work. The formation of a standards framework and assessment process is fundamental to the further development of youth work.

Finally, I wish to thank Foróige for its valuable and on-going contribution to enhancing the lives of our young people. Your work is indispensable in today's world and I am pleased to be able to support this through a number of funding schemes. I wish you every success in your work over the coming year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Seán Haughey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Seán Haughey, T.D.,
Minister for Youth Affairs



Billy Freeley

Chairperson of National Council of Foróige

As my term as Chairperson of the National Council of Foróige comes to an end, I reflect on what has been an exciting and inspiring two years. It has been a time of unprecedented growth and development in Foróige. We are reaching some 50,000 young people on an annual basis – that is 10% of young people in the 10 to 18 age group and more than any other youth organisation in Ireland. This is something that we should all be very proud of.

The Sphere of youth work has changed dramatically over the 30 years that I have been a Foróige leader, but the core purpose and philosophy on which Foróige was built remains as strong and relevant as ever. Something that has really changed though, are the ways in which we fulfil our mission. We are working with young people through more creative and innovative means and adding new dimensions to our work.

Our commitment to the organisational values of volunteerism, democracy, education, excellence and co-operation remain steadfast. Not only do we use these words, we understand them and we apply them everyday in our work.

The highlight of last year was undoubtedly the permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards which were held in Dublin's Croke Park on the 2nd November 2007. What a wonderful occasion it was and I know that each of the 900 strong crowd were proud to be there in celebration of 20 inspirational groups of young active citizens. In permanent tsb we have found a partner organisation whose commitment to fostering an Ireland of socially responsible and proud citizens is firmly aligned to our own.

Foróige has gone through a period of unparalleled expansion and development over the past few years and is working with more and more young people in different ways and in varying levels of intensity. While this is very exciting and fully in line with the purpose and philosophy of the organisation, we need to be mindful that the governance of Foróige is drawn from only one section of our work. I feel that this needs to be addressed to make the organisation more effective, more representative and a stronger Foróige for the future. I believe in the value of volunteerism and because of this I believe that adult leaders and volunteers from all parts of the organisation have much to offer Foróige at National Council level.

I would like to pay tribute to Caroline Hope who retired from Foróige this year after 37 years of dedicated service to the organisation. Over the years Caroline has shown extraordinary commitment to young people and a deep belief in the purpose and philosophy of Foróige.

It became very clear to me as I travelled around the country and visited our many clubs, projects and youth services, that Foróige is truly blessed in its people. It has volunteers and staff whose commitment sometimes amazes and who have the insight, the energy, the clarity of purpose and the generosity of spirit to help young people to successfully negotiate their way from childhood to adulthood. Your work is much appreciated.

I cannot speak of appreciation without acknowledging the dedication and commitment of my colleagues on the National Council and National Executive of Foróige. It is with great pride and pleasure that I have had the opportunity to work with you all. I wish you well for the future.

Billy Freeley

Chairperson of National Council of Foróige



Seán Campbell

Chief Executive Officer's Report

It has been an exciting and eventful Foróige year. We are reaching more young people than ever before and are continuing to build innovative programmes, projects and services to meet the changing needs of Ireland's young people. Foróige is, and has always been, an organisation that leads the way.

As Foróige continues to grow and expand, it is important that we don't lose sight of the basic unit of the organisation. I absolutely believe that the Foróige club model, when done at its best, is unequalled anywhere in the world. We need to stay true to this, whilst also staying new, creative and innovative. We must continue to give communities the opportunity to get involved in Foróige alongside the traditional Foróige Club model. It is with this in mind that we are developing a number of new voluntary youth work models including volunteer-led youth cafés, youth forums, computer corners, Foróige circles, Foróige feeder clubs, groups for older members and special interest groups.

I have an innate belief in the effectiveness of youth work. It has a vital role to play in the lives of all young people, not just those deemed to be at risk. Through our clubs, projects and services we endeavour to meet the needs of all young people and enable them to grow and develop.

2007 saw continued growth in the range and diversity of youth projects that we offer, adding to the already rich mix of work that is Foróige. The organisation has, for a number of years, led the way in drug education and prevention in the youth work sector. We now have 21 drug education workers operating in 18 counties across Ireland. Foróige is the major provider of drug misuse education and prevention services to young people throughout the country and we are very proud of this.

As leader in the sector, it is pivotal that we ensure all our projects and services are conducted in line with best practice and it is through evaluation that we can measure and track the outcomes of our work. We have commissioned research in a number of areas for this purpose. To date, our system of evaluation has been effective and of great assistance in improving and developing our service provision. However, to continue to improve, we need to produce measurable results that concretely evaluate our work and prove, beyond any doubt, the effectiveness of Foróige's models of youth work. This year will see the dawn of a new era of evaluation and positive outcomes-driven change within the organisation.

It is with great pleasure that I announce the appointment of John Cahill, former Manager, Blanchardstown Youth Service, to the newly created position of additional Assistant Chief Executive Officer. John is a man of great integrity and experience in the youth work sector who will bring an added dimension to the leadership of the organisation.

I want to thank the leaders, young people and staff of Foróige for making this another successful year for the organisation. It is vital that our young people have such positive role models in their communities, promoting the spirit and value of volunteerism, which we hope will continue into their adult lives. I want to pay tribute the National Council for their dedication over the past year. I want particularly to thank Billy Freeley, our out-going Chairperson, for his outstanding commitment and inspiring leadership over the last two years. I wish all in Foróige every success in the year to come.

Seán Campbell
Chief Executive Officer, Foróige

Focus

on

Ability

Foróige joined forces with Muscular Dystrophy Ireland and the Irish Wheelchair Association on 17th October 2007 to launch Integr8, a powerful interactive resource to engage young people and challenge their attitudes towards young people with a physical disability. Bryan Gavin, Foróige Youth Officer, North Dublin reports on how the Integr8 programme and DVD will be used to increase the opportunities for young people with physical disability to access Foróige clubs and projects nationwide.

Muscular Dystrophy Ireland (MDI) and the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) both have Foróige clubs attached to their organisations which cater for young people with a physical disability. These two clubs joined forces as the members felt strongly that they wanted to do something to break down the barriers that can stand in the way of young people with physical disabilities getting involved in mainstream youth clubs and projects.

The clubs set about planning their course of action and Integr8 was born to increase people's awareness of the needs, desires and wants of young people with a physical disability. The young members were involved in every aspect of putting this valuable resource together – they came up with the creative concept (think Big Brother meets Mission Impossible), they were the stars, they worked on the design and they organised the launch.

Integr8 is designed to help all young people, youth leaders and those involved in youth work to include young people with a physical disability. It seeks to reduce people's fears and to change their views. It also shows the positive benefits of more inclusive ways of working with young people in general.

Foróige is very proud to be associated with this project and has undertaken to role-out Integr8 in its 400 Foróige clubs and 130 projects throughout the country. This resource will then be used by these groups to raise awareness of disability and to help members and leaders make provisions to include young people with disabilities in their activities. Foróige Staff will provide an Integr8 training session at District Council level so that leaders can then deliver the programme in their individual clubs. This resource can also be used as part of a larger disability awareness programme or done on a regional basis.

A pilot session has been conducted with a number of Foróige clubs in the Dublin region and the feedback from members and leaders has been very positive. It gave members an opportunity to examine their own clubs and think of ways they could include someone with a disability. One of the members of Mad Spirit Foróige club in Dublin, Micheline Clancy, reminded the young people that they should think of a person's ability rather than their disability. She added "just because I use a wheelchair, does not mean I can't do the same things as everyone else."

