

REACH OUT

*Identifying and enabling
positive and sustainable pathways for
“Hard to Reach” young people
in Dublin’s North East Inner City*



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH



DUBLIN
NORTH EAST
INNER CITY

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INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of the research is to identify and analyse the current, emerging and aspirational needs of “Hard to Reach” 14-24 year olds in the North East Inner City (NEIC) area, and to identify gaps and blocks to engagement with local services and supports. “Hard to Reach” is defined by Young People At Risk (YPAR) as young people experiencing difficulties with relationships, education/training, employment, and health who are caught up in damaging criminal, antisocial and/or at risk activities, and are not engaging on a consistent and voluntary basis with local social supports and services. YPAR is an interagency network of statutory, voluntary and community projects and services including the HSE, TUSLA, An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service/Irish Youth Justice, Dublin City Council, Inner City Organisations Network (ICON), and other voluntary and community organisations, working to support, facilitate, and implement an integrated approach to meeting the needs of young people at risk.

The NEIC is a “RAPID” designated area of Dublin City. Persistent inequality and poverty in the inner city has resulted in a legacy of intergenerational poverty and social exclusion for many young people in the community and their families. Despite improvements both nationally and in Dublin city, low educational attainment and unemployment persists in the certain parts of the NEIC. Local and statutory organisations in the NEIC provide a range of services and supports for young people including youth services, youth justice services, substance misuse treatment, family support, further education and training, and counselling and mental health support.

Young people at risk in the NEIC present with a range of complex needs and vulnerabilities including substance misuse, mental health, and dual diagnosis, along with learning and behavioural difficulties. Several of the issues impacting the lives of young people are interconnected, as has been demonstrated internationally. For example, mental health issues, socio-economic disadvantage, and youth vulnerabilities are strongly linked (OECD, 2015c).

While many people require additional assistance and support to progress in education and employment, it is evident from existing youth education, training, and employment services that not all young people in the community are accessing the services and supports aimed at enhancing their education and employment opportunities. In some instances, engagement with local services and supports only takes place at a time of crisis or through involvement with the youth justice system. There is therefore a view within local services and supports that certain aspects of the current programmes on offer do not meet the visions, ambitions, and expectations, of all young people. Nor do they enable local organisations to fully respond to the diverse experiences of vulnerable young people with multiple complex and often interconnected needs.

The lives of young people involve the intersecting influence of family, school, and community. These shape overall adolescent development including young peoples’ opportunities to participate effectively in and out of school activities, their knowledge of education and employment, and their capacity to develop valued skillsets and aspirations (Skattebol and Redmond, 2019). International evidence highlights the importance of both individual and structural measures in responding to and meeting the needs of vulnerable young people by addressing the deficits within existing policies and services and focusing on the characteristics and capacities of young people and their families. Furthermore, standardized, ‘one-size-fits-all’ policy solutions, fail to address the diverse needs and prerequisites of many social groups, and particularly those experiencing multiple disadvantages (Eriksson, 2019).

Increased community participation and more bespoke, community-specific policies and services are therefore considered a more effective means to address ‘wicked problems’ such as inequality and social exclusion (Vanleene, Voets and Verschuere, 2018).

Despite the sporadic and infrequent engagement of some young people, it is clear that local NEIC services and supports serve as protective factors which help young people to develop and progress to adulthood. “Protective factors” are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, communities, and larger society, that when present, lower the probability of undesirable outcomes for young people (Forrest-Bank *et al.*, 2015). In the context of intergenerational socio-economic problems including drugs and unemployment, engagement with services can also be understood within broader strategies for ‘getting by’ through which young people exercise resilience and are adept at seeking out resources within the limited options available to them (Munford and Sanders, 2017).

The research was conducted through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology in which access to the target population, research design, and subsequent implementation, was based on collaboration between primary researchers and staff from local services and supports. Many of these organisations are members of YPAR and have designated people who work or attempt to work with “hard to reach” young people and their families. The services/ organisations that have established contact with “hard to reach” young people in the course of their work assisted with engagement with young people and the subsequent collection of data. This research used a mixed methods approach to collect qualitative and quantitative data from a diverse range of instruments including survey questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups, as well as an analysis of existing socio-economic and demographic data.

The design and planning of the research through PAR highlighted the important distinction between young people who do not engage at all, those who engage on an infrequent or intermittent basis, and those who engage only at a time of crisis or adversity or following referral from youth justice services. A further distinction can be made between purported “visible” and “invisible” hard to reach young people. In order to capture the full picture of youth engagement in the NEIC, the need to research the views and experiences of young people once considered hard to reach and now engaging in a project or service, but who remain vulnerable or at risk, was also identified.



PART A

RESEARCH CONTEXTS

1. NEIC CONTEXT

This section explores the rationale of the research in the context of young people in the NEIC. This report is published at a time of increased media and public attention on the NEIC. In July 2016, the Government launched an initiative to oversee the long-term social and economic regeneration of the area in an attempt to address the issues caused by an ongoing violent feud between two rival criminal gangs. By 2018, the feud, which began in September 2015, had led to the death of 15 people, with many more injured, and local families driven from their homes by fear and intimidation (McDonald, 2018).

As well as increased media and political attention, the response from Government came following widespread community engagement and advocacy. In 2016, members of the community, residents, local activists, and politicians, joined forces to voice concerns at the continued impact of drugs and the violence related to the feud within the community, and called upon Government to address the problems which have been endured by residents of the NEIC for decades (Holland, 2016). In response, then Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, met with community leaders, Ministers and senior officials from the various State agencies in June 2016, and acknowledging decades of neglect of the NEIC, pledged to oversee an inter-ministerial taskforce (Bardon, 2016). The North Inner City Drugs Task Force called for a wide-ranging coordinated response which extended beyond policing to focus on education, employment, housing, and the development of normal life patterns for young people in the community (McGee, 2016b).

The Government pledged to spend €1.6 million on the initiative and commissioned Kiernan Mulvey to produce a report outlining a ten-year vision for the area. The Government also created a North East Inner City Implementation Programme with an associated office and board to ensure the recommendations of the *Mulvey Report* were implemented. The Mulvey Strategy consisted of 10 key recommendations:

- 1) Refurbishment of Fitzgibbon Street Garda Station and strengthened Garda presence.
- 2) Development of new local policing plan focusing on needs identified by community and residents.
- 3) Establishment of local business and employers' network, including multinationals and other firms in the IFSC and Dublin Docklands.
- 4) Develop enhanced career guidance service for those over the age of 15, targeting summer and transition year work placements and apprenticeships.
- 5) "Community Benefits Clause" for developers to include making planning permission dependent on apprenticeships and internships for residents.
- 6) Tusla to explore development of "specialist hub" for highly vulnerable families.
- 7) Development of a series of local events to "bring the community together".
- 8) Integration of drug treatment, rehabilitation, and related health services.
- 9) "Rebranding" area name in consultation with community to "leave the stigma of the past behind".
- 10) "Immediate and urgent" physical improvement works (Mulvey, 2017)

While The *Mulvey Report* received broad backing within the community, it was subject to some criticism. The North Inner City Community Coalition, for example, argued that there was insufficient emphasis on economic, employment, and mental health issues and questioned the extent of community involvement in decision-making. However, a sense of guarded optimism was expressed by many in the community (O'Keeffe, 2017).

It should also be noted that increased commitment to the area on behalf of Government came following a period of national austerity and general reduction in funding for local services and supports. The *Mulvey Report* criticised measures introduced by the previous Fianna Fáil and current Fine Gael-led governments which reduced funding to the area following the economic recession in 2008. Of local community projects surveyed in the area, 100 per cent noticed an impact on staffing levels, while almost 82 per cent reported a change in services offered (Mulvey, 2017).

The Local Community Development Programme (LCDP), a significant social inclusion funding stream in the inner city, came to an end in the first quarter of 2015. Prior to this, the LCDP national budget was reduced by 42 per cent overall, from €84.7 million in 2008 to €49 million in 2013. The successor programme Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) commenced in April 2015. SICAP funding for the inner city as a whole (including the NEIC) was cut by a further 38 per cent on the previous LCDP, resulting in significant cuts in funding for social inclusion and community work in the NEIC (O'Connor, 2013). This has had clear implications for community-based

services and supports provided in the community. A 2017 report published by the CDETB, for example, identified a number of challenges faced by local youth projects in providing youth services. These included the level of funding required to extend youth work to meet the needs of young people, the availability of premises and modern facilities, and a range of issues impacting the lives of young people living in the NEIC including drugs, addiction, and crime. The report highlighted the impact of the reductions in funding for youth work on service provision including reduced working hours and less time for staff to engage in inter-project service contact (Farrelly, 2017).

1.1 INTERGENERATIONAL POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE

Disadvantage and poverty in the NEIC has persisted in many areas despite economic growth, redevelopment, and urban renewal in the community as a whole. By the early 1980s, the inner city area was characterised by widespread dereliction, physical decline, rising unemployment, population loss, and a range of other social problems (Doucet and Duignan, 2012).¹ Physical decline was partly a consequence of an increasing trend to relocate to suburbs and other areas, a feature of population decline which accelerated rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s. This is particularly evident in the Dublin Docklands area, which prior to redevelopment had lacked amenities or cultural facilities (Moore, 2002). Moreover, the radical physical and social changes that emerged in Dublin Docklands in the mid-1990s were arguably a result of government rejuvenation policies that encouraged private developers to venture into the previously high-risk location. Thus while synonymous with a revived and vibrant national economy, the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) and redevelopment of the Dublin Docklands also contributed to the increased social polarisation in the inner city (Moore, 2002). For example, while the 10,000 jobs created by the IFSC were promoted as the “flagship project” of the Government, many of the adjacent neighbourhoods continued to suffer chronic unemployment problems (Doucet and Duignan, 2012; Moore, 2008).

While the absolute situation in the deprived neighbourhoods subsequently rallied during the ‘Celtic Tiger’ years, the relative disadvantage experienced by those living in these areas improved only marginally. The most deprived areas of the late 1980s remained the most deprived communities in the past decade (Trutz Haase, 2009) and continuing disadvantage is evident in recent Pobal and CSO data. The recent affluence, influx of new residents, and redevelopment in parts of the NEIC has somewhat obscured a range of pressing social and economic issues and challenges (Farrelly, 2017).

This can be partly attributed to the composition of the NEIC in which high clusters of disadvantage are masked by a cohort of more prosperous residents and areas of physical redevelopment and gentrification (Trutz Haase, 2009).

1.2 EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is a persistent issue in the NEIC. The roots of this problem stems from the 1960s and 70s when the primary employment sources of docking and clothing manufacture began to decline. During the 1970s, the global recession directly influenced an evolution of Dublin which disproportionately affected the inner city. In fact, Dublin inner city became one of the poorest places in Europe at that time, with many communities suffering greatly due to deindustrialisation (McGee, 2016a). The collapse of traditional industries and the lack of alternatives saw formerly stable, working-class communities reduced to deprived and marginalised areas of intergenerational unemployment (Doucet and Duignan, 2012). In the nine-year period between 1975 and 1984, employment at Dublin Port (the largest employer in the area) was reduced from 7403 to 5200, while from 1981 to 1986 unemployment in the borough increased by 91.6 per cent (Moore, 2002). Moreover, between 1986 and 1996, there was an increase of 23 per cent in the unemployment rate in the inner city, compared with a 2 per cent increase nationally.² The selective nature of out-migration exacerbated existing unemployment and other social problems for the remaining residents. The overall result was the emergence of a doughnut-shaped city surrounding an inner city characterised by physical dereliction and social deprivation on an unprecedented scale (Moore, 2002).

In recent decades there has been some progress in terms of employment rates, and along with Dublin city as a whole, the NEIC has seen improvements in employment and economic outcomes. Between 1991 and 2006; for example, unemployment rates in Dublin fell to 12 per cent for male unemployment and 9 per cent for female unemployment.

¹ According to a Gamma study on the Dublin Inner City Partnership area in the 1990’s, for example, 17 wards in the inner city area had a deprivation ranking of 9 or 10, on a scale of 1 to 10 (Coveney *et al.*, 1999).

² In 1996, the unemployment rate nationally was 14.8 per cent but 27.3 per cent in the inner city. The ward in the inner city with the highest unemployment rate during this period was Mountjoy A with a rate of 59 per cent (Coveney *et al.*, 1999).

The rates for Dublin inner city were slightly higher at 14.1 per cent and 10.8 per cent respectively in 2006 (Trutz Haase, 2009). The employment rate for Dublin City was 12.9 per cent according to the CSO 2016 census.³ However, as with education statistics, the collective figures for Dublin City and the NEIC mask significant disparities in outcomes. According to *The Mulvey Report*, despite economic growth in the inner city among the local and migrant communities, unemployment is running at close to 1 person in every 4 in the RAPID area of NEIC, with a significant proportion of long-term unemployed among that number (Mulvey, 2017).

There is also anecdotal evidence of an undocumented cohort of residents who simply do not register as unemployed, rather opting to exist outside the formal system (Quin, 2018). Recent research has also demonstrated frustration with job prospects and employment among young people in the community (McCarthy, 2013; Kelly and Holland, 2016). Residents in the North Wall community, for example, have expressed frustration with the lack of gains from the development of the IFSC as employment for local residents in the IFSC is often poorly paid and insecure (McCarthy, 2013). Much of the available data suggests that the NEIC aligns with wider trends in employment created through gentrification projects which tend to require higher levels of education and skills than many low income residents in the former working class communities have attained.

