

YPAR | Young People at Risk
Dublin North Inner City

Creating a place of hope, where young people's dreams are realised

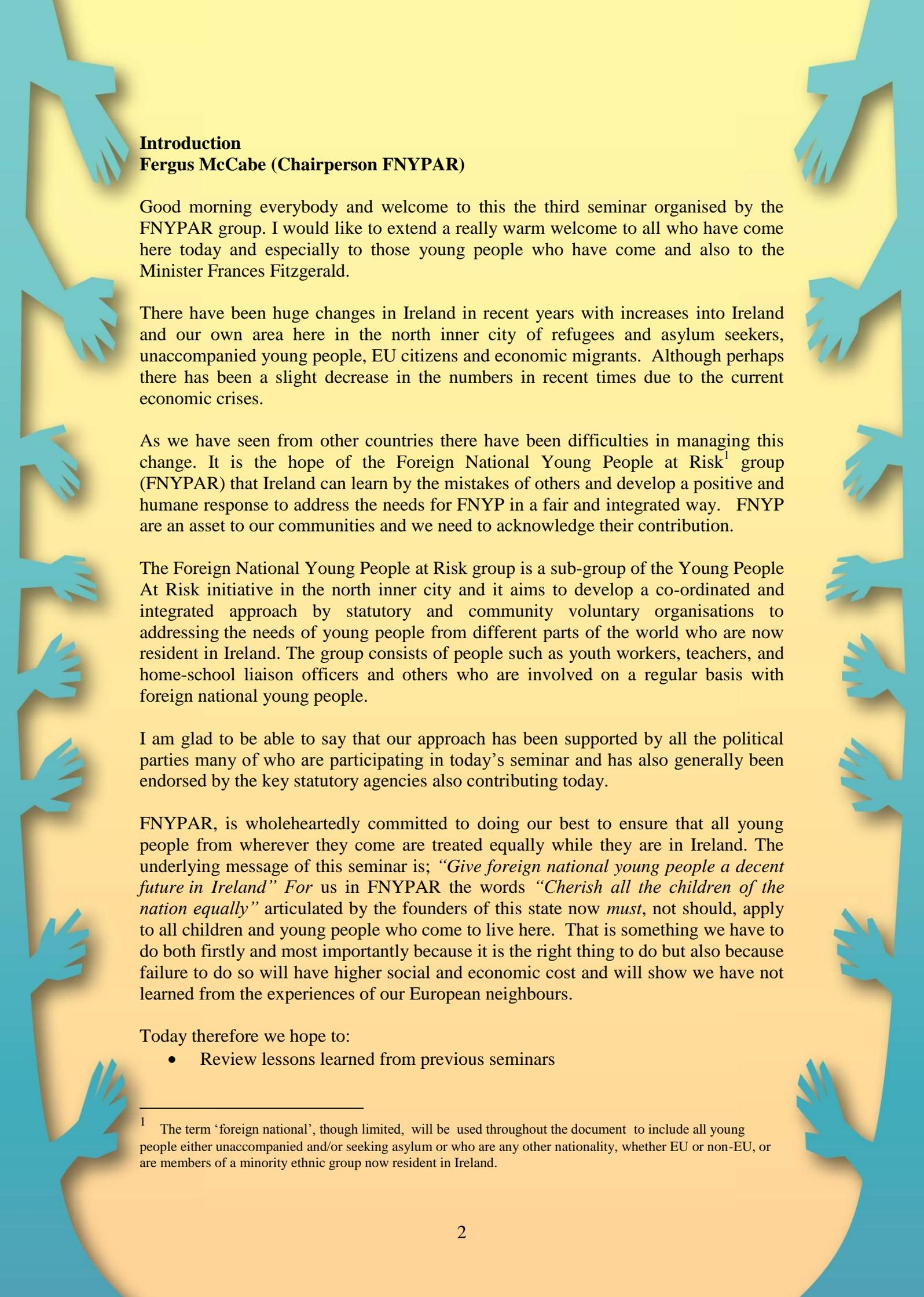
Foreign National Young People at Risk Group



Seminar held in Clonliffe College, Dublin 3

20th January 2012

Summary & Recommendations

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Introduction

Fergus McCabe (Chairperson FNYPAR)

Good morning everybody and welcome to this the third seminar organised by the FNYPAR group. I would like to extend a really warm welcome to all who have come here today and especially to those young people who have come and also to the Minister Frances Fitzgerald.