Integr8 is available to download from the Foróige website www.foroige.ie



Steffan Ashe, 17

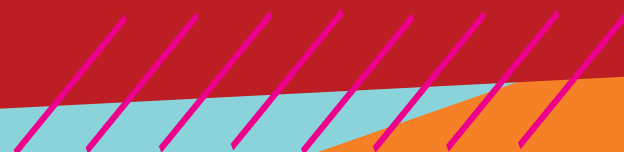
Chairperson, Mountrath Foróige Club

Co. Laois

“ Some of my older friends who were in Foróige before encouraged me to join the local club and I’ve never looked back. I feel like I’m actually doing something worthwhile and I see now that when we put our minds to it we can do anything... we have the ability to make a difference in our community. I didn’t realise how much of a difference we can make until I was elected onto the Reference Panel. We feedback our views and opinions to the organisation and can impact on youth work on a National level.”



page.9



Advanced Training for Foróige Leaders

Foróige's system of leader training, which consists of a series of levels through which leaders can progress, is making a real difference to Foróige clubs across the country. The overall purpose of this system is to enable leaders to become more self confident and more skilled at working with and empowering members. Gerry Mc Donald, Foróige's Head of Training and Programmes, reports on how leaders got on at the recent Level IV training courses that took place in Tullamore and Carrick-on-Shannon.

Foróige's system of training is based on the belief that the leader's role in the Club is crucial and fundamental to its success, so as well as developing members, leaders themselves can engage in their own process of development. In fact, both processes are complementary.

Level I training focuses on how to start a Foróige club and is aimed at new leaders who are about to set up or work in an existing Foróige club.

Level II training is about strengthening relationships, club structures and activities in order to facilitate learning and development among members.

Level III training is about ensuring that leaders have the inter-personal skills to empower young people to think for themselves, direct their own action and take charge of their own lives.

Level IV training focuses on improving facilitation and inter-personal skills so that leaders will be better able to lead group discussions to draw out members and get them thinking for themselves. The training also focuses on leaders developing their own personal effectiveness and assertiveness skills.

To date 50 Leaders have successfully completed the advanced Level IV training courses. The way you are feeling as a person can significantly affect how you relate to young people. That is why the training focuses on self awareness and taking charge of your own wellbeing and state of mind.

Leaders also developed interpersonal skills designed to draw out the best from young people and empower them to think and act for themselves. This also means intervening in discussions to enable them to express themselves, explore issues and think something through.

This training is particularly relevant today. There is a great need among young people to discuss issues that interest and concern them. They need open dialogue, particularly with adults, where they are listened to and taken seriously and can consider new perspectives. The training includes sessions on listening, relaxation, self awareness and asking open questions that encourage thinking and reflection.

Leaders responded very enthusiastically to the training and found it extremely beneficial. They said that the skills they learned were not only relevant to the club but very useful in their personal lives. Some comments from leaders were:

"I will listen – really listen to members"

"A good reminder to be aware of my feelings- how I feel is what I bring to the club"

"I will be able to talk with members in a constructive way – listening to them and explaining my feelings and viewpoint without getting emotional"

"I need to relax, ground myself and prepare mentally for a meeting"

"I will not assume anything about anyone"

One leader, herself under stress and her members getting more and more unruly by the minute, switched off the lights in the hall and got all her members to do one of the relaxation exercises. She was amazed that it worked. Everyone became much calmer. She says that they *"loved it and want to do it again."*



Niamh O'Malley, 13

P.R.O., Carrigallen Foróige Club

Co. Leitrim

“ I joined Foróige because it's not specifically for one type of person and it includes everyone. It's important to see that every person is unique and that you don't have to copy everyone else to be liked by others. I think a lot of people feel pressure to fit in and this can lead us to make bad decisions, such as drinking and smoking. The Foróige Club gives us the opportunity to be different and use our unique talents and abilities to enjoy ourselves and benefit our community.”

page.11



Sorcha McGee, 15

Secretary, Lacken Foróige Club

Co. Mayo

“ Over the past few years, as a Foróige member, I have learned how to take on responsibility and seen how important it is to look out for others and not just yourself. Our club is actively involved in our community and that’s what I like most about Foróige. It feels great to fundraise for important causes. You feel really good – like you’re making a real difference. Foróige has really made a difference in Lacken. It gives us a place to go where everyone feels included and the older community members say that they think the club is great for the village.”



page.12

Connecting Communities

Take a look around you anywhere in Ireland today and you will immediately notice one thing, the faces of Ireland have changed. According to the National Census 2006, one in every ten people living in Ireland today was not born here. In some parts of the country this ratio is much higher, like in Blanchardstown in Dublin, where Foróige operates Blanchardstown Youth Service and 14 other youth projects, nearly one in every three people was born outside Ireland. These new members of our community come from all over the world including Eastern Europe and Africa and they bring a vast wealth of culture, experience and tradition to us. John Cahill, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Foróige, gives an insight into one of the ways that Foróige is embracing cultural diversity.

Unfortunately, as a society we are not always able to, or in some cases, willing to, reach out and welcome new members into our community. In Foróige, with our mission to enable all young people to develop themselves and their communities, we have a particularly important role to play in facilitating the inclusion and integration of young people from these new communities into the fabric of Irish society.

Foróige in Blanchardstown, where over 30% of the population is from minority ethnic groups, is particularly aware of the needs of young people from various ethnic backgrounds and the challenges they face in getting involved in youth work at a local level. In 2007, with funding from Co. Dublin VEC, a Youth Officer, Julie Defranoux, was employed with the specific remit of integration of minority young people. Julie's main focus is in the newly developed area of Tyrrelstown where over 50% of the population is from minority ethnic groups. She works with all young people in the area and is setting up new, integrated youth groups as well as integrating the young people of Tyrrelstown into programmes and groups in other areas of Blanchardstown.

Also in 2007 Foróige was invited to seek funding from the ONE Foundation for a pilot initiative working towards the integration of young people from minority ethnic groups into youth work programmes. The submission was based on a pilot initiative for the Tallaght and Blanchardstown areas of Dublin. The proposal was successful and will see the development of integration policies and strategies and involve extensive targeted outreach work in both areas. The initiative, which started in early 2008, involves developing and facilitating training for Foróige staff and voluntary youth leaders in



Tallaght and Blanchardstown in relation to integration. It is envisaged that the learning gained from and the training developed and implemented will inform the development of an integration policy and strategy for the whole Foróige organisation.

As we enter 2008, which has been designated the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, we look forward to a more integrated and diverse Foróige in the future!

The Reference Panel is a democratically elected body of young Foróige members who make recommendations to the organisations National Council on issues affecting young people today. The young people are elected at Regional Conferences all over the country. At their first meeting they elect four members to the National Council of Foróige. These young people take active involvement in shaping the future of the organisation. So how did they get on at their meeting in January of this year? Gerry McDonald, Foróige's Head of Training and Programmes, fills us in.

This year's Reference Panel held their first conference from the 15th – 17th February 2008 in Emmaus Conference and Retreat Centre, Swords, Co Dublin. The size of the Reference Panel has grown significantly this year. Its membership has increased from 22 to 41, which reflects the commitment that Foróige has to real and structured youth participation.

This increase is due to an amendment to Foróige's Constitution which now allows all committee members of Foróige clubs to attend regional conferences and not just chairpersons and secretaries as before. This creates a much larger electorate for the Reference Panel. In response to this the National Council decided that the numbers elected onto the Reference Panel would also be increased.

This allows for much greater democratic participation by young people and enhances their influence on the Foróige organisation. It also gives rise to a greater buzz of activity and ideas at Reference Panel meetings. Ex- Reference Panel members have always spoken glowingly of their experience of being involved in the Reference Panel. So the organisation is delighted that this experience is now open to more members of Foróige.