This results in new employment opportunities for which they are largely ineligible (Doucet and Duignan, 2012).⁴ In 2016, Kieran Mulvey responded to these difficulties by requesting that legal and financial firms in the neighbouring IFSC and the Docklands areas provide jobs or sponsor third-level education for local young people. This appeal was reiterated by both Government and Mulvey in 2017 in the publication of the NEIC Initiative Report in which neighbouring companies were once again asked to sponsor education in third-level institutions for local people or to provide on-the-job training opportunities (Bardon, 2017).⁵

1.3 EDUCATION

Despite advancements, early school leaving and low educational attainment has been persistent and problematic in the NEIC. According to a Gamma study on the Dublin Inner City Partnership Area, between 1986 and 1996, 43 per cent of the population in the inner city had left school prior to the age of 15 compared with 35 per cent in the State as a whole (Coveney *et al.*, 1999). Nationally, the educational attainment of 15 year olds and over has improved greatly in the period 1991-2016, with a decrease in the number of people educated to primary level only accompanied by an increase in those with higher levels of education.⁶ This case has also been reflected in Dublin City. In 1991, 39.7 per cent of the adult population of Dublin City were educated to primary level only. This fell to 22 per cent in 2006. The changes for Dublin's inner city were more dramatic, dropping from 49.8 per cent in 1991 to 20.3 per cent in 2006 (Trutz Haase, 2009). Meanwhile, the proportion of Dublin City's population with third level education increased from 13.7 per cent to 35.8 per cent, with the figure for Dublin's inner city rising sharply from 11 per cent in 1991 to 43.1 per cent in 2006. The proportion of the population with primary education only dropped from 56.2 per cent to 21.1 per cent in 2006. In terms of third level, the NEIC saw an increase from 7.2 per cent to 38 per cent during the same period (Trutz Haase, 2009; CSO, 2017a).

However encouraging, these figures are arguably a consequence of overall mass displacement and in-movement of a well-educated population (Trutz Haase, 2009). Despite advancements, research confirms that a significant proportion of local NEIC residents continue to neither complete school nor progress to third level education. A study conducted in 2006 examining children's exposure to risk factors found that children living in the NEIC lived in overcrowded conditions, four in ten families were dependent on welfare/living in poverty, one in seven had no support system, and one in three mothers were at risk of clinical depression. These risk factors are considered indicators of childhood predispositions to educational disadvantage. In certain regions of Ireland and of Dublin, approximately 99 per cent of all children progress to attain a third level qualification. Among residents of the NEIC, that figure stands at less than 15 per cent (Quin, 2018).

3 The CSO identified 7 "unemployment black spots" in electoral divisions in the Dublin City area in 2016. Interestingly, none of these areas are within the NEIC boundary.

4 That said, there is evidence and sentiment amongst residents that employment opportunities improved in the community because of the Docklands development including those resident in Sherriff Street (Doucet and Duignan, 2012).

5 According to Michael Stone, head of the NEIC Initiative Implementation Committee, 16 of the top 20 IFSC Chief Executives gave commitments to help young people in the area in September 2017. An early-stage mentoring programme was developed to engage with local candidates 'in a very detailed way' to 'bring them on', and provide paid opportunities for career advancement. Despite this, community leaders have called upon the IFSC to contribute more (Hilliard, 2018).

6 The greatest gains have been in the numbers of those with a third level qualification rising from 13.6 per cent in 1991 to 42.0 per cent by 2016 (CSO, 2017a).

The disparity in education outcomes in the NEIC is even starker in the context of the workforce of the surrounding Dockland's. The local population lives in the shadow of offices of large multi-nationals whose employees represent a very high proportion of the Bachelor, Masters and PhD graduates in Ireland (Quin, 2018).⁷ Recent research conducted by the National College of Ireland's Early Learning Initiative and by organisations within the NEIC highlighted widespread criticism of formal education and a sense of alienation from the education system among both young and old members of the local population (Farrelly, 2017; Quin, 2018; Swan Youth Service, 2018).

1.4 DRUGS AND DRUG RELATED CRIME

Drugs are widely considered to be an endemic and pervasive intergenerational problem in the NEIC. Research conducted in the area since the late 1990s and early 2000s has demonstrated persistent trends and problems caused by drug-related activity. Both physically and socially, certain areas within the North East Inner City provide the space and labour supply for the drug-trade's bagging, storage, and distribution (O'Gorman, 2014). As such, the NEIC drugs-trade has spawned a sophisticated criminal network which has led to a rapid increase in drug-related crime (Connolly, 2002b), and in fact, drug-dealing and drug-related activity in parts of the community, including Summerhill, Railway Street and Mary's Mansions, has been identified in research since the 1990s (Connolly, 2002a; Swan Youth Service, 2018).

The current drug situation in the NEIC is rooted in the growth and associated lifestyle of heroin-use which has disproportionately affected primarily working-class Dublin communities since the early 1980s. The NEIC, in particular, experienced the marked change in the drug situation in Dublin at that time with increased heroin-use, the emergence of an injecting culture, and drug-dealing on a commercial scale (EMCDDA, 2013). The deepening structural crisis for inner city Dublin and working-class communities following deindustrialisation provided a space for the illegal heroin economy to flourish in the inner city (Coveney *et al.*, 1999). By 1984, as the heroin epidemic took root in the inner city, concerned residents and community groups confronted Government to seek funds to address the issue.⁸ The rather slow and uncoordinated response to the crisis from policy-makers however, triggered the groups of community activists which had formed in some Dublin inner-city neighbourhoods to take action against drug-dealers (Moran *et al.*, 2001).

Research into the prevalence and impact of drugs in the NEIC has increased since 1999. Prior to this, while studies demonstrated the impact of drug-related crime on the quality of life of the local area in the NEIC, according to the North Inner City Drugs Task Force, difficulties in assessing the extent and nature of the local drugs situation were compounded by the lack of structural and regular dissemination of data until 2000 (Connolly, 2002b). Research conducted on behalf of the North Inner City Drugs Task Force in 1999, for example, demonstrated high levels of drug-use among residents of the Dublin 1 and 7 areas.⁹ A later study of drugs and its impact on quality of life in the NEIC concluded that drug-related crime and antisocial behaviour exacerbated the already serious social problems within the area and corroded community cohesion. It further concluded that persistent offenders adversely impacted local residents' quality of life (Connolly, 2002b).

A needs analysis of older residents in the NEIC conducted in 2009 illustrated concerns about the impact of drugs on young people and the wider community. According to the report, many older residents did not feel safe, were often afraid to leave their homes, and felt threatened by the violence, aggression, and drug-dealing in the area (Rourke, 2009). In 2013, a report on drugs in the wider inner city underlined public and community concerns about the public nuisance caused by drug activity. Drug-activity is associated with various forms of public nuisance and crime including violence between users, sex work, theft and muggings, littering of drug paraphernalia, and drug tourism from outside the inner city (Van Hout and Bingham, 2013).

⁷ According to the 2016 census, for example, 20.5 per cent of total holders of a Ph.D. in Ireland live in Dublin City with percentage of persons age 15 or over with the third level qualification in Dublin City 48.7 per cent, one of the highest in the country (CSO, 2017a).

⁸ A 1996 prevalence study provided an estimate of 13, 460 opioid users aged 15 to 54 in Dublin city, with 40 per cent males aged 15 to 24. Another study, five years later, estimated the presence of 12, 456 opioid users in Dublin alone. Between 1990 and 1996, the National Report on Treated Drug Misuse indicated the numbers of addicts seeking heroin treatment doubled (EMCDDA, 2013).

⁹ 30 per cent of all those in the treatment agencies had an address in the Dublin 1 area with a further 10 per cent from Dublin 7. 1,480 drug users were identified as seeking support and treatment for drug user in five separate services in Dublin Inner City of which the gender breakdown was disproportionately male. However, the gender breakdown was more even when cross tabulated by Dublin 1 and 7 residences (Coveney *et al.*, 1999).

Moreover, the drug landscape and market has changed in recent years with particular implications for young people. Along with traditional hard drugs such as heroin, drugs sold and consumed in the area now include black-market prescription drugs including Benzodiazepine, Zopiclone, cannabis and designer drugs. The growth of the prescription drug-trade is partly related to their legal status. Since they are not in the same class of legality as cocaine or heroin under the Misuse of Drugs Act the use of these pharmaceuticals was initially largely devoid of the negative connotations of traditional hard drugs and remains more difficult to police. The then Chief Superintendent of Metropolitan North Dublin Division, Pat Leahy, acknowledged that the growth of the prescription drug-market during the recession was problematic for both the community and police, explaining that “the most visual are the prescription drugs and we have found over time that the legislation was not developed or designed to deal with them being sold on such a small scale. Therefore, it’s been very difficult to work with it and address the problem” (Eolas, 2016).¹⁰

Drug-dealing, including prescription drugs, happens openly throughout the community (Freyne, 2016) with customers residing both within and outside the community. Customers travel into the community by train and bus, and local representatives have observed a number of taxis arriving and leaving at the same time, often carrying buyers from neighbouring counties (Van Hout and Bingham, 2013; Regan, 2016).

1.4.1 Drugs and Young People

There is widespread fear of the creeping normalisation of drug-use among young people within the NEIC, while many local projects and services fear that substance misuse is now regarded as culturally acceptable in the area.

For example, evidence from a report on street youth work in the NEIC maintains that a strong normalised culture of ‘weed’ consumption among young people of all ages is unchallenged by local police, and shows that the Gardaí presence does not deter drug-dealing in Sherriff Street (Swan Youth Service, 2018). In fact, drug-related activity is an everyday feature of life for many young people in the NEIC¹¹ and much of the violence and criminal activity linked with drugs and organised gangs involves young people who can earn up to €1,000 per week dealing prescription drugs (Freyne, 2016). In the past year alone, drug-dealing involving young people has been pinpointed in NEIC areas including Railway Street, Ballybough, Mountjoy Square, Summerhill, Sherriff Street, and from cars on Rutland Street (Swan Youth Service, 2018). Local young people in the area frequently act as couriers, lookouts, runners and dealers.

It is common for 12 and 13 year olds to first enter the trade to carry out jobs such as collecting and transporting drugs or cash. With time and experience young people can then engage in fully-fledged drug-dealing (Cusack, 2016). More active drug-dealing in the community is often carried out by males aged between 14-25 years (Swan Youth Service, 2018).¹²

According to recent reports from the community, the drug-trade has impinged upon the use of public space of young people. In certain instances, young people on the street may be either socialising or in close proximity with people who are engaged in drug-dealing. As such, it can be difficult to determine which young people are ‘hanging out’ and which are present to sell or buy drugs. Interestingly, there appears to be a gender component in that the cultural practice of hanging out in this way is regarded as stigmatising for young women. Areas identified as ‘hotspots’ for young people ‘hanging out’ in proximity to drug-related activity include North Wall/Sheriff Street, Railway Street, Mountjoy Square Park, Ballybough, and surrounding areas of the North Circular Road, such as Portland Place, Sherrard Street, and Sean O’Casey Avenue, with the numbers of young people increasing as the days drew longer (Swan Youth Service, 2018).

According to local community/youth workers, the shift in the drug-market has also impacted upon young people’s engagement with local services and supports. According to the Talbot Centre, for example, there has been a noticeable upturn in the numbers of young people withdrawing from local health, education, and youth services. This, according

10 Further, he reflected, “we’ve gone from less than 4,000 searches of individuals in 2008 when we had full resources and austerity hadn’t hit us, to 16,000 at the end of 2015 when we had approximately 130 less Gardaí. A huge jump in activity in terms of searches by the police.”

11 More widely, drugs have been identified as a key source of cases in the Dublin Children’s Court. According to one judge, drugs and particularly cannabis feature in as much as 90 per cent of cases (Tuite, 2016).

12 Drugs including prescription drugs are often sold by young people and adults coming out of flats and by people arriving on bicycles. Young men and children appear, according to the North Dublin Inner City Drugs Taskforce, on foot and on bikes outside schools and crèches in the area. Groups assemble quickly often in response to phone and WhatsApp messages (Freyne, 2016; Swan Youth Service, 2018).

to the service, has been precipitated by a reduction in payments for Youthreach and Community Employment Schemes, staff shortages in statutory and voluntary agencies, and greater street availability of benzodiazepines, cannabis, and designer drugs. Furthermore, the increased presence of Gardaí in the wake of the local feud has forced drug activity ‘underground’ in some areas (The Talbot Centre, 2017).

1.4.2 Young People and Drug Related Intimidation

Along with the misuse of drugs, the NEIC has experienced and continues to experience high levels of drug-related intimidation (DRI). Such intimidation may include verbal threats, physical violence, damage to the home or property, and threatened or actual sexual violence (Murphy, 2017)

Drug debts are often accrued either when the consumption of drugs obtained on credit outpaces the user’s ability to pay, or when mid-level dealers obtain drugs on credit and either lose or consume their own supply, have it stolen, or confiscated by Gardaí (L. Murphy *et al.*, 2018).¹³ Community representatives and Gardaí refer to a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to debts, whereby small amounts of debt are as vigorously enforced as larger ones in order to set an example for others in the community (O’Gorman *et al.*, 2016). Families with limited means and earning capacity may struggle to make repayments and often source funds from multiple sources, including friends and family, salary/wages, social welfare payments, or savings or loans from credit unions and banks. In extreme cases, families may re-mortgage their home, sell personal property, or resort to moneylenders (L. Murphy *et al.*, 2018).