There have been huge changes in Ireland in recent years with increases into Ireland and our own area here in the north inner city of refugees and asylum seekers, unaccompanied young people, EU citizens and economic migrants. Although perhaps there has been a slight decrease in the numbers in recent times due to the current economic crises.

As we have seen from other countries there have been difficulties in managing this change. It is the hope of the Foreign National Young People at Risk¹ group (FNYPAR) that Ireland can learn by the mistakes of others and develop a positive and humane response to address the needs for FNYP in a fair and integrated way. FNYP are an asset to our communities and we need to acknowledge their contribution.

The Foreign National Young People at Risk group is a sub-group of the Young People At Risk initiative in the north inner city and it aims to develop a co-ordinated and integrated approach by statutory and community voluntary organisations to addressing the needs of young people from different parts of the world who are now resident in Ireland. The group consists of people such as youth workers, teachers, and home-school liaison officers and others who are involved on a regular basis with foreign national young people.

I am glad to be able to say that our approach has been supported by all the political parties many of who are participating in today's seminar and has also generally been endorsed by the key statutory agencies also contributing today.

FNYPAR, is wholeheartedly committed to doing our best to ensure that all young people from wherever they come are treated equally while they are in Ireland. The underlying message of this seminar is; *"Give foreign national young people a decent future in Ireland"* For us in FNYPAR the words *"Cherish all the children of the nation equally"* articulated by the founders of this state now *must*, not should, apply to all children and young people who come to live here. That is something we have to do both firstly and most importantly because it is the right thing to do but also because failure to do so will have higher social and economic cost and will show we have not learned from the experiences of our European neighbours.

Today therefore we hope to:

- Review lessons learned from previous seminars

¹ The term 'foreign national', though limited, will be used throughout the document to include all young people either unaccompanied and/or seeking asylum or who are any other nationality, whether EU or non-EU, or are members of a minority ethnic group now resident in Ireland.

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- Focus on the key issues of Health, Education and Justice, in responding to the needs of foreign national and minority ethnic young people
 - Examine current social policies and practices for international and minority ethnic young people to identify what works well, what does not work well and prioritise actions to bring about improvement in service provision.

In so doing we will look at the good and positive things that are happening as well as those issues that need to be addressed.

I want to encourage you all to participate fully in today's proceedings to help and inform the FNYPAR group in its important job of finding ways of providing young people who have come to live here in Ireland with the same level of services and supports we would like to see for our own young people and so try and ensure that they have a chance of a decent future here in Ireland.

So I would now like to call on Minister Frances Fitzgerald to speak and thank her again for her presence here today.

Minister's Address

Frances Fitzgerald TD. Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

Thank you Fergus, I have to say I have been a great admirer of the work of Fergus for many years.

I am delighted to be here with you this morning to officially open the YPAR Foreign National Young People at Risk Conference. I also welcome the diversity of cultural experiences in the room. It gives me an opportunity to thank all of you involved for the valuable contribution you have made over the years in the North Inner City area of Dublin and I hope that today's conference will help further that work. I see that you have a very full and impressive programme of speakers, activities, workshops and discussions for the day and I hope that you will have a very successful event.

Let me begin by commending on the work being done by YPAR (Young People at Risk)

YPAR represents something which, as Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, I want to see more of – put simply, that is interagency action in the community, for the community.

So I further wish to commend all the various bodies and agencies and in particular those frontline practitioners who are working together to deliver much needed integrated services to young people at risk and their families in the North East Inner City area of Dublin.

I know this includes partners from Schools, Probation Services, Gardaí, the HSE, City of Dublin Youth Service Board, Local Community Childcare and a number of voluntary and community groups and youth projects in the area.

The YPAR initiative has been the result of local endeavours to integrate services for children and young people “at risk” due to a number of factors such as early school



leaving, mental health, anti- social behaviour and involvement in crime, substance misuse and severe personal, family and social problems.

All of these issues are very real. They affect so many young people. Indeed the interplay of these factors have often combined to destroy the lives of too many vulnerable young people - young people who were let down by the state and the myriad of services which existed to intervene, but didn't, or at least not adequately or collaboratively.

For far too long these issues affecting young people at risk have not received the focus they deserve. But as Ireland's first-ever senior Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, I am working to right this wrong. I am committed to building a new architecture for Child & Family Services in Ireland; to be delivered by a dedicated new Child & Family Support Agency.