The theme of this year's conference was "Mental Health and Young People". The questions discussed were:

What is mental health?

What does mental health mean to the Reference Panel?

What can Foróige do to help young people build positive mental health?

Before making any serious recommendations on mental health, there was a real need to explore the subject in greater depth and explore the experience and understanding of the Reference Panel.

Tony Bates, Founder Director of Headstrong and a leading expert on mental health, gave a powerful presentation to the group. He spoke with great enthusiasm and came up with exciting and innovative ideas. Tony's input was invaluable in giving a great deal of depth to the proceedings.

Tony worked in partnership with Gerry McDonald, Head of Training and Programmes, Annette Fleming, Area Manager and Youth Officers Gail O' Sullivan and Gwen Maye to run what was a highly enjoyable and successful conference. But it has to be said that it was the Reference Panel members themselves that really made the conference the great event that it was. Their engagement with what could have been a difficult topic was creative and enthusiastic. The results were exciting and sometimes spectacular.

The Reference Panel drew pictures of what mental health meant to them. They came up with deep and insightful images and ideas on the nature of mental health. They also came up with a vast number of practical ideas as to how Foróige can enable young people to develop positive mental health. Their ideas will create a programme that will go on for years.

Tony was highly impressed, in fact bowled over by some of the ideas. He took some of the images away with him for his own work. The Reference Panel gave a lot over the weekend, but also enjoyed themselves immensely. They left with a feeling of having a very positive experience; of really bonding with others and of having great fun as well!!

Congratulations to Steffan Ashe, Mountrath Foróige Club, Co. Laois, Sorchá McGee, Lacken Foróige Club, Co. Mayo, Fionn O'Conarain, Tallaghtfornia Foróige Club, Dublin and Fionnbarr Thompson, Lacken Foróige Club, Co. Mayo who were elected to the National Council of Foróige to represent the views of young people.



Steffan Ashe



Sorchá McGee



Fionn O'Conarain



Fionnbarr Thompson

Insights and Ideas

There is a full report on the Reference Panel Conference available from Foróige Headquarters highlighting all of the ideas and recommendations generated at the conference. This is just a small flavour of them.

“Mental Health is about getting the balance right. There are always negatives and positives in life. It is about balancing negatives such as fear, difficulties and isolation; with positives such as friendships, talking things out, fun and laughter.”

“A young person could be isolated and feel as if they are in a “cul de sac” with no way out. Through friendship, talking something through and participation in activities he or she could see that there is a way out and other more positive horizons.”

“Everyone is unique and so is their mental health.”

page.15

Some practical recommendations included:

- Drama festivals on mental health issues
- Charter of rights that promote emotional safety in the club
- Activities that promote socialising and friendship
- Procedures for greeting and welcoming new members into the club
- Mentoring by older members
- A directory of supports available to young people
- A publication on youth mental health awareness
- Space to talk and communicate in the club
- Fun exercises to develop positive mental health
- Grants for mental health projects

This year's Reference Panel meeting was historic for two reasons – the dramatic increase in membership and the great partnership with Tony Bates of Headstrong. This partnership has been very exciting for all involved and has great prospects for the future.



Mentoring: Little Time, Big Difference

Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) is the world's largest, proven youth mentoring programme and it operates in 37 countries worldwide. This professionally supported one-to-one mentoring programme matches an adult volunteer to a young person with similar interests who would benefit from extra support. Foróige and the then Western Health Board piloted the programme in 2001. In 2006 financial support was secured from philanthropic foundations and Foróige became the designated host for the programme in Ireland.

Over the past two years the programme has gone from strength to strength and now operates in nine counties across Ireland. A strategic plan was developed to expand the programme nationally and there are now 765 matches in operation. The programme operates in two spaces, the community and schools. 24 schools now take part in the programme and this figure is growing rapidly.

Profile:

Ciara O'Halloran, Project Officer, Galway

"I was a big sister for a year in college. Now 6 years on I'm a Project Officer with the programme. What I love the most about my job is hearing the heart-warming stories of the parents, volunteers and young people. To see the young person's face light up when they talk about their 'big' and the experiences they have shared is really lovely. Hearing the volunteer or parent talk about the changes they have noticed in the young person is fantastic too. I get as excited as they do when I hear how the young person has developed. I feel privileged to be part of this process. One girl said the year of her match was the best of her life."



Ensuring Best Practice

The Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway, were commissioned by Foróige, to carry out extensive research on the programme. A randomised control trial was designed by the centre and carried out with two hundred young people in the West. This research will continue until 2009 and is being closely monitored by an international expert advisory committee.

BBBS has established internal partnerships with Foróige operated projects and services in Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim and Monaghan. External partnerships have been developed with the Health Service Executive (HSE) in Galway and the Transition Support Project in Dublin. These partnerships enable the effective expansion and diversification of the programme to ensure we are reaching the young people who would most benefit from having a big brother or sister.

Transition support for young people seeking asylum in Ireland through BBBS

The Transition Support Project, funded by the European Social Fund, co-ordinates, integrates and delivers services to Separated Children Seeking Asylum and 'aged out' minors (17-21 years). The project enables these young people to participate in education and prepares them for adult life in Ireland or their country of origin. BBBS has been singled out as a key way to meet the needs of these vulnerable young people. There are currently 20 matches under the Project and in all cases the young people were either referred by the HSE (if under 18) or self referred (over 18). The participants are both male and female and from a wide variety of cultures and traditions from West Africa to the Middle East. These matches have made the transition to life in Ireland easier and more enjoyable for the littles.

What the Bigs and Littles Say

“Thanks to my big I passed my driver theory test first time!”

“I’ve been matched to my big brother for 10 months and since then I’ve gained refugee status and moved into private rented accommodation. I’m not sure I’d be settled in my own place if it wasn’t for all his help and support.”

“My little brother wanted to attend college but was having trouble doing this and claiming his full social welfare. We spoke about his needs and rights and I met with a representative of the department of social community and family affairs on his behalf. He is now doing a course in english and receiving his full welfare entitlements.”

Profile:

Catherine Muldowney and Shannon Haugh

Volunteer Catherine Muldowney has been matched to 13 year old Shannon Haugh, for nearly nine months. They share a love for animals and Catherine, who is a vet, often brings Shannon walking with her dog 'Jaz.' They enjoy nature walks and sometimes share a picnic in the park and they can often be found window shopping and sipping smoothies in town. Both natives of Laois, the girls always don the blue and white county colours when their team is playing. Catherine decided to become a volunteer because she thinks, “It’s a great idea to have someone to talk to outside your own family. It’s not a huge commitment – only a few hours a week.”

Shannon started secondary school just a few months after she was matched to Catherine and the match was a great support to her throughout her first year in school. Her confidence has soared and she is comfortable chatting about her life to a caring adult friend. She says, “I tell all my friends about it and they think it’s really good. I really recommend it. We do loads of stuff together and we can always talk, which is nice. It gives me something to look forward to every week.” Catherine agrees, “I have really enjoyed the match so far. I love hearing about Shannon’s school and all her news! It makes me do more stuff that I haven’t done in ages. We went swimming last week and I can’t remember when I last did that. I can’t see how anyone wouldn’t enjoy it.”



Then and Now

- Foróige Clubs Standing the Test of Time

Ratheniska Foróige Club, Co. Laois

In 1967 Maureen Drennan, Nora Mansworth and Annie Delaney, had a dream of setting up something for the young people of their community. Today, 40 years on, Ratheniska Foróige club is still going strong. In celebration of their 40th anniversary the club held a service of thanksgiving in the local church, followed by a stage presentation and the official opening of an 'archive room' in the hall dedicated to showcasing the many achievements of the club throughout the years. This milestone event was attended by members of the community including a number of the original adult leaders and club committee. Seán Campbell, Chief Executive Officer, Foróige made a presentation to the club on the night in celebration of their great achievement.