When demands for repayment cannot be met solely through money, dealers can coerce young people to deal, hold, or transport drugs, hold or hide weapons, engage in sexual acts or prostitution, or use violence. This can begin a recurrent cycle in which drug-users take drugs on credit, are intimidated to repay debts by dealers or their enforcers, repay debts; and are then offered more drugs on credit (L. Murphy *et al.*, 2018). Organisations such as Citywide, ICON, the National Family Support Network, and the Community Policing Forum in the NEIC have highlighted the interlinked problems of open drug-dealing, drug debts, intimidation, and violence in the community, both in the media and through direct representations to Government (O’Keefe, 2016; Regan, 2016; Schiller, 2016).

1.5 EXISTING RESEARCH ON THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NEIC

This section provides an insight into the lives and perspectives of young people in the NEIC and their engagement with local projects, services and supports, in the context of the existing literature. The issues raised in past and recent publications affecting young people consistently reference crime, drugs, education, employment, exclusion, and perceptions of voicelessness. They also highlight the importance of local projects and services, and in many instances, a desire for increased availability particularly at weekends, and additional supports for some cohorts of young people.

The *Mulvey Report* outlined a number of issues of concern for young people in the NEIC. The report highlighted the “great sense of community solidarity with active and engaged senior citizens and a community highly focused on its children and young people but with an inter-generational legacy of drug addiction and related mental health problems”(Mulvey, 2017). The report also drew attention to:

High deprivation levels and low educational attainment; The use of legal and illegal substances which pose a daily challenge for young people and adults in the area; Alcohol abuse which results in major problems for young people causing them to miss days from schools and training centres regularly; The normalisation of hash and a general ambivalence towards the recreational use of prescription tablets which are sourced on the black market.

Hanging Around, an analysis of engagement with local project and services conducted by LYCS in 2012, surveyed young people about a range of issues including life in the NEIC. In addition to engagement with local clubs, the review highlighted issues of concern to young people including drug-use, petty crime, and involvement in more

¹³ Young people in Ireland are often offered these drugs on credit and as a result can run up debts quickly, and can become victims of intimidation. Reported incidents of intimidation over drug debts range from less than €100 to upwards of €40,000 (Connolly and Buckley, 2016).

organised forms of criminal activity. In terms of education, low levels of literacy, the need to provide opportunities for early school-leavers to re-engage in education, and support for young people in transitioning to further education and training were also underscored (LYCS, 2012).

Research conducted in the North Wall area in 2013 demonstrated young peoples' sense of discrimination, exclusion, stigma, and awareness of the negative image of the community in the media and wider society, while their elders expressed a sense of voicelessness, including frustration at their perceived exclusion from local fora including residents and local development committees (McCarthy, 2013). Young people in the area also revealed an awareness of the intergenerational nature of social problems including violence, drugs, and crime. Anti-social behaviour in the community is often public and visible to the wider community, including young children. The range of this activity includes gangs loitering in public, public drinking, drug-taking, and damage to property.

According to young people in the community, anti-social behaviour and criminal activity has been normalised, leading to stressful living conditions and a hostile environment for young people to grow and develop (McCarthy, 2013).

In terms of local services and supports, young people expressed a desire for more gender-specific forms of youth work, more counsellors to support young people, an increased number of community facilities with longer opening hours, and additional services and support for 16-24 year olds in relation to further education and training. Post-primary education was found to be a serious issue for young people, particularly the difficulty in transitioning from primary to secondary school. Young people expressed a lack of connection with teachers and frustration with discipline issues which often led to suspensions and even exclusion from school. Parents and young people also demonstrated a lack of familiarity and understanding of the education system and the implications of particular routes from second to third level such as the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) (McCarthy, 2013).

The recent report *Building Hope for Brighter Futures* presented an overview of the perspectives of 285 children living in the area and their hopes for their community. The document illustrates how children and young people want their voices to be heard by adults, both locally and at national level. The areas of concern for young people in the area included drugs, homelessness, local facilities, and violence (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017). A 2017 report conducted by the CDETB similarly highlighted the perspectives of young people on their community and local projects and services. This review which conducted focus groups with young people from the age of 14 to 26 years of age revealed an emphasis on alcohol, drugs crime, violence, Gardaí, and forms of anti-social behaviour. In positive terms, the focus groups highlight the importance of community, people, sports, and youth services. The report also gave voice to the hopes and aspirations of young people, including securing employment, having a family, travelling, owning a car, attending college, building their own home, and having a healthy and successful life (Farrelly, 2017).

A midterm review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* engaged with young people in the area in partnership with Swan Youth Service. Young people recommended more direct contact between children in the community and Government in their local environment, and the use of social media and videos to promote new reports, policies, and initiatives. According to the review, children and young people living in the North East Inner City do not feel safe in their community. Respondents from 10 to 24 years of age indicated that crime, drugs, violence, harassment, and alcohol-abuse have left children and young people feeling unprotected and unsafe in the community. Furthermore, a lack of school supports or promotion of opportunities post-school and overall 'bad experiences of education' were highlighted, along with issues of mental health for children and young people including young migrants. The review also highlighted the need for additional supports and services for young migrants (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2018a).

Finally, a recent report from Swan Youth Service highlighted a number of areas of concern in the lives of young people including drug-use, safety, intimidation, education, poverty, homelessness, self-esteem, identity, and the difficult transition from adolescence and adulthood. According to young people, these transitions are often compounded by a lack of support and wider personal and/or family issues. In respect of education, the report highlights the difficulties experienced by many young people, negative views of the formal education system, and the lack of guidance counselling. Intimidation was also highlighted by many young people, as well as the issues of adolescent development and identity in a community with a strong culture of crime and drugs (Swan Youth Service, 2018).

1.5.1 Engagement with Local Services and Supports

In terms of services and supports, many young people have expressed a strong sense of gratitude and pride in local youth services, and acknowledged the importance of youth work to their lives. *Hanging Around*, an analysis of engagement with local project and services conducted by LYCS in 2012, asked young people about a range of issues including life in the NEIC. Their responses provide an insight into why young people do not engage with local clubs and activities, including a lack of friend or peer involvement, shyness, and perceptions of boredom. The analysis stressed the necessity to adequately consider the needs of both girls and boys, to monitor programmes carried by services to assess the engagement of young participants, and the provision of physical and active programmes for older young people (LYCS, 2012).

While young people have emphasised the importance of having a safe space to socialise with peers, in contrast the social aspect was more recently highlighted as both positive and negative. Although many young people appreciate the opportunity and space to socialise, for some, interacting with other young people who they do not like or get on with, is actually a further barrier to engagement (Swan Youth Service, 2018). A total of 5239 participants attended the following youth services in 2015: ASP; Ballybough Youth Project; Belvedere Youth Project; Bradog Youth Service; Cavan Centre; Crinan Youth Service; East Wall Project; LYCS; Stoneybatter; and the Swan Youth Service. The participants were 53 per cent male. A total of 3759 attended the Cavan Centre. As illustrated in Table 1.1, excluding the Cavan Centre and projects outside the Mulvey RAPID NEIC area, the number of participants was 1337, 62 per cent of which were male. Participants in these projects ranged in age from 10 to 24 (Farrelly, 2017).

Table 1.1: Total Participants in Local Projects Services 2015

2015	Total Participants	Male	Female	% Male	% Female
ASP	138	94	44	68	32
Ballybough	122	78	44	64	36
Belvedere	227	150	77	66	34
Bradog	300	180	120	60	40
Crinan	48	38	10	79	21
East Wall	181	107	74	59	41
LYCS	74	33	41	46	54
SWAN	247	132	115	53	47
Total	1337	812	525	62	38

In 2017, young people identified a number of positives in relation to CTCs and Youthreach. These included relationships with staff and guidance, and the importance of structure. Alternatives to getting into trouble were also highlighted, as were CTCs and Youthreach importance in building skills and improving employment chances (Farrelly, 2017).

Recent research from the Swan Youth Service has revealed young people have expressed the desire and need for more sessions and greater availability of services over weekends which are considered key times of difficulty and crisis for many young people. The need for additional supports for young people under the age of 10 and over 25 who have aged out from mainstream services, young migrants, people with mental health issues, and young homeless people is also highlighted.

The report concludes that effective provision for these groups necessitates a more collaborative enhanced interagency approach and supports (Swan Youth Service, 2018).

The report also examines the experiences of those who do not engage or have disengaged from youth services. Some young people who disengaged did not wish to explain their reasons, while others highlighted discipline issues and/or wider alienation from local institutions. In addition, some older young people considered youth services inappropriate for them but suitable for younger members of the community (Swan Youth Service, 2018).

According to projects and services in the area, international young people are not always visible in the community and many do not engage with local services and supports. For example, while it common for young people to access sport facilities in the Mountjoy Square area, many of these young people and their peers do not engage with any

youth service (Swan Youth Service, 2018). The lack of and barriers to engagement of international young people with local services and supports has been previously highlighted (YPAR, 2012). A number of barriers and challenges are highlighted in a recent report into new communities and their engagement with local services, including a lack of knowledge of what is available, lack of English language supports, anxiety and fear caused by the recent upsurge in gang-related violence and heightened police presence, and inadequate supports such as childcare (LYCS, 2018).

SUMMARY

This section explored the context of the NEIC with a particular emphasis on the experiences of young people. This context highlights the rationale for the research and provides an insight into the challenges and difficulties experienced by young people in the community.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

This section explores the wider policy context of supporting and engaging with young people at risk in the NEIC. Specific legislation and policies which shape the broader operational environment within which services, programmes, and courses, are delivered are outlined. In this regard, a concise overview of youth work, youth justice, drugs, and further education and training policy is provided.

2.1 MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NEIC

A wide range and variety of projects, agencies and services work with young people at risk and their families in the NEIC. The area has a strong culture of community development and advocacy on key policy issues which are led by the Inner City Organisations Network (ICON) and YPAR. Since the 1990s ICON has consistently highlighted the need for more integration between State and voluntary agencies in dealing with young people at risk. In 2000, ICON convened a group which comprised members of voluntary, statutory and community organisations that work with young people at risk and seek to promote integrated, high quality, effective and co-ordinated services to such children. This culminated in the creation of YPAR. Both ICON and YPAR have facilitated organisations that operate in the NEIC to work in a more cohesive, collaborative and coherent way.

The City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB) is a key organisation in the provision and delivery of educational, training and developmental opportunities and supports within the NEIC and finances a range of organisations in the community who work with young people at risk and their families. Funding for local services is also provided by statutory bodies including Tusla and the HSE, as well as relevant government departments. The policy and operational environment in the NEIC has also been impacted by the creation of the NEIC Initiative.¹⁴

The *Mulvey Report* identified four priority areas for action to support the regeneration of the NEIC and recommended the formulation of new structures to oversee them as follows:

- 1) Tackling crime and drugs.
- 2) Maximising educational/training opportunities/creating local employment opportunities.
- 3) Creating an integrated system of social services.
- 4) Improving the physical landscape.

The North East Inner City Programme Office was established in July 2017 which, along with the governing Implementation Board, oversees and supports the implementation of the recommendations of the report. The office now works alongside local and statutory organisations operating in the community. The Programme Office also oversees the work of four sub-groups established to drive policy in the four priority areas identified. In addition to increased investment, the initiative has seen an increased focus on coordination and integration of services, including greater collaboration within the formal education sector. A newly established Local School Principals Network met for the first time in January 2018. This network seeks to “examine scope for a collaborative approach together with other local services to “community-wide” education initiatives and teaching/service resources to support the development of a North Central City community of schools, children, young people and families and to map and manage transitions between primary and post-primary education in the area”(NEIC Programme Office, 2018) .

Along with this, services and supports in the NEIC operate within national policy environments and frameworks which impact the character and nature of services provided in the community. The NEIC initiative, for example, is proceeding in parallel to the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Initiative* which seeks to build cohesive and productive communities and “strengthen the capacities and voices of local children and young people by laying the foundations of a restorative practices neighbourhood approach” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2018a).

Finally, Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSCs) were established to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in Ireland with the overall aim to improve outcomes for children and young people through local and national interagency work. CYPSCs were originally established as part of a commitment in

¹⁴ The NEIC Initiative also provides funding for organisations operating in the community. This is provided through the Department of Rural and Community Development’s RAPID fund.

Towards 2016: A Ten year Framework for Social Partnership Agreement. They are county-level committees which bring together the main statutory, community, and voluntary providers of services to children and young people. In so doing, they seek to provide a forum for joint planning and co-ordination of activities to better ensure that children, young people, and their families, receive improved and accessible services. Each committee develops a three-year plan, aligned with the national outcomes in *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures*. The North East Inner City area falls within the Dublin North CYPSC.

The remainder of this section will provide a brief overview of policy in the realms of youth work, youth justice, further education and training, family support, mental health, and drugs. These areas do not represent all relevant areas to the lives of young people at risk and their families but are important to adolescent development and progression as well as broader engagement with young people at risk by local organisations in the community.