But setting-up a new agency on its own would be futile unless at its heart there is a clear vision and firm commitment to new and innovative ways of working:

- A commitment to real interagency collaboration and shared multi-disciplinary practice;
- A commitment to early-intervention and prevention services;
- A commitment to effective family support services;
- A commitment to working with proven voluntary service providers to deliver these services in the community.

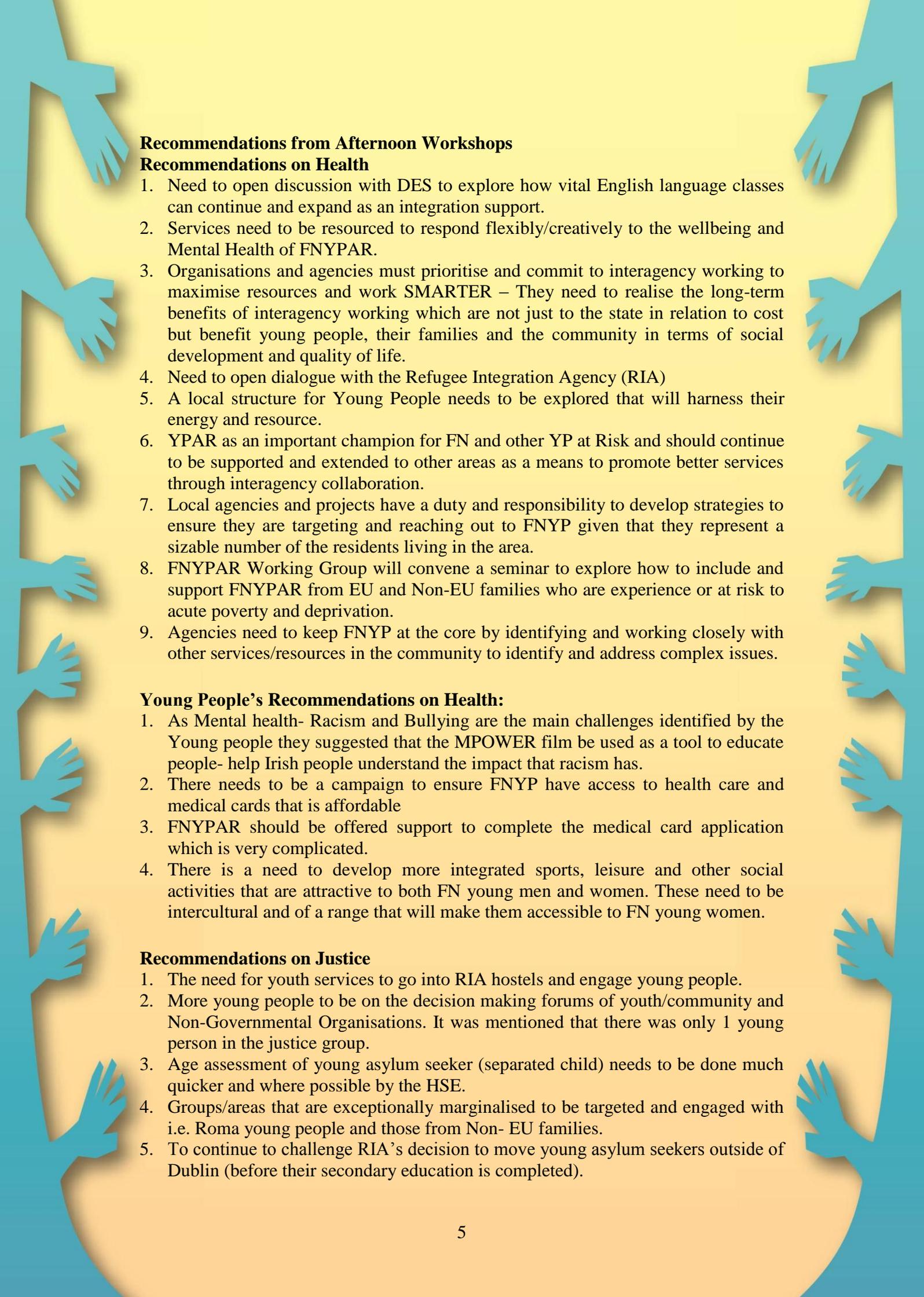
But I don't think I need to explain such concepts to you, because it seems very clear that YPAR is already streets ahead. That is why I'm so happy to be here today, to join you as you consider Inter-Agency Strategies for working with Foreign National Young People at Risk.