Ratheniska Foróige club has had many successes throughout the years. Some memories include a drama piece and citizenship entry based on Chernobyl, the reuse-recycle fashion show and the many club nights where friendships began and a sense of community was created. Many ask what the secret to the success of the club is and both Annie Delaney, who was a Foróige leader for over twenty years and Theresa Fingleton, who has been a Foróige leader for over 33 years, attributed the long life of the club to the continuity and dedication of leaders. With its long standing history, it's fair to say Ratheniska Foróige club is an inspirational representation of the Foróige ethos.



Then

Now

Then

Newcastle Foróige Club, Co. Wicklow

The Foróige club in Newcastle was started 20 years ago by leaders Seán O'Carroll and Irene Lacey. Both are still very much involved in the club today. "The club has played an integral part in local community life over the years," says Seán O'Carroll. "I remember our first project involved bringing a run-down picnic area back to its former glory. Members of the club have maintained this project over the years and it is still enjoyed by both locals and tourists.

Another clear memory is from 1996 when Newcastle's oldest resident, who was 95, was attacked in his home. Luckily, he survived, but the members were upset and wanted to do something about it. After a lot of discussion and research, the club decided to buy personal alarms for the elderly. They visited all of the senior citizens in the area, built relationships with them and gave them pendant alarms which were connected to a monitoring station. The club won a 'Be a Good Neighbour' Award and were the overall winner in Foróige's Citizenship Awards for this project.

These are just a few of the many projects the club has undertaken over the years, but they have also had great fun along the way hostelling, camping, hill-walking, adventure weekends and interclub events. The club also takes an active role in Wicklow District Council, which I feel is important for every club, it connects us and strengthens us at local level.

In February 2008 we held a function in Newcastle Community Centre to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Foróige club. The whole community, including former members and leaders, turned out in force to celebrate with us. A wonderful night was had by all and here's to another 20 great years."



Now

Fionn O'Conarain, 17

Chairperson, Tallaghtfornia Foróige Club

Co. Dublin

“ I've gotten a great sense of pride being involved in Foróige because you're given the opportunity to get involved in your community. There's a structured approach to all our community projects which makes them easier to do. We recently organised a charity cycle travelling 300km in 3 days. We were wrecked but we raised €3,000 for the Simon Community and Share a Dream Foundation, so it was worth it!”



Young

Changemakers

Foróige's Citizenship programme has gone from strength to strength since its conception in 1969. Expanding the programme in partnership with permanent tsb has allowed the programme to reach more young people and acknowledge their active citizenship achievements at both regional and national level. In 2007 over 70 groups received regional citizenship recognition and 20 groups went on to be honoured with national citizenship awards. The Citizenship programme empowers young people, enhances their human development and enables them to realise that they do have the power to make a difference in the world in which they live.

The regional recognition events kicked off in Co. Cork seeing County Hall packed full of active citizens for a day of celebration and entertainment. Similar excitement followed in Laois, Cavan and Mayo. Groups displayed their citizenship projects and spoke to other young people and leaders about their active citizenship endeavours. Special guests included local ministers and TDs, National Council members and permanent tsb staff. After the presentation ceremony everyone took part in an interactive quiz where their singing, dancing and comic stylings were put to the test.



An Evening To

Remember

The inaugural 'permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards 2007' took place on 2nd November 2007 at Croke Park. The electric atmosphere, anticipation and excitement began to build early on in the evening as an audience of over 900 people from across the country arrived for the Awards Ceremony. This red carpet event gave the 20 award winning groups the perfect opportunity to display their projects and celebrate their achievements. Broadcaster, Ray Darcy and Aoife Forde, a member of the Reference Panel and National Council of Foróige compared the night's events. The award winners presented their projects to the engrossed audience through song, poetry and snappy speeches. Entertainment was provided by 'Celtic Storm' an Irish Dance Troupe made up of Foróige members from the North West and congratulatory wishes came from a host of stars including An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern; Aidan Power, RTE Presenter; Malcolm O'Kelly, Irish Rugby International and the inimitable Dustin. After the ceremony everyone danced the night away with 2FM DJ Ruth Scott.



1. Munterconnaught Foróige Club, Co. Cavan ran a number of fundraising activities, such as a Christmas hamper raffle, a junior disco and a pancake sale to buy a defibrillator for their community.



2. LEAF Youth Project, Co. Donegal researched the dangers of fireworks and produced a dvd to discourage young people from using them.



3. Carracastle Foróige Club, Co. Mayo fundraised for the past two years to buy a defibrillator. Some of their fundraising initiatives included inter-club discos, cake sales and a sponsored walk.



8. Bandon Garda Youth Project, Co. Cork raised money for Trócaire by running activities in the local community, such as bag packing, mother pampering sessions and a 24 hour fast. They also ran personal development workshops for younger teenagers in the area.



9. Killimordaly Kiltulla Foróige Club, Co. Galway hosted a fashion show to raise money for a defibrillator. Activities included ticket sales, stage set up, modeling, wardrobe and advertising.



4. Killeevan Foróige Club, Co. Monaghan got involved in the Trocaire Global Gift Plan, raised money for a defibrillator in their community and organised a party for senior citizens to highlight their view that 'Life is a gift to be preserved and enjoyed.'



5. Loobagh Area Youth Project, Co. Limerick organised a venue, rights to movies and refreshments to hold a cinema night for their community.



6. Ardfield-Rathbarry Foróige Club, Co. Cork organised a youth mass in their parish to help bridge the generation gap. They also organised a disco so that everyone could enjoy themselves in a safe and friendly environment.



7. Ballinascarthy Foróige Club, Co. Cork, in a bid to support tourism and the local festival, involved the whole community in a village clean up to help improve the village's physical appearance.



10. Knocknacarra Youth Development Project, Co. Galway fundraised for a mini bus in response to the lack of transport facilities in operation. A wide variety of community groups now have use of the bus.



11. Loughlynn Foróige Club, Co. Roscommon published a book documenting the local history of the area to help newer members of the community integrate into the existing community.



12. M.C. Teens Foróige Club, Co. Dublin organised a lobbying campaign to keep Tallaght Children's Hospital open. They highlighted the consequences of the possible closure of the facility and secured over 1000 signatures on their petition.



13. Dromheath Group, Blanchardstown Youth Service, Co. Dublin provided a wide range of activities for the Mulhuddart Community Games, including face painting, catering, fundraising and the provision of a clean-up team.



14. St. John Ambulance, Blanchardstown Youth Service, Co. Dublin produced an information booklet detailing response protocol because they discovered a significant lack of awareness of how to respond appropriately to an emergency in the home.



15. Whitechurch Health Café Group, Co. Dublin set up a health café to provide young people in the area with a safe place to hang out, meet new people, learn new skills, get information and have fun.



16. Paulstown Foróige Club, Co. Kilkenny undertook three distinct activities to improve their village. They constructed flower boxes and planted flowers, erected limestone benches at the village bus stop and compiled a contacts directory of all local businesses.



17. Ballycumber Foróige Club, Co. Offaly designed and erected signposts in their village. They also compiled a plan of the old cemetery as it had never been mapped before and displayed it in the local church.



18. Boher Foróige Club, Co. Westmeath hosted an information evening on suicide awareness so that the issue could be discussed openly in a safe and secure environment. Guests from Mental Health Ireland, the HSE and the Samaritans spoke about mental health and suicide.