2.2 THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORK

Prior to elucidating youth work policy in Ireland, this section offers a brief overview of youth work. Youth work covers a wide range of social, cultural, educational or political activities by, with, and for young people. It is based on non-formal learning and voluntary participation, and encompasses out-of-school education and leisure-time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and/or youth leaders (Williamson, 2017).¹⁵ The distinctive ethos of youth work is young person led with young person centred activities which entail association with other young people, and where befriending and trusting relationships between youth workers and young people are built up incrementally (Kiely and Meade, 2018).

Youth work should collaborate systematically, but not uncritically, with more formal sectors, and the various stakeholders tasked with working with youth are increasingly encouraged, and often expected, to work collectively to create synergies for the effective and efficient realisation of their respective aims (Schild and Williamson, 2017). Youth work and other policy domains working directly or indirectly with young people often face similar, if not identical, challenges and problems including; (a) how to best support the transition from youth to adulthood, from education to work, from dependency to autonomy, from family of origin to self-determined relationships and partnerships, and from dependent to independent living; and (b) how to enable living in and across diverse communities (ibid).

Throughout Europe, youth work is increasingly target-driven and outcome-focused with both policy-makers and practitioners eager to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of youth work and its societal and personal impact (Williamson, 2017).

It is possible to distinguish between different types of youth work. For example, traditional forms within specific spaces (youth clubs) and those which are more geographically mobile. Mobile forms of youth work, in contrast, include detached youth and street or outreach work. While often used interchangeably and sharing certain characteristics, detached youth work and street/outreach youth work are actually distinct. The purpose of detached work is to elicit the needs of young people as they experience them and attempt to deal with whatever they present. Outreach, on the other hand, is seen as an extension of building or activity-based work. Often, the targets of outreach work are “hard to reach” groups who are difficult to contact through traditional forms of engagement (CWVYS, 2014).

Detached youth work operates without the use of a building or activity and takes place wherever young people ‘are at’ both geographically and developmentally. Detached youth workers target young people in areas where they socialise, congregate, and/or engage in activities. Interactions can be very informal, based on interest, topical issues, sometimes using humour, or they can concentrate on specific issues, concerns, needs, and so on. The nature of the conversations can depend on the level of relationship between street/detached worker and young people present (ibid). Outreach also takes place in young people’s own area and supports and complements new and existing centre/project based youth work. Primarily used to inform young people of services that exist in their locality and to encourage them to use such services, through consultation with young people, outreach can also seek to identify any gaps that exist in services aimed at meeting their needs (CWVYS, 2014).

¹⁵ The European Commission has identified core principles of youth work including responding to the needs, interests and experiences of young people as perceived by themselves; based on young people’s voluntary and active participation, engagement and responsibility; and designed, delivered and evaluated together with young people (European Commission, 2015b).

2.3 YOUTH WORK POLICY IRELAND

In Ireland, Section 3 of the 2001 Youth Work Act provides the legislative definition which formally recognises and defines youth work as: “a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is: a. complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and b. provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations” (Government of Ireland, 2001).

Youth work is described by the Youth Affairs Unit (YAU) in the DCYA as being “educational and elective, structured and systematic”, as operating “in various settings spanning the non-formal education through to informal education *yet alongside formal education*”, and as engaging “young people from ten to twenty-four years of age, representing a significant period in both development and duration” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2018b).¹⁶

The long-standing influence of the principle of subsidiarity has led the State to be a funder and supporter of the non-governmental sector as the main direct provider of youth services in Ireland (Devlin, 2017). Successive Irish governments have actively pursued national policies obtaining to children and youth, including a strong emphasis on youth participation and consultation in policy-making (Chaskin, McGregor and Brady, 2018a).

In more recent years a number of significant and substantial policy documents and statements have been developed and launched by DCYA.

These documents shape the policy context for the provision of youth work include:

- Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020
- Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes 2014
- National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020
- National Youth Strategy 2015-2020

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children & young people 2014-2020 is the overarching government document approach which sets out government policy to improve outcomes for children and young people. The current framework extends the concept of youth affairs to all persons under 25 and represents a change in approach that puts “early intervention into action” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a).¹⁷ Targeted effective interventions, the report argues, “can support children at risk to build their competencies, leading to better health, educational attainment and greater resilience, impacting on future outcomes, such as better mental health, better parenting skills and reduced youth crime” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a).

To this end it sets out six ‘transformational’ goals as follows:

- Support Parents
- Earlier Intervention and Prevention
- Listen to and involve Children and Young People
- Ensure Quality Services
- Strengthen Transitions
- Cross-Government and Interagency Collaboration and Coordination

The central rationale is to strengthen the support systems around each child and young person in order that they can achieve five stated national outcomes; namely:

- Active and healthy, physical and mental well-being
- Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development
- Safe and protected from harm
- Economic security and opportunity
- Connected, respected, and contributing to their world

¹⁶ Furthermore, “youth work can act as a support to young people, who may be both engaged and external to the formal education system, and as a point of contact and referral to other youth related services” (ibid).

¹⁷ This includes “the expansion of an area-based approach to tackling poor outcomes for children and young people to 13 areas of high disadvantage” and “investment in early years care and education, including maintaining the free pre-school year and implementing measures to support and regulate improvements to the quality of Early Years and childcare services” (ibid).

A key priority of the framework is to “work together to protect young people at risk”. As such, the framework “seeks to make sure that young people who are marginalised or ‘at risk’ or who demonstrate challenging or high-risk behaviour have access to an integrated range of supports and services to help them achieve their best possible outcomes” and to “ensure that no young person falls through the cracks because of fragmented services” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a). Within this, the government further recognises that vulnerable groups of children can be placed at further risk during times of transition and that specific groups of children and young people may be particularly vulnerable and in need of additional support and protection.

Current Government policy and strategy places a significant emphasis on youth services to achieve these broader objectives, since these services play an important role in developing the confidence, social skills, well-being, and resilience of young people.

The government therefore commits to “support quality youth work, both as a protective factor contributing to the young person’s overall development and in reaching out to young people at risk of crime or anti-social behaviour” and to “develop information protocols to assist the sharing of information, where appropriate in respect of particular children who are vulnerable and at risk” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a).

Youth work in Ireland is increasingly subject to systems of monitoring, quality assurance and accountability similar to those which apply in social work and teaching. The State is now more proactive in guiding and assessing the youth work sector, and requiring the sector, like other areas of provision and practice, to demonstrate that it is achieving particular “outcomes” for young people (Devlin, 2017). This is evident in recent government policy. In 2012, the DCYA subjected a selection of youth programmes to the Department’s first value for money and policy review or Value for Money Policy Review (VFMPR). The VFMPR was positioned as part of the DCYA’s agenda to “rationalise, reform and improve programmes” in the youth sector. The Steering Committee therefore comprised individuals with expertise in finance, economic evaluation, auditing, and governance (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014b).¹⁸ Their review ultimately recommended that service provision for young people would aim to achieve seven key outcomes which could have a positive impact on delaying the onset of substance misuse as follows:

- 1) Communication skills
- 2) Confidence and agency
- 3) Planning and problem -solving
- 4) Relationships
- 5) Creativity and imagination
- 6) Resilience and determination
- 7) Emotional intelligence/Managing Feelings

The review further recommended an amalgamation of the three programmes into one targeted programme for youth, as significant cross-over was identified in the ‘types’ of needs targeted by the programmes, in particular, in addressing concerns relating to drug-misuse, crime/anti-social behaviour, and educational disadvantage. The VFMPR also recommended changes to youth funding programmes to ensure evidence-based, effective, value-for-money services which secure the best outcomes for young people, particularly, vulnerable young people (ibid).

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is also focused on value for money, stating that “government investment in children will be more outcomes-driven and informed by national and international evidence on the effectiveness of expenditure” and that “resource allocation within services will be based on evidence of both need and effectiveness, and services that are not working will be decommissioned” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a).

In addition to value for money and demonstrating effectiveness, the government has sought to standardise youth work practice through *The National Quality Standards Framework* by the then Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The framework seeks to establish the standards of “quality youth work” practice, provide “an evidence base” for youth work, to enable “whole-organisational assessment,” and ensure effective use of state-funding within the sector (Department of Health and Children, 2010). Participation in this process is now prerequisite for DCYA funding awards for all youth work services and programmes in Ireland.

¹⁸ Prior to this, the NYCI commissioned the economic consultancy firm INDECON to assess the economic value of youth work in Irish society. Published in 2012, the report concluded that every euro the government invested in youth work ultimately saved €2.22 (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2012).

The National Quality Standards Framework (NQS) aims to ensure that youth work organisations provide quality services to young people. It is primarily a support and development tool for youth work organisations, it aims to ensure that youth work providers continue to offer a rich and varied service, and commit to a process of continuous development through engagement in the NQS. The rationale behind the development of the NQS initiative is to provide a support and development tool to youth work organisations providing services to children and young people to establish standards in the practice and provision of youth work to provide an enhanced evidence base for youth work; to ensure resources are used effectively in the youth work sector, and to provide a basis for ‘whole organisational assessment’¹⁹ (Department of Health and Children, 2010).

The values underpinning the development and implementation of the NQS are a clear understanding of youth work’s educational purpose, methodology, and context, commitment to continual improvement and best practice, transparency of governance and operation, equality and inclusiveness embedded in policy and practice for staff, volunteers, and young people, and promotion of the young person’s well-being by ensuring safe learning environments (Department of Health and Children, 2010).²⁰

However, it must be stated that the drive to demonstrate effectiveness and value for money within the youth work sector has proceeded in a climate of reduced funding and cuts for youth organisations. According to Youth Work Ireland, while there was increased funding for youth services in Budget 2017, so-called disadvantaged youth projects have been cut at 6 per cent of the rate of average public expenditure, with investment in youth work services from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs below 2008 levels, down approximately 26 per cent (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2017b). However, the pursuit of ‘hard’ evidence of impact and value for money increasingly imposed on the youth sector has roots in the managerial requirements to demonstrate tangible outcomes in both statutory and voluntary sectors. In Ireland, this process intensified amidst a climate of reduced public spending, and concerns about the economies, performance, impacts, and effectiveness of public, community, and youth services (Kiely and Meade, 2018).²¹

The National Youth Strategy (NYS) now represents the principle policy document for young people aged 10 to 24 years in Ireland.

The NYS sets out a linear approach to development from child to adolescent, to young adult to adult, and a development process evolving in dependence and leading to independence in adulthood. The stated aim of the NYS is “to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood”(Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015).

The NYS outlines the developmental tasks, milestones, and factors influencing the progress and development of young people. The development of the strategy was led by a DCYA sponsored project team and based on consultation with young people and youth work organisations nationally. The strategy identifies a series of ten objectives which cater for and respond to the needs of young people aged 10 to 24 years, and is largely reflective of the five national outcomes outlined delineated in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (ibid).²²

Lastly, with the establishment of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, there is now a pronounced emphasis

19 The primary responsibility for ensuring quality lies with the individuals and organisations involved in youth work service provision, while the primary beneficiaries of quality youth work provision should be the young people with whom these services work (ibid).

20 Central to the NQS are 5 core principles; young person-centred: recognising the rights of young people and holding as central their active and voluntary participation; committed to ensuring and promoting the safety and well-being of young people; educational and developmental; committed to ensuring and promoting equality and inclusiveness in all its dealings with young people and adults; dedicated to the provision of quality youth work and committed to continuous improvement (ibid).

21 For some, the concern for ‘hard’ evidence of the effectiveness of youth work is counter to the holistic and person centred orientation of youth work practice. According to the Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention, for example, “attention should be given to outcomes and impact where they can be measured, but youth work should continue to focus on the process and the needs of young people, remaining outcomes informed and not outcomes led” (Council of Europe, 2015b). According to Kiely and Meade, the dominance of economic rationalities and quantitative measures of “value” forces youth organizations to deploy similar rationalities and discourses to legitimize their work. This can lead to the possible exclusion of other forms of value and analysis in assessing youth work (Kiely and Meade, 2018).

22 For example, national outcome 2; “Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development” is articulated and fleshed out in the NYS by objectives 3 and 4 as follows; Objective 3: Young people’s core skills, competencies and attributes are enhanced and promoted through accessible, responsive, formal and non-formal education and learning opportunities; Objective 4: Young people benefit from strengthened transition supports at all levels as they move through the education system.

on ensuring the co-ordination of policy and services for children and for youth. In keeping with mainland Europe, cross-sectoral youth work is increasingly expected of youth services in receipt of statutory funding in Ireland. For example, the first significant increase in State funding post-recession, a €5.5 million increase to the overall budget for youth services in 2017, is tied to the condition that services use the additional resources to support early school-leavers and other groups of young people identified as disadvantaged in accessing employment (Kiely and Meade, 2018).

2.4 YOUTH JUSTICE

The youth justice system in Ireland has been under reform since the 2001 Children's Act and following a December 2005 review, the Government agreed a programme to implement youth justice reforms. This programme included changes to legislation and the establishment of the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) which operates as an executive office located in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and aims to coordinate all aspects and improve the delivery of youth justice services. As responsibility for the act is shared between the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the Minister for Justice and Equality (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2013) the service is staffed by officials from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Justice and Equality.