As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, I am constantly heartened at how children and young people are leading the way in promoting integration and interculturalism in our communities; in our schools; in our youth clubs and in our local sports clubs.

I acknowledge that immigration creates opportunities for the country; diversity, talents, skills and understandings. On the other hand, I realise, like you do, that foreign national and ethnic minority young people have specific additional problems that need to be addressed. These include bullying, discrimination and racist attacks, accommodation problems, and cultural mediation and language problems in dealing with State Agencies.

Your commitment to responding to these problems is very welcome and I am very impressed with the approach you are taking with a specific working group bringing local organisations and agencies together to identify current and emerging issues and needs for foreign national young people living in the North Inner City and to further identify responses to these needs.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to YPAR and to everyone involved for your unstinting work, commitment and dedication.



Recommendations from Afternoon Workshops

Recommendations on Health

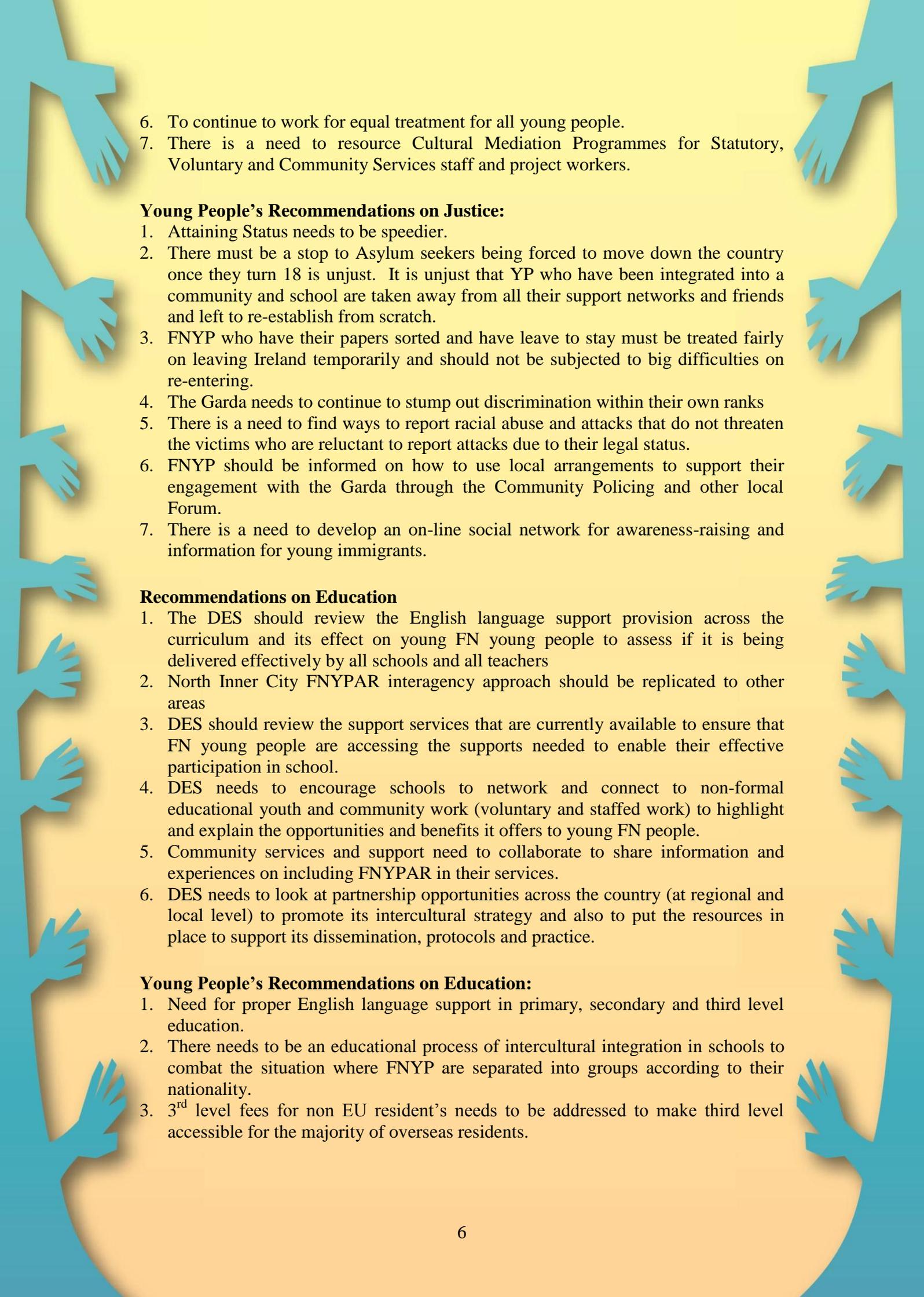
1. Need to open discussion with DES to explore how vital English language classes can continue and expand as an integration support.
2. Services need to be resourced to respond flexibly/creatively to the wellbeing and Mental Health of FNYPAR.
3. Organisations and agencies must prioritise and commit to interagency working to maximise resources and work SMARTER – They need to realise the long-term benefits of interagency working which are not just to the state in relation to cost but benefit young people, their families and the community in terms of social development and quality of life.
4. Need to open dialogue with the Refugee Integration Agency (RIA)
5. A local structure for Young People needs to be explored that will harness their energy and resource.
6. YPAR as an important champion for FN and other YP at Risk and should continue to be supported and extended to other areas as a means to promote better services through interagency collaboration.
7. Local agencies and projects have a duty and responsibility to develop strategies to ensure they are targeting and reaching out to FNYP given that they represent a sizable number of the residents living in the area.
8. FNYPAR Working Group will convene a seminar to explore how to include and support FNYPAR from EU and Non-EU families who are experience or at risk to acute poverty and deprivation.
9. Agencies need to keep FNYP at the core by identifying and working closely with other services/resources in the community to identify and address complex issues.