19. Mount Temple Foróige Club, Co. Westmeath renovated and restored the Old Mount Temple Graveyard which had fallen into disrepair. They also researched and compiled a history of Caulry GAA minor board from 1980 to the present day.



20. Milltown Foróige Club, Cavan, in an effort to spruce up their local area and bolster community spirit, designed and painted a mural on the wall of the community centre. They also published a booklet describing the mural and the history of the local area and included a full list of local organisations.

Rising to the Challenge

The **permanent tsb** Foróige Youth Citizenship Programme 2008 is well underway and young people from Foróige and other youth organisations are rising to the challenge and organising lots of community enhancing projects across the country.

Youth Citizenship dates for your diary

11th April

The deadline for the Project Report Form to be completed and returned to the Citizenship Programme Officer.

10th/11th/17th/18th/24th May

The permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Regional Recognition Events will take place at different locations around the country – log onto www.youthcitizenship.ie for details.

October 2008 The permanent tsb Foróige Youth Citizenship Awards Ceremony 2008.

Check out www.youthcitizenship.ie

European Recognition for our Youth Citizenship Programme

Based on our expertise in youth citizenship, Foróige was approached in May 2007 by the EU Director General of Education and Culture to sit on a working group dedicated to examining methods of involving young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, in public life. Foróige's Citizenship Programme Officer, Bernie McHugh represents the organisation on this working group, which has sent a paper to the Council of Ministers on models of best practice in youth citizenship. Foróige's citizenship model has been recognised by this working group as one of the most suitable and transferable models of involving young people in public life.

permanent tsb Volunteering Programme

As part of our partnership with **permanent tsb** they have committed to supporting a major volunteering initiative for their staff. So far 50 enthusiastic permanent tsb staff have taken part in induction training and are volunteering in Foróige Clubs and Projects around the country. We are delighted to have them on board and wish them every success.

What's Stopping You?

Remember that you and your club or group has the power to change the world for the better. Don't just sit there thinking about it, take positive action and make a real difference in your community.

Make this your year of youth citizenship action!



Niamh Wickham, 17

Secretary, Levitstown Foróige Club

Co. Kildare



“ I joined Foróige because it sounded like good craic and a fun way to meet new people. The Reference Panel is a perfect example of this. We get to meet loads of new people from different places, who we never would have met otherwise and we got a weekend away out of it too!!! We also got the chance to voice our opinions, which I probably wouldn’t have had the confidence to do a few years ago. ”



Supporting Young People Through Tough Times

By Tony Bates*, Founder Director of Headstrong, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health

Young people are our future. As they emerge from childhood into the adult world, they bring to it a freshness and creativity that allows society to constantly redefine itself. As we watch them grow we see in their behaviour reflections of all that is good in our culture. But their behaviour can also reflect elements of our world that are confusing, hurtful or simply unjust.

Growing up in a stressful world is not easy. It is not surprising that the rates of mental health difficulties among young people in Ireland are increasing, that they are acting out, drinking, taking drugs and in some cases even taking their lives. These behaviours have sent a shiver across countless communities, challenging us all to ask some hard questions about why mental health seems to elude so many young people. At a time in history when there have never been greater opportunities, why do some of them choose to end or destroy their lives? Why is it so hard for so many to feel good about themselves, to feel like they belong and to know that they have something unique to offer our world?

Headstrong was established a little over a year ago to support young people in search of positive mental health. When we listened to young people, we realised that what they want is actually very simple. They want responsive support to be readily available, in a safe place and to be listened to in a sensitive, non-judgemental way. Far from being demanding, many of the changes that young people are requesting require the investment of thought, time and friendliness rather than finance.

Headstrong's mission is to empower communities to better support young people to achieve well-being. The jigsaw model is the vehicle by which Headstrong aims to achieve this mission. It is a vehicle which is driven not by Headstrong, but rather by local communities, as ultimately, each community must find their own solutions to the challenges their young people are facing on this journey. It is about building on and drawing together the services that currently exist rather than duplicating them.

Jigsaw supports the development of an integrated, community-based support system centred on the needs of young people and their families. It is about creating a different story of youth mental health. One in which young people are listened to and their needs are respected; and if they need support on their journey, ensuring it's available to them when and where they need it. Strong youth organisations, like Foróige, with its ethos of empowering youth and enriching communities, have a vital role to play in this process.

*Tony Bates has 30 years experience of working in mental health. Prior to founding Headstrong, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health, in March 2006, Tony worked as Principal Clinical Psychologist at St James's Hospital. Tony had previously worked and trained in the US alongside some of the leading international innovators in mental health and also established Trinity College Dublin's Masters in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Tony is a regular contributor to national print and broadcast debate about mental health, including a fortnightly column in the Irish Times.

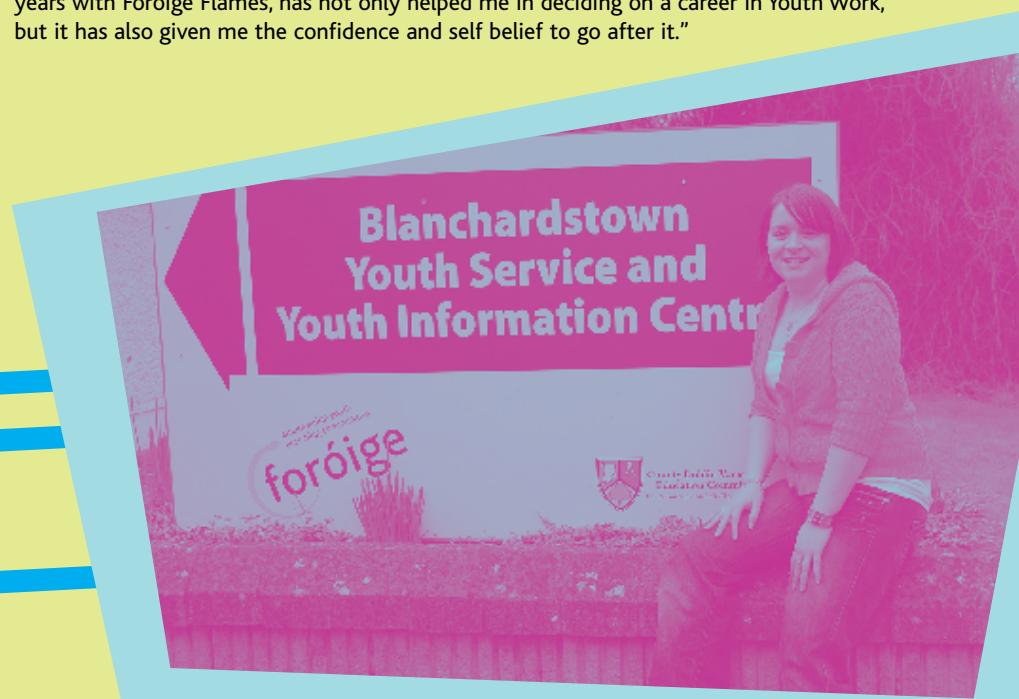
Kim Sullivan, former member and now leader with the Foróige Flames Club in Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, tells her Foróige story.

"When I reflect on my time as a member of the Foróige Flames Club in Blanchardstown, which I joined when I was 12, I have really great memories. The fun that we had, the friendships that we made and the projects that we undertook will stay with me forever. The biggest influence on my life has been my Mam, Chris, who was one of the founding leaders of the Foróige Flames club in 1989. Through my experiences in the club I have learned the importance of being a team player as well as many other life skills. When I turned 18 I decided to become an adult leader in the club as I felt that this would, in some way, stand to give something back to our community. I felt fortunate that we had such a strong Foróige club in our area, a place where we really belonged and felt that we could achieve anything that we set our minds to, so I really wanted to help keep that alive.