The 2001 Act formalised the shift towards prevention and diversion from criminal activity including the use of restorative practices which have been reiterated in subsequent youth justice policies such as the *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010* and the more recent *Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018*. The *National Youth Justice Strategy 2008-2010*, set out five goals, three of which focused on diverting young people from offending behaviour, promoting the greater use of community sanctions, and providing a safe and secure environment for detained children to assist their early reintegration into society (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2007).

The IYJS is currently overseeing the implementation of the 'Tackling Youth Crime'; *Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018* by chairing a multi-agency steering group. The mission statement of the plan is to create a safer society by working in partnership to reduce youth offending through appropriate interventions and linkages to services. According to IYJS, the action plan:

- Builds on the existing community policing partnerships and forums to enhance trust between local communities and their Gardaí.
- Emphasises alternative programmes for young offenders through use of the Juvenile Liaison Officer Scheme and the Diversion Programme.
- Focuses on outcomes-based contracts with community based organisations to help reduce re-offending by young people.
- Ends the practice of sending 16/17 year old boys to St. Patrick's Institution.
- Prioritises resources based on evidence, research, tracked levels of recidivism, and on the voice and experience of children involved in the youth justice system.

It also sets out a further 5 High Level Goals as follows:

- To work together to ensure public confidence in dealing with young people in trouble with the law.
- To strengthen and develop our evidence base to support more effective policies and services, having regard to the voice of young people.
- To review and strengthen targeted interventions to reduce offending and divert young people from the criminal justice system,
- To promote and increase the use of community measures, including restorative justice, for young people who offend, and
- To provide a safe, secure environment and necessary support for detained young people to assist their reintegration into the community (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2013)

Youth justice aims to link young people with non-offending peer groups as a means of forming stable and trusting relationships with adults in their community (Ryan, Warren and Caldwell, 2003). The purpose of youth crime prevention work is to engage young people who have offended in a process of learning and development, to enable them to examine their own offending, and to make positive lifestyle choices which protect them from involvement in criminal, harmful, or socially unacceptable behaviours. Diversion from the criminal justice system constitutes one of the central features of contemporary Irish youth justice policy. While the main diversionary mechanism for children and young people in trouble with the law in Ireland, the Garda Diversion Programme, has been in operation since 1963, it was only formalised on a statutory basis in the 2001 Act. Since their inception in the early 1990s, the multi-agency Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) projects have served as an integral component of contemporary Irish youth justice policy and diversion (Swirak, 2016).²³

Under the auspices of the IYJS since 2005, GYDPs seek to divert young people from anti-social and/or criminal behaviour by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development and promote civic responsibility (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2009).²⁴

GYDPs work with young people primarily aged 12 to 18 years who have come in conflict or are at risk of coming into conflict with the law. Young people can be referred to a Diversion Project following a JLO caution, or referred by another Garda, another agency, by a community worker, or a family member. The projects may also work with young people identified as being at significant risk of becoming involved in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour. As such, the project works with each child to set an individual intervention plan to assist in examining their decision-making process, particularly the decisions that led to offending (Garda Bureau of Community Engagement, 2017).

Swirak maintains that recent developments signify the development of a new professional field of ‘youth justice work’ in Ireland which favours highly interventionist programmes with young people, while decentring those which are based on principles of organic relationship-building, young people’s participation, and the embedded priorities reflected in traditional youth work. This has effectively blurred the lines between criminal justice agencies such as the Gardaí and youth work organisations, (Swirak, 2016) as prior to this, youth work and youth justice work were considered to be separate and distinct (Ryan, Warren and Caldwell, 2003).

Restorative justice is a voluntary process within the Irish justice system, whereby a young person assumes responsibility for their offending behaviour and is accountable to those they have harmed. The victim is given the opportunity to represent their views either by meeting the young person face-to-face or through a third party. According to the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme, the Restorative Caution provides an opportunity for the young person to apologise directly to the victim and, where appropriate, to do something positive to repair the harm caused. The process seeks to assist the young person to avoid re-offending through acceptance and reintegration (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2013).

The use of restorative practice is in line with wider government youth strategy.²⁵ However, evidence from the Irish justice system suggests the use of restorative practices is both underdeveloped and in decline. In 2016, Juvenile Liaison Officers used a Restorative Justice Caution in just four per cent of cases (667 cases from a total of 17,615). In 2015, 19,513 referrals led to 891 restorative cautions in 2015 (Garda Bureau of Community Engagement, 2017).²⁶ In 2016, there were 130 Restorative Cautions enacted, down from 237 in 2015. The number of Restorative Cautions enacted in the North Dublin Metropolitan Division declined significantly in the period, falling from 137 in 2013 and to 57 in 2016. While the number increased in the Northern Central Division from 8 in 2015 to 10 in 2016, the overall number has declined significantly since 2013 from 28 (Garda Bureau of Community Engagement, 2017). The 2016 GJLO Report therefore recommended the continued training and up-skilling of Juvenile Liaison Officers in Induction, Mediation and Restorative Justice Facilitator training.

23 While Gardaí are involved, GYDPs must be understood as separate interventions to the wider Garda Diversion Programme.

24 The initial two diversion projects were established in 1991, emerging as a local response by Gardaí and voluntary local youth work organisations to address crime and violence in disadvantaged areas of Dublin in the wider context of high unemployment, underserved public housing areas and low Garda morale (Bowden and Higgins, 2000).

25 The Brighter Futures Initiative seeks to strengthen the capacities and voices of local children and young people by laying the foundations of a restorative practices neighbourhood approach. Embedding restorative practices through the promotion of a systemic approach, that nurtures and invigorates the community will facilitate the community to develop and build relations in a safe and healthy manner (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a).

26 This represents a reduction of 25 per cent. 10 Restorative Cautions were given in the Dublin North Central Division.

Nonetheless, according to the same report, the number of Restorative Cautions is expected to further decrease in 2017 due to the impact of the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Bill 2016, which aims to transpose the Victims Directive 2012/29/EU²⁷ into law (Garda Bureau of Community Engagement, 2017).

Young Persons' Probation (YPP) is a specialised division of the Probation Service with dedicated resources to work with children aged 12 to 18 who appear in Court. As such, it seeks to employ a holistic interagency approach to the assessment and supervision of young persons referred under the Children Act 2001. Established to implement sections of the Children's Act relating to young persons' probation, the YPP aims to promote the use of community-based sanctions and restorative justice in order to reduce re-offending (Probation Service, no date). To this end, the work of the YPP involves:

- Preparing pre-sanction assessments for the Courts.
- Supervising offenders in the community who are referred by the Court
- Supervising offenders released conditionally from custody.
- Providing a counselling service to offenders and their families.

The Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) works with the YPP on the implementation of the relevant sections of the Children's Act and currently has 17 community-based organisations delivering services on its behalf. In alignment with other aspects of youth policy in Ireland, the YPP now seeks to employ a multi-agency approach to address the needs of young offenders and to offer alternative pathways for young offenders. For example, CTCs and local VECs work in conjunction with some of the YPP projects to offer training and education.²⁸

While reforms in youth justice are indicative of the increasingly welfarist and holistic approaches to young people's offending behaviour in Ireland (Swirak, 2016), such developments have been subject to some criticism. For example, since youth justice policy in Ireland ceases at the age of legal majority, GYDPs cannot continue engagement with young people of 18 years of age or over. Instead, such young people transition to the adult criminal justice system. Moreover, there are no special rules for young adults providing the application of specific (juvenile law) sanctions or special rules permitting sentence mitigation in Ireland (Pruin and Dünkel, 2015). This places Ireland out of step with the practice of many European states including Germany and the Netherlands. More widely, there have been notable international efforts to propose and implement justice reforms specifically targeted at young or emerging adults aged between 18 and 24 (Matthews *et al.*, 2018). This practice, which has led to greater diversity among youth justice systems, is rooted in the diversity of perspectives on childhood, youth, and adolescence, increased recognition of the importance of transitions in emerging adulthood, and on international criminological research which provides evidence to justify the application of the same regulations, procedures and legislation to young adults as to those aged under 18 (Pruin and Dünkel, 2015; Matthews, Schiraldi and Chester, 2018).

2.5 FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Further Education and Training (FET) system in Ireland has seen significant reform in recent years and has been at the forefront of government policy in addressing youth unemployment. FET in Ireland refers to the provision of education and training at includes levels 1-6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) outside the traditional post-primary and Higher Education Institute trajectory.²⁹ As such, the FET remit includes the provision of courses for jobseekers, school-leavers, employees, those upskilling and/or retraining, and those seeking 'second-chance' education, along with the delivery of basic skills and education for adult learners. It includes Post-leaving Certificate (PLC) Courses, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Youthreach programmes for early school-leavers, the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), adult literacy, and community education.

27 The number of Restorative Justice cases may decline due to the impact of the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Bill 2016, the purpose of which is to transpose into law the Victims Directive 2012/29/EU. This directive establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime and may have subsequent repercussions for Restorative Justice due to increased responsibility to protect victims during the process.

28 Further, the government has announced a new jobs initiative to support the development of social enterprises and increase employment for people with criminal convictions. The 'Kickstart' Seed Fund programme is designed to provide matching grants of up to €30,000 to organisations providing employment to former offenders and persons leaving prison. The programme, for which a total of €300,000 was approved under the Dormant Accounts Disbursement Scheme, was developed jointly by the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service, as part of the Department of Justice and Equality's Social Enterprise Strategy, 'A New Way Forward'.

29 In Ireland it is defined as '... education and training which usually occurs outside of post-primary schooling but which is not part of the third-level system' (The Teaching Council, 2011).

In late 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established in the wake of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. QQI is an integrated agency with responsibility for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training. As such, it assumed the roles and responsibilities previously undertaken by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, and the Irish Universities Quality Board. QQI acts as an awarding body and also holds responsibility for the development of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

In February 2012, the Government also established Pathways to Work (PTW) which was designed to foster engagement with the unemployed, enhance labour activation and incentives to take-up job opportunities, strengthen links with employers, and reform institutions to improve the services delivered to the unemployed. PTW followed the Integrated National Employment and Entitlement Service (Intreo) service aimed at establishing an enhanced engagement between the employment and income support services and the unemployed, including those under the age of 25.

The Further Education and Training Act 2013 provided for the dissolution of FÁS and the inception of SOLAS (Further Education and Training Authority) and facilitated the transfer of the FÁS training centre network, provision, and staff to the relevant Education and Training Boards (ETB). A total of 33 VECs were duly replaced by the 16 ETBs under the Further Education and Training Act 2013, and SOLAS established, alongside the ETBs, as the State organisation with responsibility for funding, planning, and co-ordinating Further Education and Training (FET) in Ireland. Upon its establishment, however, the OECD highlighted the major challenges for the organisation in terms of supervision and coordination and ensuring the training provided remained effective in addressing the needs of the unemployed, in particular of long-term and other disadvantaged unemployed. These included the absence of a comprehensive national strategy to tackle the very high unemployment rates among youth in 2013, and cited fragmentation and a lack of coordination in government policy (González Pandiella, 2013).

With the creation of the new agency, all former FÁS training operations transferred to SOLAS. This included over 850 staff and 19 training centres. In 2014 the seven former FÁS training centres, including 426 staff and their related training activity, transferred from SOLAS to four newly established ETBs.

The remaining 12 training centres, including over 434 staff, subsequently transferred to eight ETBs, in July 2014. One of the key tasks for SOLAS was the development of a five-year Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 which is underpinned by a number of key principles namely: *Learner and employer centred, Evidence-based FET policy and practice, Employment-focused and actively inclusive, Responsive, flexible, innovative and high quality provision, Consultative and collaborative, Transparent and accountable, Value for money.*

The strategy also outlines ‘5 Strategic Goals’: a series of related strategic objectives under each goal falling within the context of an overarching Implementation Plan (Solas, 2014) as follows:

- 1) *Skills for the Economy*: FET will address current and future needs of learners, jobseekers, employers and employees, and will contribute to national economic development.
- 2) *Active Inclusion*: FET provision will support the active inclusion of people of all abilities in society with special reference to literacy and numeracy.
- 3) *Quality Provision*: FET will provide high quality education and training programmes and will meet appropriate national and international standards.
- 4) *Integrated Planning and Funding*: FET provision will be planned and funded on the basis of objective analysis of needs and evidence of social and economic impact.
- 5) *Standing of FET*: The aim of this goal is to ensure a valued learning path leading to agreed employment, career developmental, personal and social options. The strategic goals, related sub-objectives and time-lined actions outlined in the strategy document, signpost and have the potential to radically shape the direction and future operation of the FET sector.

According to the strategy, the key purpose of FET is to ensure the provision of 21st century high quality further education and training programmes and services to learners, employees and employers (ibid). Increasingly, FET is primarily seen as a mechanism for labour activation purposes and SOLAS operates with a very strong economic mind-set which seeks to provide skilled workers for the economy, while ensuring that adult literacy forms part of its skills for work strategy, and aligns adult literacy with the needs of the economy (O’Brien, 2018).