Young People's Recommendations on Health:

1. As Mental health- Racism and Bullying are the main challenges identified by the Young people they suggested that the MPOWER film be used as a tool to educate people- help Irish people understand the impact that racism has.
2. There needs to be a campaign to ensure FNYP have access to health care and medical cards that is affordable
3. FNYPAR should be offered support to complete the medical card application which is very complicated.
4. There is a need to develop more integrated sports, leisure and other social activities that are attractive to both FN young men and women. These need to be intercultural and of a range that will make them accessible to FN young women.

Recommendations on Justice

1. The need for youth services to go into RIA hostels and engage young people.
2. More young people to be on the decision making forums of youth/community and Non-Governmental Organisations. It was mentioned that there was only 1 young person in the justice group.
3. Age assessment of young asylum seeker (separated child) needs to be done much quicker and where possible by the HSE.
4. Groups/areas that are exceptionally marginalised to be targeted and engaged with i.e. Roma young people and those from Non- EU families.
5. To continue to challenge RIA's decision to move young asylum seekers outside of Dublin (before their secondary education is completed).

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6. To continue to work for equal treatment for all young people.
 7. There is a need to resource Cultural Mediation Programmes for Statutory, Voluntary and Community Services staff and project workers.

Young People's Recommendations on Justice:

1. Attaining Status needs to be speedier.
2. There must be a stop to Asylum seekers being forced to move down the country once they turn 18 is unjust. It is unjust that YP who have been integrated into a community and school are taken away from all their support networks and friends and left to re-establish from scratch.
3. FNYP who have their papers sorted and have leave to stay must be treated fairly on leaving Ireland temporarily and should not be subjected to big difficulties on re-entering.
4. The Garda needs to continue to stomp out discrimination within their own ranks
5. There is a need to find ways to report racial abuse and attacks that do not threaten the victims who are reluctant to report attacks due to their legal status.
6. FNYP should be informed on how to use local arrangements to support their engagement with the Garda through the Community Policing and other local Forum.
7. There is a need to develop an on-line social network for awareness-raising and information for young immigrants.

Recommendations on Education

1. The DES should review the English language support provision across the curriculum and its effect on young FN young people to assess if it is being delivered effectively by all schools and all teachers
2. North Inner City FNYPAR interagency approach should be replicated to other areas
3. DES should review the support services that are currently available to ensure that FN young people are accessing the supports needed to enable their effective participation in school.
4. DES needs to encourage schools to network and connect to non-formal educational youth and community work (voluntary and staffed work) to highlight and explain the opportunities and benefits it offers to young FN people.
5. Community services and support need to collaborate to share information and experiences on including FNYPAR in their services.
6. DES needs to look at partnership opportunities across the country (at regional and local level) to promote its intercultural strategy and also to put the resources in place to support its dissemination, protocols and practice.