The various positions that I held in the Foróige club helped me to understand the workings of committees and youth forums and I believe that this has been an invaluable experience for me. Another lesson that I have learned is the importance of creating a culture of volunteerism in communities. The Foróige club plays a vital role in my area and this can only continue if a tradition of valuing volunteerism is passed from one generation to the next.

In 2006, having successfully completed my Leaving Certificate Examination, I secured a Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Course in Applied Social Care. During this 12 month course I was fortunate enough to secure a two week placement with Foróige, in Blanchardstown Youth Service, where I had hugely positive experiences and got to see another side of youth work.

Having completed the PLC Course in 2007, I moved to the Blanchardstown Institute of technology where I am presently in the second year of an honours degree course in Applied Social Studies. As part of my second year curriculum, I am currently on a three month placement in Blanchardstown Youth Service. The experience that I have gained during my time there has made me realise that a career in youth work is what I really want. On completion of my work placement, I will return to college having gained an invaluable insight into professional youth work and I owe a great deal to the staff of Blanchardstown Youth Service. This experience, coupled with the knowledge that I gained from my eight years with Foróige Flames, has not only helped me in deciding on a career in Youth Work, but it has also given me the confidence and self belief to go after it."



Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies

The Health and Well-Being Programme is one of Foróige's eight education programmes. It is designed to educate young people about physical, mental, social and community health and enable them to take action to address health matters that affect them. In 2007 the Wrigley Company Ltd. came on board as sponsors of the programme and this allowed Foróige to re-vamp the programme and involve more young people than ever before in developing their physical, mental and social well-being. A strong element of the new and invigorated health and well-being programme is a focus on the retention of older members in Foróige clubs. A grant scheme was set up to enable the running of effective health and well-being projects at county level through district councils. Projects can involve anything from yoga or keep fit classes to mental health seminars and first aid courses. Gail O'Sullivan, Regional Youth Officer for Waterford and South Tipperary reports on how the Health and Well-Being programme is being embraced by both Waterford and South Tipperary District Councils.

Waterford District Council is focusing their efforts on leadership and mentoring systems within the club. 20 members from Waterford Foróige clubs, aged 15 years and older, have been chosen to participate in a residential weekend to explore leadership and mentoring. There is a packed agenda of discussion and debate planned so that the 20 young participants, facilitated by volunteer adult leaders, can examine leadership in their clubs and the role they play in it. They will also explore current models of mentoring and look at ways of adapting the most appropriate mentoring model for use in the Foróige club. The participants will take the results back and be involved in implementing a practical mentoring programme in their club. This programme will benefit both younger and older members in the clubs in Waterford. Younger

members will gain the support and guidance of their older peers and older members will gain confidence and a heightened feeling of ownership over their club. Leaders will also reap the benefits as older members are enabled to take on more responsibility within the club.

South Tipperary District Council was also successful in their grant application. The District Council highlighted the difficulties that teenagers face in modern Ireland and intend to develop a programme for helping them to cope with the pressures and stress of everyday life. They developed a survey and distributed it to clubs in South Tipperary to accurately identify the pressures young people face and to find ways of dealing with them. 71 members from four South Tipperary clubs participated in the questionnaire. Key areas of stress which emerged were exams, pressure to take drugs or alcohol, pressure to smoke and relationships. The suggestions to alleviate some of the difficulties included study techniques (a priority among 12 – 14 year olds), assertiveness training (most popular among 15 – 18 year olds) and relaxation and meditation techniques. The 15 – 18 age group also highlighted having someone to talk to as being very important. In response to the survey, South Tipperary District Council is organising workshops in these key action areas. This is a great example of young people working together to encourage *positive* mental health and well-being.



Abiola Muhammed, 13

P.R.O., Dynamite Teens Foróige Club

Dundalk



“ There are a lot of people from different cultures in my club and we often talk about our views and beliefs. Foróige is great for getting everyone involved, even the most shy people get involved in the group games and discussions. It really brings you out of yourself. Before I became P.R.O., I was too shy to talk in public but now, because I give reports every week, I’m more confident when I’m speaking.”

in Communities

Garda Youth Diversion Projects

Garda Youth Diversion Projects are community based and supported youth development projects that work to divert young people from becoming involved, or further involved, in anti-social or criminal behaviour by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development and promote civic responsibility. Garda Youth Diversion Projects are funded by the Irish Youth Justice Service in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and operated in conjunction with the Garda Community Relations Section of An Garda Síochána. Foróige currently operates and manages 28 Garda Youth Diversion Projects.

New Horizons

Hazel Flemming, Co-ordinator of the recently established SUB Project in Co. Offaly, reports on how the project is already making a difference in the local community after just 8 months.

The SUB Project which stands for Saol ur Biorra and translates into New Life in Birr, engages young people, aged 12-17, from the Birr area of Co. Offaly in a range of positive and constructive activities to facilitate their own personal development and promote civic responsibility. The wide range of activities include sports, fishing, arts and crafts, computers, active in the community projects, glass design workshops, and other special interest groups.

The launch of the Project was a star studded event with An Tánaiste, Brian Cowen, Musician, Mundy and Hurler, Brian Whelahan in attendance. It was a great opportunity to showcase some of the young people's work, meet members of the community and discuss our plans for the future.

The SUB has had an incredible 8 months. The young people involved organised a clean-up of the local estate and got the whole community to help out. The Project recently had its first soccer match with the local Gardaí, which, unfortunately, the young people lost by one measly goal. However, the group has learned the value of hard work and persistence and are determined to be victorious in the next encounter!

It has been an eye opening and enriching journey thus far and the young people involved have worked hard, developed positively and had great fun along the way. They say that they are coming to think of the SUB as a 'home away from home' and this bodes very positively for what is to come from the project in the future.

Ballincollig Action Project Forging Links

"The Ballincollig Action Project in Co. Cork has been an important part of the local community since 2001," says Nessa Harnett, newly appointed Project Co-ordinator. "Group activity is the core way in which the project involves young people in learning and development. Courses include hair and beauty, engine building, carpentry, DJ workshops, graffiti art and drama. Through these programmes we enable young people to become more self confident and learn skills to better cope with difficulties in their lives and contribute to their community. A volunteer led 'Youth 'Café' was set up in partnership with St. Vincent de Paul a year ago within the project and has gone from strength to strength.

Pictured below are some of the members of the Ballincollig Youth Café having the 'craic' with Gardaí and local volunteers on a recent outing. This is at the centre of what the Ballincollig Action Project is about; breaking down barriers and building relationships with young people through enjoyable, challenging activities. It's from this basis of fun and trust that young people experience real connections with their peers and their communities and thus are in a strong position from which to embark on their own journey of self development.

This project and the local Drugs Task Force Project are supported by a dynamic Youth Diversionary Committee who take a discreet yet active role in seeking to enhance the life chances and possibilities of young people in Ballincollig. Their successes include acquiring a bus for the two youth projects and a community house in a local estate. They also played a large part in both projects accessing €10,000 through the Electric Aid Ireland Fund."



A Young Person's Perspective

Cathriona Gilrairie, or Triny as she's known to her friends, is a youth work success story and has been involved with the LEAP Garda Youth Diversion Project in Longford town for over seven years now. She's a bright, bubbly young woman who has a firm sense of purpose and exudes a maturity way beyond her 20 years. When Triny first got involved in LEAP (Longford Enable Action Project) she admits to being 'a bit of a wild child' but says that she now channels this energy into positive, constructive activities. Sinead Flanagan, Project Co-ordinator, LEAP, chats to Triny about her experiences of being involved in a Garda Youth Diversion Project.