Recent reform in the FET sector is significant as, historically, FET structures in Ireland have lacked coherence. The further education and training sector progressed in a fragmented historical context, developing from the training needs of different economic sectors and state departments, often in separation from the rest of the education system (Grummell and Murray, 2015). This is reflected in an organisational structure whereby the distinct departmental and logistical operations of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) created tensions between the education (learning) agenda and employment (training) agenda of each. Structural confusion and overlaps between government departments, therefore resulted in such a challenging organisational structure and a lack of centralised planning that the sector was slow to react to changes in the economy (Mooney and O'Rourke, 2017). Furthermore, the development of vocational education in Ireland was initially slow, largely because of late industrialisation. In consequence, the tradition of structured involvement of employers in education and training provision found in many other European countries, such as Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands, did not develop in Ireland. This has had significant implications for Ireland's vocational education and training (VET) sector and the overall calibre of training on offer to young people (McGuinness *et al.*, 2018).

2.6 FAMILY SUPPORT AND MEITHEAL

Recent developments in the governance of children, family, and youth affairs in Ireland reflect the desire to move towards a preventative and early intervention model of practice which includes family support. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* emphasises the importance of supporting parents to parent confidently and positively. Family support is considered one of the primary, universal, and most effective supports that the State can provide (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a).

Family support is a widely utilized approach to service delivery within Tusla which emphasises prevention, early intervention, and a focus on the strengths of family members. According to Tusla, the primary focus of support services is on early intervention which aims to promote and protect the health, well-being, and rights of all children, young people, and their families. A partnership approach to working with children, young people, families, and partner agencies, is also advocated within family support processes (Tusla, 2017). The Mainstreaming and Development Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) was established by Tusla to develop early intervention and the principles of family support when working with children, young people and their families. This model encompasses 5 key areas:

- 1) Parental support.
- 2) Public awareness (increasing awareness of where to access help among the general public).
- 3) Participation (enhancing child and youth participation at all levels of their engagement with Tusla).
- 4) Commissioning (focusing on the funding of services)
- 5) The Meitheal and Child and Family Support Network (CFSN) model.

CFSNs are designed to work with families to ensure that services are available to support them as at local a level as possible and that there is 'no wrong door'. In terms of prevention, PPFS distinguishes between low, medium, and high prevention services (Tusla, no date).

The experiences and circumstances of parents and families in Ireland and within the NEIC vary considerably. While some families may require universal supports, others may have more complex needs and require more tailored and specific interventions. Some vulnerable families may require interventions based on their level of need, while in other cases it may be more appropriate to consider the type of service-user and parenting relationship (Connolly, Devaney and Crosse, 2017).

Tusla utilises the Meitheal model to help children who may be in need of support from more than one service. According to Tusla, Meitheal is a core low prevention component of the PPFS Programme, representing the agency's commitment to working with all agencies which interact with children. It adopts a coordinated, multi-agency approach to ensure that interventions maximise families' dignity, autonomy, and self-determination (Tusla, no date). Prior to the introduction of Meitheal in 2016, a similar process of the YPAR Protocol was used in the NEIC. This protocol was an interagency mechanism through which the YPAR addressed specific problems of child welfare within families. YPAR also delivered a Strengthening Families Programme to families in the community.

Meitheal is a case co-ordination process for families with additional needs who require multi-agency intervention but who do not meet the threshold for referral to the Social Work Department. It is a national practice model which

aims to ensure that the needs and strengths of children and their families are effectively identified, understood, and responded to promptly. It is designed to support and strengthen the implementation of *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, whose procedures for child protection always apply.

The Meitheal model is a process-based system consisting of formal and informal activities which can be used by organisations both within the community and by voluntary sector and statutory services in their work with a family.³⁰

The fundamental idea of the Meitheal Practice Model is that any agency or group working with children or young people may seek the assistance of other agencies or groups to support a child, young person, or family, by calling a ‘Meitheal’ meeting with a view to action. At this meeting a plan is devised around the specific needs of the young person and subsequently implemented. The key principle of placing the child or young person’s needs at the centre of the process is reflected, for instance, in the fact that the quality of the relationship developed by family members and practitioners informs the choice of ‘lead practitioner’ for the family, rather than any specific role or responsibility (Cassidy *et al.*, 2016).

A key principle of the process is that it is voluntary, led by a ‘Lead Practitioner’ with a prior relationship with the family, and that the family agree to them taking on this role.³¹ Based on an ecological model, Meitheal typically involves a multidisciplinary team of practitioners working together towards resolving the unmet needs of the child, young person, or their family. As such, Meitheal seeks to simultaneously formalise an ‘informal’ style of help and to ‘informalise’ relations with more formal systems, such as, through the designation of a lead practitioner based on the relationship with the family as opposed to specific role or qualifications (Cassidy *et al.*, 2016).

The assessment and evaluation of Meitheal is ongoing. A study published in 2017 examining its introduction demonstrated that the process was broadly welcomed by participants as providing a mechanism to intervene at an earlier point of time where a child or young person had unmet needs. The process has also helped to enhance cooperation between agencies, to build a more effective and structured continuum of support for children, young people, and their families, from low to high levels of need, and to increase buy-in from families. Meitheal participants also highlighted benefits for children and young people in terms of improved outcomes and increased meaningful participation by them in the process. Similarly, parents’ involvement in the process, for example, in developing actions plans, was shown to be of significance, as was the changed nature of their engagement with services (Devaney, McGregor and Cassidy, 2017).

However, the evaluation also drew attention to a number of challenges, including communication both at this interface and in coordination between different levels of governance. Meitheal relies on coordination between a range of different agencies and systems which is not always implemented in a coordinated way. Participants have raised questions about the sustainability of a model in which much of the responsibility for communication and the implementation is reliant on individual relationships rather than formal, structured, or systems-level organisation (Devaney, McGregor and Cassidy, 2017).

Another study has raised concerns in relation to families’ understanding of the process, the relationships between children and parents, identification of the needs of child, and the availability of existing social services to meet the needs of all participants. For example, in some cases, families faced a lengthy waiting list for services, particularly in the case of disability, housing, or mental health needs. Moreover, parents did not seem to be fully aware of the demands and obligations of the process, or the nature of their role. There is also some evidence of tension between the presenting needs of the family (and the source of familial difficulties) as identified by parents and their children, and the ability of parents and children to express and identify their needs and goals from within the process (Rodriguez, Cassidy and Devaney, 2017).

³⁰ Families can be referred to Meitheal in a number of ways; a direct referral can be made by a practitioner or by a family member; or a referral can be made by the child protection social worker who has assessed that there are no child protection concerns or where child protection concerns are no longer an issue but further support would be beneficial (Devaney, McGregor and Cassidy, 2017).

³¹ Groups and agencies who adopt the Meitheal Practice Model agree to use it as the template for inter-agency coordination in all situations where a multi-agency response is useful, whether that involves prevention, early intervention or treatment.

2.7 DRUG POLICY

Drug policy has been defined as ‘any government, non-government, community or individual strategy, response or intervention that we expect to impact on drug use and drug harms’ (McDonald and Ritter, 2017). The four pillars of international drug policy are law enforcement, prevention, treatment, and harm reduction (McDonald and Ritter, 2017). In recent decades, international drug policy has placed a particular emphasis on harm reduction. This represents a shift in policy from the previous orthodoxy in which criminal justice systems and healthcare systems appeared to be largely unified in a joint ambition to rid society of illicit drug-use.

The current EU Drugs Strategy (2013-20) is the ninth strategic document on illicit drugs endorsed by EU Member States since 1990. As such, it sets out current member-state drug policy positions and aspirations, and identifies common objectives to reduce drug demand, dependence, related health and social harms, and supply. For the first time, the reduction of the health and social risks and harms caused by drugs is a stated policy objective, along with the two traditional drug policy aims of reducing supply and demand (EMCDDA, 2015).

The trends seen in Europe are also evident in Ireland, and in recent years significant steps have been taken towards implementing a more progressive drug policy focused on health rather than criminal justice. In May 2017, the Misuse of Drugs (Supervised Injecting Facilities) Act 2017 was signed into law, thereby providing a legal framework within which such services may operate in Ireland. Further, the current *National Drug Strategy: Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery 2017-2025* endorses a health-led approach to drug-use in Ireland with a focus on harm reduction.³² It places an emphasis on children, family, friends, and the wider community in respect to recovery and substance use. The strategy is guided and influenced by the five values of compassion, respect, equity, inclusion, partnership, and evidence, and supports five specific goals as follows:

- 1) Promote and protect health and well-being.
- 2) Minimise the harms caused by the use and misuse of substances and promote rehabilitation and recovery.
- 3) Address the harms of drug markets and reduce access to drugs for harmful use.
- 4) Support participation of individuals, families and communities.
- 5) Develop sound and comprehensive evidence-informed policies and actions (Department of Health, 2017).

Components of the *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery* strategy are in line with international best practice and progressive European drug policy, including the shift towards a health-led approach, integration with housing and other issues of poverty and deprivation, family and community interventions, an emphasis on prevention at a young age, and the formal participation of drug-users, their families, and communities in formulating drug policy.

Drug-users and their families are formally included in policy responses and the strategy places a considerable emphasis on the role of the community and voluntary sector in drug policy implementation. Community and voluntary actors are listed as a “partner” of government in implementing the strategic action plan. In fact, the strategy explicitly states that “understanding the underlying socio-economic and cultural factors which contribute to the drug problem has resulted in the development of an integrated whole-of-government response based on a partnership approach between the statutory, community and voluntary sectors” (Department of Health, 2017).

However, the current strategy proceeds in parallel to the continued criminalisation of possession of controlled substances. The principal legislation controlling drugs in Ireland is the Misuse of Drugs Act, 1977. The legislative framework which has been developed over time by the addition of various other pieces of legislation is typically cited collectively as the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977-2017. Under this legislation, controlled substances are not to be prohibited completely, but are rather to be controlled. Questions have been raised as to whether the current legislation, which criminalises possession for personal use, is justifiable within a health-led approach to drug-use (Keane *et al.*, 2018). The enforcement of criminalisation of even small amounts of drugs has the potential to harm the reputation of young people and lead to lasting harm including restricting access to the labour market as well as travel restrictions. This is important due to the extent of drug-use among young people in many communities in Ireland and in the sense that possession of a controlled substance is a significant justice issue in Ireland. In 2017, for example, there were 12,201 recorded incidents of possession of drugs for personal use, representing over 70 per cent of all

³² According to Butler and Mayock, as of 2005, the policy of harm reduction in Ireland was largely implicit, in the sense that political actors did not encourage or participate in explicit debate on the issue. Moreover, the formal expression of the policy as underpinning the state’s response to illicit drug use was absent (Butler and Mayock, 2005).

drug-related offences, while in 2016 the District Court received 20,746 drugs offences involving 13,033 defendants (Keane *et al.*, 2018).

Policy in this regard is currently under review by a Working Group set up under ‘*Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery*’. Established in December 2017, the group is tasked with a review of the approaches taken by comparable states to the possession of small quantities of drugs for personal use with a view to making policy recommendations for Ireland. Their findings will be important in determining the explicit policy approach of the State to respond to everyday drug-use for the foreseeable future (Keane *et al.*, 2018).

Lastly, Drug Related Intimidation (DRI) is now considered a pervasive and pressing issue which negatively impacts the health, well-being, and social cohesion of communities throughout Ireland (L. Murphy *et al.*, 2018). DRI can also compromise the functioning of local agencies who serve them. Intimidation can be explicit or implicit, involve actual, threatened or perceived threats of violence or property damage, and leave targeted individuals (and families) feeling helpless, isolated, demoralised and/or fearful (Murphy, 2017). The Drug Related Intimidation Reporting Programme was therefore established by the Garda National Drugs Unit and the National Family Support in order to respond to the needs of drug-users and family members being subjected to drug-related intimidation (Garda National Drugs Unit, 2013). The programme provides a framework to facilitate reporting of an incident of intimidation to a nominated inspector. However, there is widespread recognition of the need for more robust approaches, and Minister for State, Catherine Byrne, has highlighted DRI as a particular area of concern within the current drugs strategy. While addressed in the strategy, it is noted that DRI, requires specific attention due to the level of threat it presents to public safety in communities (Department of Health, 2017). While there are a number of current local responses to DRI being implemented within Local and Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force areas³³, there is little coordination of these approaches across the various task-force areas and very few of these initiatives have been formally evaluated (L. Murphy *et al.*, 2018).

Addressing DRI is an extremely complex matter and there is little international literature evaluating effective direct responses to DRI. However, a recent review of the literature and the evidence-based data conducted by the Health Research Board has recommended a number of potential approaches in designing and delivering interventions. It is held that comprehensive solutions should be developed on the basis of the best information available, and is most effective within in the areas of prevention, intervention, and suppression. Such a comprehensive approach requires stakeholder partnerships which rest on the communication and proper coordination of social services, schools, law enforcement, probation and parole, the Courts system, and community representatives. There is also a critical role for the local community in defining key issues, identifying young people who require support, designing responses, intervention delivery, and increasing the legitimacy of interventions (Murphy, 2017). Given the dearth of current evidence, evaluation of any initiatives in respect to DRI would enable learning, and potentially inform the development of effective responses across task- force areas in Ireland (L. Murphy *et al.*, 2018). To this end, a conference on DRI was held in July 2018 by the Crime and Drugs sub-group of the NEIC Initiative with inputs from Citywide and the National Family Support Network. A report is due for publication.