Young People's Recommendations on Education:

1. Need for proper English language support in primary, secondary and third level education.
2. There needs to be an educational process of intercultural integration in schools to combat the situation where FNYP are separated into groups according to their nationality.
3. 3rd level fees for non EU resident's needs to be addressed to make third level accessible for the majority of overseas residents.

Immediate Actions to Progress for FNYPAR Working Group

1. Meet with relevant Departments and Agencies to presents the FNYPAR conference findings appropriate to each agency.
2. Continue to promote, advocate and influence interagency work as an effective respond to the needs of FNYPAR
3. Convening a meeting of agencies to explore how best to respond to EU and Non-EU families not accessing services, who are 'hard to reach' and are experience or at risk to acute poverty and deprivation.
4. Convene a meeting of the wider YPAR network and other to present the FNYPAR Conference Report as a means to encourage greater interagency collaboration as a means to response more effectively in addressing the issues of FNYPAR.
5. Work to set up a structure that will enable the views and voices of FNYP be part of decisions that affect their lives.
6. Continue to coordinate and share information between local services and supports to FNYPAR
7. Develop an alternative response to address the policy of displacing FNYP before they complete their 2nd level education.

Conclusion

The Foreign National Young People at Risk group would like to thank Minister Frances Fitzgerald and all those who participated and contributed to its third conference. We would like to especially thank all the young people who attended and who shared their diverse experiences with us including the good, the bad and the ugly experiences. These young people as all our young people are the real riches of our society. How we as a society provide the supports to cultivate the hopes, dreams and diverse talents of ALL our young people will determine the type of society we become in the future.

This conference provided the FNYPAR group with the chance to reflect on the progress made since the last conference in 2008 and consult with key stakeholders on what should be our priorities over the next number of years. Many of the participants agreed that there has been some good progress in relation to many of the issues and in particularly the work that is happening at local level between the agencies such as the schools, community projects, voluntary agencies and Garda. However, there are still many issues and barriers identified that foreign national young people need to be overcome for them to feel an equal part of Irish society.

In the area of health there is a need to ensure equality of treatment in accessing medical cards, GP services, Mental Health services and general information on health entitlements. Aftercare and the policy of displacing young people from their community networks and supports to place them in an alien environment when they reach 18 was criticised by all at the conference and needs to be stopped immediately.

In education, access to English classes is an issue that came up again and again and something the DES needs to recognise as a vital support to enable FNYP to participate in school. Training in cultural mediation for teachers, community workers and agency staff was highlighted; Racist bullying both in and outside school was again identified as a serious issues. The need for schools to develop greater contact



with community supports such as youth projects was identified. The cost of third level fees was seen as unfair and discriminatory against FNYP and needs to be tackled as it is a major barrier to accessing 3rd level for FNYP.

For Justice the main issues to come up included the lack of information on rights, the rigidity of the system that did not allow for a fair appeal or understanding of the situation that people may have been in when they made their first statement to immigration. The processing of applications needs to be speeded up and the displacement by RIA when young people reached 18 was again identified as an issue of justice that needs to be halted. Many of the participants recognised that there had been good progress in the relationship between FNYP and the Garda and in particular the positive contribution of the GNIB was highlighted. However, racism is still a major problem for many of the FNYP and there have been a few difficulties in relation to Garda harassment.

In relation to the community and the FNYPAR group it was accepted that the group provides a very valuable service to FNYP and its work should be replicated in other areas. Given the contributions from the young people at the conference, the FNYPAR group should support the development of a local Forum for Young People to harness the energy and resources of foreign national and other young people. The FNYPAR group should also work to encourage some of the other community and youth projects to reach out to FNYP and integrate them into their services. The local integrated responses championed through FNYPAR and YPAR were identified by all at the conference as having a very positive impact on supports and service to FNYP and is something that needs to be supported and replicated between statutory departments and agencies.

There continues to be serious issues impacting on the lives of FNYP people living in our area and we have both a moral and international legal obligation to respond to their needs in a human, caring and fair manner. It is the intention of the FNYPAR group to reflect on the outcomes of the Conference and use them to inform our priority actions which we will proactively progress over the next 24 months.

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