"My first impression of LEAP was that it was somewhere for young people to hang out and to make new friends. Over my time being involved in the project I was able to take part in lots of courses and participate in different youth events, including trips to adventure centres, cookery and personal development courses and Foróige's drug and alcohol awareness programme. I had been a member of lots of groups and gotten really positive experiences from them, but when the opportunity to be involved in Youth Bank came along it really captured my imagination," says Triny. Youth Bank is a grant giving group which is run by young people for young people. It is funded by Ulster Bank and involves a hands-on youth committee who are responsible for everything from managing the budget, to drafting the grant application forms and from promoting the initiative to buying the paperclips.

"I am an out going person but until this point in my life I would never have had the confidence to get up in front of people to speak and, furthermore, I wouldn't have had anything that I was interested enough in to want to speak about. Through my experiences in LEAP and Youth Bank I have gained this confidence.

Over the past few years I have been asked to travel all over Ireland and further a field with Youth Bank as a youth advisor. In July 2007 I travelled with other members of Youth Banks from Northern Ireland for a week to help set up six Youth Banks across Armenia. I was the only person from the South of Ireland on the trip and words can't express how much I got from this trip, it was amazing!

I am now a mentor to the present Youth Bank committee in the LEAP Project. This involves me supervising and mentoring young people and it's my chance to give something back to the project that I gained so much from. Due to the success of our Youth Bank we were chosen to host an International Youth Bank forum in Longford last April. 12 Youth Banks were represented at the forum and our youth committee did a great job in organising all of the details of the event.

Being part of these projects has opened doors for me to go on into further education. I am the first person from my immediate family who has successfully obtained their Leaving Certificate. LEAP challenged me to find my strengths and to achieve my potential."



Facing Facts

One of the on-going challenges facing young people is the role drugs and alcohol play in Irish society. Good youth work has a unique and vital part to play in breaking the cycle and culture of drug and alcohol misuse that exists in Ireland today. Ger McHugh, Foróige Drug Misuse Prevention Officer, gives an insight into how Foróige is supporting young people to make positive informed choices to prevent drug and alcohol misuse.

The essence of good youth work and therefore good drug misuse prevention programmes is enabling young people to involve themselves in their own development and in that of their community. The work of Foróige's staff and volunteers aims first and foremost to develop the young person in an out of school setting. This supports and compliments existing family and educational structures. Evidence suggests that if young people have a connection to, and involvement in, their community and society as a whole, then this supports pro-social development and behaviour. This, in turn, influences the choices a young person makes about drug or alcohol use as a way of coping with different challenges faced during adolescence.

The majority of young people accessing Foróige clubs, projects and services have a responsibility in participating, organising and developing activities for the group. This empowers young people to be more confident and feel a stronger sense of self-worth. They also tend to have a greater awareness of their abilities, needs and values, which are all important in drug education and prevention work.

Foróige uses a variety of responses in their drug prevention and education work and they tailor each programme to the exact needs of the young person or group as each case is different. We can incorporate an element of substance misuse education into any of our programmes which look to develop the young person's physical, mental and social well-being.

In the past 12 months in Foróige there has been a 150% increase in the number of staff directly involved in drug misuse prevention. There are currently 21 drug education and prevention workers covering 18 counties across Ireland. They are involved in doing individual and group work with young people, peer education, parents' programmes, family support and referral, and training for staff or volunteers in their region. Many of the programmes also work very closely with other Foróige managed projects or services such as Garda Youth Diversion Projects, Teenage Health Initiatives and Youth Health Café's.

The drug education and prevention programmes include information on tobacco, alcohol and drugs, dispelling myths and challenging attitudes. The programmes also incorporate a range of personal and skill development modules in areas of communication and assertiveness, decision-making, peer pressure and influence and negotiating risky situations.

Foróige has a very comprehensive policy and guidelines document in relation to Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs which is currently in the process of being reviewed and updated. This is in line with quality standards in substance use education as outlined in the Drug Education Workers Forum (DEWF) manual. Over the coming year drug awareness training for Foróige staff and volunteers will be available and training in the DEWF 'manual in quality standards in substance use education' will follow over the next two years which will compliment any drug education being incorporated into general youth work practice within Foróige.

youth@thecentre

Celebrating
5 years of
Mulhuddart Community
Youth Project



More Than Just a Space - Foróige Youth Cafés

Foróige is playing a strong role in the development of Youth Cafés, which are becoming a much sought after response to the social and recreational needs of young people. Foróige sees youth cafés as another way of involving young people in safe socialising, learning by doing, developing healthy relationships and having a positive space in which to explore the issues adolescence raises for them. Denis O'Brien, Foróige's Area Manager, Southern Region, reports on why a youth café is more about good youth work than operating a commercial coffee shop.

While visiting a youth café, you might see relaxed groups of young people listening to music, playing pool, talking to adult volunteers, using computers, watching television or just having a chat over a coffee. Larger cafés also run activities like band events, film nights, citizenship and other programmes. In line with Foróige's values and beliefs, young people are involved in all aspects of running the café. A young people's committee working with the adult volunteers or staff choose a name, decide on rules, opening times, activities, menus and more.

While many communities would like a youth café in their area, government funding is unlikely to be available to provide one in every town and village. In response to this, Foróige has designed four different models of youth café, which will allow us to respond effectively to the needs of young people.

For towns and cities, Foróige has developed a large scale fully staffed youth café which provides a range of services, including health related programmes. The C.R.I.B. in Sligo is an example of this 'Youth Health Café' model. Our second model is a part-time café attached to one of the 130 youth projects Foróige operates throughout Ireland. These cafés are led jointly by the project youth workers and local adult volunteers. Examples include Ballincollig, Tramore, Tallaght and Letterkenny. Our third model is a volunteer led café, which operates in a suitable room in the community one or two evenings a week. Volunteer led cafés operate in Glountaune, Co. Cork and in Longford town amongst others. The fourth model is a mobile youth café. This might take the form of a large bus fitted out as a café and parked in a different location each evening for young people of that area to use. Foróige looks forward to being able to pilot this in the future.



'The Attic' volunteer led café in Longford is evidence of a community's determination to make a café available for its young people. Operated by a youth committee and a large team of adult volunteers, the Attic opens in a local hall every Saturday. Some 200 young people are registered members, though not all go in every week. Foróige assists the adults and the youth committee with training, advice, policy development and programme design. Monica Considine, an adult volunteer says, *"It was great to be involved in developing a youth café in Longford town. We were very fortunate to have a team of dedicated and hardworking people, an energetic and enthusiastic youth committee and the advice and support of Foróige throughout the planning stages. Working as a volunteer with young people in the Attic, while challenging, is also very rewarding, and of course great fun."*

Adam Mawdesley, a young person using the café said "Coming from England the Attic gave me the opportunity to meet new friends out of a school setting and made my transition to my new home a lot easier and more enjoyable"

Eoin O'Connor, 13

P.R.O., Craughwell Foróige Club

Co. Galway



“ I like that we run our club, we get to choose what we want to talk about and what issues we want to take action on. You get to be involved in loads of different activities because everyone has different interests so members often suggest activities that some of us would never have even thought of. Our club is learning sign language at the moment to help us communicate with a member who is unable speak. ”

page.34

Focus

Sarah's Story

Sarah Murphy is 24, from Carrick-on-Suir and getting married this September. She has been working in *Squashy Couch*, an adolescent health and information project in Waterford, for the past two years. Sarah was a member of both the Foróige club and young women's group in Carrick-on-Suir Neighbourhood Youth Project (NYP).