2.8 MENTAL HEALTH

Increased concern for the health and well-being of young people has led to the growth of a global movement focused on the provision of youth mental health services (Malla *et al.*, 2016). Ireland is considered a leader in the advocacy of mental health services for such people, in large part due to the availability of philanthropic funding and the work of dedicated NGO mental health organisations (McMahon *et al.*, 2018). However, Government has also been proactive in the policy environment in recent decades. A *Vision for Change* has served as the State’s comprehensive policy framework for improving the mental health of the population including young people. The framework endorses a health promotion and early intervention model with primary and community care services, and specialist mental health services for more complex difficulties. It also advocates a people-centred and multi-disciplinary approach to treating mental health problems. The key principles identified in the strategy include coordination, effectiveness, early intervention, equity, and quality (Department of Health and Children, 2006).

³³ Local Drugs Task Forces (LDTFs) in areas with the highest prevalence of problem drug use and Regional Drugs Task Forces (RDTFs), according to government, have been key to the development of practical services such as treatment and rehabilitation facilities through supporting and funding local initiatives, and to harnessing the efforts of community groups, families and local residents and have built partnerships with statutory services and local representatives (Department of Health, 2017).

In *A Vision for Change*, the need to prioritise the full range of mental health care, from primary care to specialist mental health services for children and adolescents, is recognised. The strategy recommends that child and adolescent mental health services should provide mental health services to all aged 0-18 years in Ireland. It is also recommended that service-users and their families and carers be offered opportunities to give feedback on their experience and to influence developments within services, and that programmes addressing mental health promotion and primary prevention early in life should be targeted at child populations at risk (Department of Health and Children, 2006).

The commitment to this strategy was reinforced in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* which, under its five national priorities, committed to ensuring that children and young people in Ireland achieve mental well-being, pledged to implement *A Vision for Change* as it relates to children and young people, and to improve access to early intervention youth mental health services (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a). To enhance service provision, a standard operating procedure for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was introduced in 2015. Furthermore, the National Youth Mental Health Task Force was established to provide national leadership in the field of youth mental health and to enhance the ways the public, private, voluntary, and community sectors may work together to improve the mental health and well-being of young people. The subsequent report published by the Department of Health in 2017 recommended, among other things, community supports for mental health, and improved accessibility and the alignment of mental health services for young people. According to the report, “there is a need for a clear joined-up approach for the provision of mental health care for young people when and where it is needed. There should be improved access to the appropriate level of mental health care in timely manner and clear referral pathways across and between services for the 0-25 years age range. The importance of inter-agency coordination cannot be over-emphasised” (National Youth Mental Health Task Force, 2017).

At present, mental health services for young people are provided by State-run organisations and a range of community and voluntary organisations in receipt of public and philanthropic funding. CAMHS provide assessment, care and treatment, both in hospital and in the community, for children and young people with severe mental illness in Ireland until the age of 18, while Tusla provides grants to voluntary organisations offering various types of counselling and support services. These include Marriage & Relationship Counselling, Child Counselling, Rainbows peer support programme for children, and Bereavement Counselling and Support on the death of a family member.

Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health, provides a primary-care service for young people from 12 to 25 years and is widely praised for providing accessible, responsive community-based supports for young people experiencing mild-to-moderate mental health difficulties (McMahon *et al.*, 2018). A report of the Mental Health Commission commended Jigsaw for providing this much needed service, for the ease and accessibility of its services for both young people and their families, and the excellent involvement of young people within the organisation (Mental Health Commission, 2018).

While the HSE and Government have demonstrated a commitment to advancing youth mental health services in Ireland, issues of barriers into care as well as discontinuity of care and poor integration across the spectrum of services persist and require significant national engagement to tackle. Evidence suggests a coherent continuum of services and supports is still lacking and that Ireland remains out of step with international best practice (McMahon *et al.*, 2018). Additional sustained investment, a commitment among all service providers, and a willingness to coordinate all efforts to support young people, are required if Ireland is to develop a comprehensive, coordinated, effective and youth-friendly mental health system (Malla *et al.*, 2016). Despite the development of CAMHS in line with recommendations in *A Vision for Change*, many of the relevant institutions remain significantly under-resourced and are characterised by considerable waiting lists (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2015).³⁴ According to figures provided by the HSE in September 2018, 2,691 children and young adults were still awaiting their first appointment, with 386 waiting longer than 12 months (Quann, 2018).

A recent report from the Mental Health Commission which highlighted considerable deficits in CAMHS in Ireland concluded that “major transformational change” is needed. The issues underscored in the report include the inappropriate admission of children into adult mental health in-patient services (82 such admissions in 2017, up from 68 in 2016), inadequate staffing and variable funding in community child and adolescent mental health services leading to unacceptable waiting times, and forcing young people into emergency services, and the continuing inability of certain services to devise the individualised care-plans and therapeutic programmes now regarded as the cornerstone of a recovery-focused person-centred national policy (Mental Health Commission, 2018).

³⁴ The inability to meet the demand for services was acknowledged by the HSE in 2014 (HSE, 2014).

The low level of staff in child and adolescent mental health services is also a key impediment to timely access to supports. For example, the number of staff in post in CAMHS was just 51 per cent of the staffing level recommended in *A Vision for Change* as of December 2015 (Mental Health Reform, 2017). Increasingly therefore, CAMHS has been obliged to provide services for mild and moderate mental distress due to the lack of primary care psychology services (Mental Health Commission, 2018). Furthermore, the referral pathway to specialist mental health services in Ireland is indirect and under-resourced (Hickey *et al.*, 2018), and with many mental health services proving difficult to access, a single confidential, 24/7, 365 days a year access point has been advocated. According to *Mental Health Reform*, 24/7 crisis intervention mental health services should be made available in every community across Ireland in order to improve to out-of-hours support for people with mental health difficulties (Mental Health Reform, 2017). Furthermore, it is maintained that self-referral would greatly improve accessibility to services for young people (McMahon *et al.*, 2018).

The difficulty and inconsistencies reported in the referral process is evident in the case of Jigsaw. In the case of young people presenting with severe mental health difficulties, the HSE Standard Operating Procedure states that Jigsaw can make direct referrals to CAMHS and subsequently notify the GP as necessary. However some CAMHS will not accept such referrals, instead insisting that the young person attend their GP for referral. According to the Mental Health Commission, this causes delays and adds yet another bureaucratic step to a process which is already difficult for the young person and their family. The refusal to accept referrals from Jigsaw, moreover, runs counter to a seamless and person-centred pathway proposed for young people with mental health difficulties (Mental Health Commission, 2018). Moreover, *Mental Health Reform* contends that the mental health system must be driven by policy which follows a trauma-informed approach (Mental Health Reform, 2017).


Mental health support for children and young people in the care and youth justice systems in Ireland has improved since the introduction of *Vision for Change*. Psychological support and therapy is provided either by primary-care or community psychology services (McElvaney and Tatlow-Golden, 2016). Family support workers provide support and therapeutic services to young people and families, either through statutory family support services or through family support agencies funded by the public health service. Within the youth justice system, however, psychological support for young people tends to be provided internally, with no formal links to CAMHS (McElvaney and Tatlow-Golden, 2016).

In its submission to the Independent Monitoring Group (IMG) for *A Vision for Change*, the Children's Mental Health coalition called on Government to provide mental health supports for young people who come before the Courts or are in detention and insisted that a system for addressing the mental health needs of young people in the youth justice system is urgently needed (Children's Mental Health Coalition, 2014). In terms of providing mental health services to young people in such cases, research has identified a range of barriers to effective interagency work. These include mismatched expectations within and between agencies, diverse professional approaches, and conflicting conceptualisations of young people's difficulties and the best way to respond to their needs. These have contributed to frustration and conflict between professionals, in particular in clashes between those who see their role as prioritising child protection and those who perceive their role as child welfare, differing views on the role of medication, and competing interpretations of challenging behaviour (McElvaney and Tatlow-Golden, 2016).³⁵

SUMMARY

This section explored key aspects of the policy environment in which local services and supports in the NEIC operate, including youth work, youth justice, drugs, and mental health as well as recent changes to local structures since the establishment of the NEIC initiative. The discussion emphasises how local services and supports operate within broader policy environments and operational frameworks. These shape the type of services they provide and their capacity to meet the needs of “hard to reach” young people and their families.

³⁵ A need for additional training and professional support is also referenced (*ibid*).

A large, light blue, stylized letter 'B' graphic that serves as a background element for the title.

PART B

DETAILED DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

3. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE NEIC

This section explores key demographic, economic, and social issues in the NEIC with reference to the latest Pobal and Central Statistics Office (CSO) Census data. The section focuses on a range of issues including population, family and households, educational attainment, employment and deprivation, with a particular focus on the available data for 14-24 year olds.

The North East Inner City (NEIC), which is a “RAPID” designated area of Dublin City, extends from Busáras/Connolly Station to Croke Park, and borders parts of Dorset Street and O’Connell Street to the west to the edge of the East Wall. While the exact boundaries of the NEIC are not definitive or fixed, the following analysis is based on 85 CSO small areas incorporating the areas of the Custom House, George’s Dock, Rutland Place, and the Poplar Row flats. It is noted that this boundary, which is based on Dublin City Council’s North East Inner City map, is somewhat larger than the RAPID area boundary identified in *The Mulvey Report* which consists of 74 small areas.

The electoral divisions within the boundary in this research incorporate the following communities:

- Ballybough A:** *Annesley Avenue, Ballybough Road, Ballybough House, Clonliffe Avenue/Road, Croke Villas, North Strand Road, Poplar Road, Portland Row, Summerhill Parade*
- Ballybough B:** *North Circular Road, Drumcondra Road Lower, Fitzroy Avenue, Jones Road, Russell Avenue, Portland Place, Sherrard Street Lower, Brendan Behan Court, Belvedere Place*
- Mountjoy A:** *Amiens Street, Buckingham Street, Foley Street, Gardiner Street Lower, Liberty House, Sean McDermott Street Lower, Summerhill, Killarney Street, Railway Street*
- Mountjoy B:** *North Circular Road, Fitzgibbon Street, Matt Talbot Court, Summerhill, Gardiner Street, Mountjoy Square, Sean O’Casey Avenue.*
- North City:** *Larkin College, Cathal Brugha Street, Custom Hall, Deverell Place, Gardiner Street Lower*
- North Dock C:** *Commons Street, Mayor Street, Oriel Street, Seville Place, Sherriff Street Lower, St. Lawrence O’Toole Court, Emerald Street, Coburg Place, Ferrymans Crossing*
- Rotunda A:** *Alfie Byrne House, Gardiner Street, Grenville Street, Hardwicke Street, Hill Street, Parnell Street, Avondale House, North Great Georges Street*

3.1 NEIC AND DEPRIVATION

To reiterate: disadvantage and poverty in the NEIC has persisted in many communities despite economic growth, redevelopment, and urban renewal in the area as a whole. The most recent Pobal and CSO data gives an insight into some of the barriers and challenges for young people in the NEIC in comparison with other communities, including the persistent, intergenerational nature of socio-economic outcomes. The Pobal Deprivation Index set out in Table 3.1 measures deprivation based on a range of indicators including age, dependency, education levels, household composition, and employment status, and classifies areas into eight separate categories (Trutz Haase, 2017).

Table 3.1: Pobal Deprivation Index

Relative Score	Label
Over 30	Extremely Affluent
20 to 30	Very Affluent
10 to 20	Affluent
0 to 10	Marginally Above Average
-1 to -10	Marginally Below Average
-10 to -20	Disadvantaged
-20 to -30	Very Disadvantaged
-30	Extremely Disadvantaged

Table 3.2 illustrates the average deprivation score in each electoral division from 2006 to 2016. In reference to the index scores, there has been a decline in deprivation throughout the NEIC in the past decade.

Table 3.2: Average Deprivation Score Electoral Division

Electoral Division	2006	2011	2016
Ballybough A	-11.5	-9.1	-5.3
Ballybough B	-7.3	-5.5	-0.1
Mountjoy A	-6.4	-1.2	-0.2
Mountjoy B	-1.1	-1.9	7.3
North City	2.3	6.8	6.6
North Dock C	-2.7	0.4	-1.2
Rotunda A	2.8	7.3	5.9

This however, masks the disparity in outcomes for small areas within and across electoral divisions. Table 3.3 below, for example, shows the deprivation score for each small area in the Ballybough A division as well as the total change in scores since 2006. Three areas remain very disadvantaged while the levels of deprivation have increased in three small areas incorporating Poplar Row, Courtney Place, Spring Garden Street, and North Clarence Street.