Sarah, who has a qualification in Social Care from Waterford Institute of Technology, has since volunteered with both the Foróige Club and the NYP. She now volunteers with a group of young girls who are pregnant and still in school. The group supports the girls to remain in education and involves them in a range of developmental activities including parenting courses, computer classes, health and beauty courses and information sessions.

"One memory that sticks out in my head is seeing a member of the group graduate from college and knowing that the support the group gave her had a lot to do with that. The girls regularly say that they wouldn't have come through the experience as strongly as they did or be the good parents that they are if it wasn't for the support that they got from the group - it's a great feeling to be part of that", says Sarah.

"It was through my time spent as a member of Foróige and being involved in the NYP that I knew I wanted to study Social Care and work with young people. I always say that there is as much fun to be had being a volunteer as being a member. You get to try activities and have fun doing things that adults might never get a chance to try. I can honestly say that I learn something new every session that I spend with the group."

Meet John James Gannon

John James Gannon has been Club Leader with Curry Foróige club, Co. Sligo for the past 15 years. He first got involved because his children wanted to join and he felt it was only right that he help out. He explains, "I found it tough the first few nights but the leaders who were there were great to show me the ropes." His children have long moved on from their Foróige days but John still volunteers and says that he has "the height of respect for young people." He explains, "They are more capable now than ever." I think they have it a lot harder that we did, they have so many pressures to deal with like drugs and alcohol. We had it easy!"

John has seen firsthand the benefits of being involved in Foróige for young people. "The first few years in secondary school can be tough. It's a big transition so having a Foróige club can help support young people through this. They form close friendships with their peers and have older members and adult leaders to speak to and confide in. Things aren't perfect everywhere, so it is good that young people have a place to go where they can enjoy themselves in a safe environment and seek guidance if needed. I'd never been involved in a formal meeting but these youngsters can conduct meetings and know exactly how to behave. All these skills will really stand to them."

There have been many great moments for John over the last 15 years, but he says what he enjoys most is the clubs' projects. He explains, "The members come up with ideas and discuss with us how practical these ideas are. When they decide on a project, whether it be fundraising or tidying the village, they are really committed and want it to be a success." John has recently stepped down as Club Leader but will remain as leader in the club. He says, "I think all parents should have a spell at it. It's easy to leave it to someone else but once you start you really will enjoy it. Being involved gives you a much better attitude towards young people. I'm continuing to enjoy my spell as a Foróige Leader."



Foróige Projects and Services

PROJECTS/SERVICES

FUNDING AGENCIES

1. Mainline Core	Department of Education
2. Mainline North Dublin (Foróige Clubs)	Dublin Youth Services Board
3. Mainline Donegal (Foróige Clubs)	Co Donegal VEC
4. Mainline Waterford (Foróige Clubs)	Waterford City VEC
5. Ferrybank Youth Development Project	Waterford City VEC
6. Tallaght Youth Service	Co Dublin VEC
7. Tallaght Youth Information Centre	Co Dublin VEC
8. Blanchardstown Youth Service	Co Dublin VEC
9. Blanchardstown Youth Information Centre	Co Dublin VEC
10. Peer Education Tallaght	Co Dublin VEC
11. Whitechurch Youth Development Project	Co Dublin VEC
12. STAY Project St Aengus, Tallaght	Co Dublin VEC
13. Early School Leavers Blanchardstown	Co Dublin VEC
14. Peer Education Blanchardstown	Co Dublin VEC
15. Corduff Community Youth Project, Dublin	Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund
16. Ballybane Youth Development Project	City of Galway VEC
17. Ballinfoile Youth Development Project	City of Galway VEC
18. Knocknacarra Area Youth Project	City of Galway VEC
19. Beara Peninsula Youth Development Project	Co Cork VEC
20. SKY, North Cork	Co Cork VEC
21. The Glen Youth Development Project	Cork City VEC
22. Mahon Youth Development Project	Cork City VEC
23. Castlebar Youth Information Centre	Co Mayo VEC
24. Croom Youth in Action Project	Co Limerick VEC
25. Carrigaline Youth Initiative	Cork Local Drugs Task Force
26. Loobagh Area Youth Project, Kilmallock	Co Limerick VEC
27. Donegal Youth/Community Information and Development Programme	Co Donegal VEC
28. Nenagh Youth Development Project	North Tipperary VEC
29. MADE Extension Project, Monaghan	EU Programme for Peace & Reconciliation
30. ABLE Project, Ballyfermot, Dublin	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
31. Ballincollig Youth Development Project, Cork	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
32. Bán Project, Ballybane, Galway	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
33. dán Project, Donore Avenue, Dublin	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
34. GAP Project, Glen, Cork	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
35. JAY Project, Jobstown, Dublin	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
36. KEY Project, Tallaght, Dublin	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
37. LEAP Project, Longford	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
38. MAY Project, Mahon, Cork	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
39. Monaghan Garda/Neighbourhood Youth Project	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
40. BLOCK Project, Portlaoise	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
41. Raphoe Garda Project, Donegal (LEAF)	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
42. The WAY Project, Wicklow	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána

PROJECTS/SERVICES

FUNDING AGENCIES

43. Bandon Garda Project, Co Cork	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
44. The YEW Project, Whitechurch	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
45. DIME Garda Project, Dublin	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
46. The HAY Project, Dublin	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
47. Birr Garda Youth Diversion Project (SUB), Offaly	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
48. Cavan Garda Youth Diversion Project	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
49. Hartstown/Huntstown Garda Youth Diversion Project (ORB), Dublin	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
50. APT Garda Youth Diversion Project, Tallaght, Dublin	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
51. West Limerick Garda Youth Diversion Project	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
52. Falcarragh Garda Youth Diversion Project, Donegal	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
53. Drogheda Garda Youth Diversion Project, Louth	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
54. Youghal Garda Youth Diversion Project, Cork	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
55. Galway City Garda Youth Diversion Project	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
56. Brookfield Garda Youth Diversion Project, Dublin	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána
57. WEB Project, Blanchardstown, Dublin	Department of Justice & Garda Síochána (Local Drugs Task Force)
58. Tallaght Teenage Health Initiative, Dublin	Health Service Executive – South West
59. Monaghan Neighbourhood Youth Project	Health Service Executive – North East Area
60. Ballyshannon/Bundoran Neighbourhood Youth Project, Donegal	Health Service Executive – North West Area
61. The Rosses Neighbourhood Youth Project, Dungloe, Donegal	Health Service Executive – North West Area
62. South Leitrim Neighbourhood Youth Project	Health Service Executive – North West Area
63. The CRIB Youth Project and Health Café, Sligo	Health Service Executive – North West Area
64. Letterkenny Youth Project and Health Café, Donegal	Health Service Executive – North West Area
65. Teen Parenting Support Programme, Donegal	Health Service Executive – North West Area
66. Carrick-on-Suir Neighbourhood Project, Tipperary	Health Service Executive – South East Area
67. Tramore Youth Development Project, Waterford	Health Service Executive – South East Area
68. West Limerick Youth Initiative	Health Service Executive – Mid West Area
69. Ballina Neighbourhood Youth Project, Mayo	Health Service Executive – Western Area
70. Castlebar Neighbourhood Youth Project, Mayo	Health Service Executive – Western Area
71. Castlereagh Adolescent Programme	Health Service Executive – Western Area
72. Teenage Health Project, Roscommon*	Health Service Executive – Western Area
73. Teenage Health Project, Galway City	Health Service Executive – Western Area
74. Westport Neighbourhood Youth Project, Mayo	Health Service Executive – Western Area
75. Boyle Neighbourhood Youth Project, Roscommon	Health Service Executive – Western Area
76. Athenry Adolescent Support Programme, Galway	Health Service Executive – Western Area
77. Springboard, Mayo	Health Service Executive – Western Area

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