Table 3.3: Deprivation Scores Ballybough A

Deprivation Scores	2006	2011	2016	Change Since 06
Ballybough A				
268009001	2.6	0.5	5.26	2.66
268009002	-4.5	1.5	9.15	13.65
268009003	2.7	3	6.67	3.97
268009004	-8.5	-6.9	-1.52	6.98
268009005	-12.2	-5.2	-4.16	8.04
268009006	-30.7	-27.9	-21.23	9.47
268009007	-10.8	-3.3	-1.69	9.11
268009008	-14.3	-18.3	-16.48	-2.18
268009009	-25.6	-26.3	-26.76	-1.16
268009010	-22	-23.2	-12.15	9.85
268009011	-18.4	-19.2	-23.1	-4.7
268009012	-18.1	-13	-15.11	2.99
268009013	-10.2	-8.6	-3.25	6.95
268009014/268009015	-9.1	-3.5	3.14	12.24
268009016	-0.1	5.5	4.96	5.06
268009017	-4.5	-0.8	11.63	16.13

In the Mountjoy A electoral division, there was an average increase of 6.2 in scores. The area off Railway Street incorporating the Forge, Foundry, and Kiln, saw an increase of 16 points, and the area of Buckingham Village and Rutland Cottages increased by 15. However, there has been a persistence of deprivation in many communities. For example, one small area incorporating Gloucester Square and Saint Mary's Mansions saw a small increase in deprivation according to the index. Furthermore, the small area of Gloucester Place Upper, Patrick Heeney Crescent, and Kavanagh Court saw a slight increase in deprivation from 2011 to 2016 (-23.2, -23.86) and remains very disadvantaged, while the area of Sean McDermott Street has seen deprivation levels increase since 2011 (-17.84 in 2016) and remains in the disadvantaged category.

The small areas within the Mountjoy B division saw an average increase of 8.3 points in deprivation scores. However, the small area next to Sean O'Casey Avenue including Summer Place and Pig Lane remains very disadvantaged with scores improving only marginally from -25.4 to -23.1 during the period. The small area off Gardiner Street Middle, Belmont, in contrast, has seen an improvement in deprivation scores from -17.6 in 2006 to 6.38 in 2016. In the North Dock C division, scores increased an average of 1.6 points. Deprivation increased considerably in three small areas, however, and two small areas remain very disadvantaged. The small area incorporating Oriel Street Lower including Canon Street Lower is the most disadvantaged (-26.7) with deprivation scores increasing since 2006 (from -19.3). In Rotunda A, one area is very disadvantaged and one area is disadvantaged, with the small area off Cumberland Street North including Avondale Dale House the most disadvantaged area in the division. The small area of Sean McDermott Street Upper is now disadvantaged having been classified as slightly above average in 2011.

In sum, according to the HP Pobal Deprivation Index 2016, despite a general increase in socio-economic outcomes there are clear disparities within the NEIC, with deprivation persisting in many communities. Nine small population areas in the NEIC are classified as very disadvantaged and a further 12 small areas are disadvantaged, representing 25 per cent of the total number of small areas. The corresponding figure for affluent areas is approximately 30 per cent as shown in Table 3.4:

Table 3.4: Small Areas and Categories of Deprivation

Pobal Deprivation	Number Small Areas	%
Very Disadvantaged	9	11
Disadvantaged	12	14
Marginally Below Average	11	13
Marginally Above Average	28	33
Affluent	21	25
Very Affluent	4	5
Total	85	100

3.2 POPULATION

According to Census 2016 data, the population of the NEIC increased by 3563 between 2006 and 2016. The average population of each small area is 274 and vary in range from 102 to 794 persons.

Table 3.5: Total Population

Total Population	2006	2011	2016
Ballybough A	3617	3482	3718
Ballybough B	1651	1647	1886
Mountjoy A	3760	5326	5389
Mountjoy B	3446	2732	3963
North City	729	743	965
North Dock C	3657	3839	3661
Rotunda A	2853	2875	3694
Total	19713	20644	23276

Twenty three per cent of residents in the NEIC live in small areas classified as very disadvantaged and disadvantaged compared with 33 per cent in the affluent categories.

Table 3.6: Total Population by Categories of Deprivation

Population	2006	2011	2016	% Tot Pop 16
Very Disadvantaged	2379	2334	2427	11
Disadvantaged	2636	2705	2851	12
Marginally Below Average	2564	2578	2772	12
Marginally Above Average	6274	6323	7404	32
Affluent	4658	5610	6592	28
Very Affluent	1202	1094	1230	5

The 14-24 population in the NEIC is set out in Table 3.7. There are 3874 residents aged 14-24 in the NEIC area, of which 51 per cent are female. The 14-24 cohort accounts for 17 per cent of the total population.³⁶ The small area with the highest single number of 14-24 year olds is the area of the National College of Ireland/North Wall Quay. The area also has the one of the highest number of residents born outside of Ireland, along with the highest number of students.

Table 3.7: 14-24 Year Old Population

Age	Male	Female	Total
14	82	82	164
15	73	66	139
16	104	86	190
17	107	96	203
18	148	135	283
19	132	141	273
20-24	1242	1380	2622
Total	1888	1986	3874

In terms of electoral division, 27 per cent of the 14-24 population reside in the Mountjoy A division with a further 18 per cent in North Dock C. As illustrated in Table 3.8, 22 per cent of the total population and 26 per cent of 14-24 year olds in the NEIC live in disadvantaged and very disadvantaged areas as per the Pobal Index. In contrast, 33 per cent of the total population and 34 per cent of 14-24 year olds live in affluent or very affluent small areas.

Table 3.8: 14-24 Year Old Population by Categories of Deprivation

Categories of Deprivation	Total 14-24	% of 14-24	Total Pop	% Total Pop
Very Disadvantaged	461	12	2427	10
Disadvantaged	535	14	2851	12
Marginally Below Average	404	10	2772	12
Marginally Above Average	1126	29	7404	32
Affluent	1064	27	6592	28
Very Affluent	284	7	1230	5
Total	3874	100	23276	100

There is an even higher concentration in terms of the 15-18 population, with 38 per cent residing in disadvantaged or very disadvantaged small areas, increasing to 45 per cent for the 10-14 cohort.

³⁶ The average number of 14-24 year olds in each small area is 45 and ranges from a low of 12 to a high of 205.

Table 3.9: 10-24 Year Old Population by Categories of Deprivation

Categories of Deprivation	% 10-14 Pop	% 15-18 Pop	% 20-24 Pop	% 14-24 Total Pop
Very Disadvantaged	24	19	9	12
Disadvantaged	21	19	11	14
Marginally Below Average	12	12	10	10
Marginally Above Average	27	29	30	29
Affluent	14	20	31	28
Very Affluent	1	1	10	7
Total	100	100	100	100

The census data also indicates the high proportion of foreign born or international residents. Table 3.10 illustrates the usually resident population in the NEIC by place of birth and nationality according to the 2016 Census figures.³⁷

Table 3.10: Usually Resident Population Birthplace Nationality

Location	Birthplace	Nationality
Ireland	12486	11557
UK	673	284
Poland	683	729
Lithuania	117	128
Other EU 28	3207	3366
Rest of World	4396	4049
Not stated	0	1449
Total	21562	21562

Table 3.10 reveals that approximately 58 per cent of NEIC residents were born in Ireland while the total number of non-Irish born residents in the NEIC is 9076. The largest cohort of non-Irish born residents resides in the Mountjoy B division. In terms of nationality, there are 11,557 Irish and 8,556 non-nationals in the NEIC (1449 respondents did not declare their nationality). Of respondents who did specify their nationality, the percentage of non-Irish nationals as a proportion of the total population in the NEIC is 39.6 per cent. The figure for Dublin City as a whole is 17.3 per cent (CSO, 2017a). In terms of ethnicity, the NEIC has a lower proportion of residents who classify as “White Irish” in comparison to the country and Dublin City as a whole (Centre for Effective Services, 2018).

Table 3.11: Birthplace Electoral Division

Electoral Division	UK	Poland	Lithuania	Rest of EU	Rest of World	Total	% Total Born Outside Ireland	% Total Pop
North City	37	34	5	131	255	462	5	4
North Dock C	131	55	13	365	451	1015	11	16
Ballybough A	137	63	15	295	319	829	9	16
Ballybough B	36	51	13	272	374	746	8	8
Mountjoy A	169	196	23	924	857	2169	24	23
Mountjoy B	79	190	18	778	1313	2378	26	17
Rotunda A	84	94	30	442	827	1477	16	16
Total	673	683	117	3207	4396	9076	100	100

³⁷ It was not possible to provide a breakdown of non-Irish young people with the available CSO small area data files.

In respect of Pobal categories of deprivation, Table 3.12 details the number of residents born outside Ireland and the total number of foreign language speakers. A total of 45 per cent of the total cohort born outside Ireland live in the affluent and very affluent small areas.

Table 3.12: Total Born Outside Ireland Foreign Language Speakers

Categories Deprivation	Born Out-side Ireland	% Total	Foreign Language Speakers	% Total
Very Disadvantaged	118	1	85	1
Disadvantaged	420	5	370	5
Marginally Below Average	915	10	720	10
Marginally Above Average	3516	39	2914	39
Affluent	3385	37	2863	38
Very Affluent	722	8	569	8
Total	9076	100	7521	100

In contrast, only 6 per cent are resident in the disadvantaged and very disadvantaged small areas.

3.2.1 Households, Families and Housing

The 8,573 households in the NEIC area are comprised of 20, 520 residents. The average household size is 2.39 persons, which is lower than the national average of 2.75 and 2.48 for Dublin City as whole. Conversely, one-person households represent 31 per cent of the total number of households, which is higher than the national average of 23.5 per cent and 23.1 per cent for Dublin City and suburbs (CSO, 2017a).³⁸

Table 3.13: Total Number of Households

Type of Household	Households	% Total	Persons
One person	2653	31	2653
Married couple	535	6	1070
Cohabiting couple	686	8	1372
Married couple and children	779	9	2931
Cohabiting couple and children	204	2	751
Father and children	104	1	259
Mother and children	926	11	2621
Couple and others	257	3	944
Couple children and others	152	2	788
Father children and others	25	0	88
Mother children and others	165	2	656
Two or more family units	144	2	778
Non-family households and relations	488	6	1403
Two or more non-related persons	1455	17	4206
Total	8573	100	20520

Table 3.13 demonstrates the relatively high proportions of households comprised of mothers and children, at 11 per cent, compared to 1.2 per cent of households for Dublin City and suburbs (CSO, 2017b).

³⁸ The area also has a high proportion of non-family households and relations (6 per cent), and two or more non-related persons (17 per cent).

Table 3.14: Number and Size of Families

Size of family	Families	% of Total	Persons	% of Total	Children	% of Total
2 persons	2286	55	4572	40	751	17
3 persons	1007	24	3021	27	1423	32
4 persons	563	14	2252	20	1290	29
5 persons	175	4	875	8	577	13
6 or more persons	95	2	616	5	451	10
Total	4126	100	11336	100	4492	100

Table 3.14 presents the number of families, persons, and children by the size of family units.³⁹ Two-person families comprise 55 per cent of the total number of families and incorporate 40 per cent of the total number of family members. Approximately 50 per cent of the total cohort of children resides in 2 or 3 person families.

Table 3.15 Total and Size of Families by Categories of Deprivation

	Number Families	Total Family Members	Total Children
Very Disadvantaged	604	1842	1033
Disadvantaged	649	1898	975
Marginally Below Average	519	1444	591
Marginally Above Average	1291	3481	1223
Affluent	901	2300	615
Very Affluent	162	371	55
Total	4126	11336	4492

Table 3.15 shows that the 604 families living in the very disadvantaged areas of the NEIC include 1033 children. A further 975 children live in the disadvantaged small areas. The percentage of the total number of children in families living in the very disadvantaged and disadvantaged small areas is 45 per cent. The data also reveals the prevalence of lone-parent families in the NEIC, with more children in lone-parent families, and the number of families of mothers with children greater than the number of families in the couples with children category.

Table 3.16: Age of Children and Parents

Age of children	Couples with children	Mothers with children	Fathers with children
All children U15	719	544	37
All children 15 +	360	519	94
Children Both U/Over 15	104	206	8
Total Number	1183	1269	139

This is a long term trend. Between 1991 and 2006, for example, the lone-parent ratio saw significant growth from 35 per cent in 1991 to 55 per cent in 2006 in the North East Inner City, with 55 per cent of all families with dependent children headed by a single parent (Trutz Haase, 2009).

Of the total number of families, 356 and 354 are in the pre-adolescent and adolescent cycles respectively. A further 937 are in the adult cycle, which along with pre-family is the largest family cycle cohort.⁴⁰ Both cohorts represent 51 per cent of the total number of families.

³⁹ For census purposes, a family is defined as a couple with or without children, or a one parent family with one or more children.

⁴⁰ The following classification is used for family units: Pre-family: Family nucleus of married or cohabiting couple without children where female is under 45 years; Empty-nest: Family nucleus of married or cohabiting couple without children where female is aged between 45 and 64 years; Retired: Family nucleus of married or cohabiting couple without children where female is aged 65 years and over; Pre-school: Family nucleus where oldest child is aged 0-4 years; Early-school: Family nucleus where oldest child is aged 5-9 years; Pre-adolescent: Family nucleus where oldest child is aged 10-14 years; Adolescent: Family nucleus where oldest child is aged 15-19 years; Adult: Family nucleus where oldest child is aged 20 years and over (CSO, 2017a).

Table 3.17: Family Cycle and Number of Families

Family cycle	Number of families	% of Total Families	Number of Family members
Pre-family	1156	28	2312
Empty nest	255	6	510
Retired	124	3	248
Pre-school	518	13	1501
Early school	426	10	1364
Pre-adolescent	356	9	1196
Adolescent	354	9	1193
Adult	937	23	3012
Total	4126	100	11336

Table 3.18 shows the percentage total of families according to the category of the youngest child by each class of deprivation:

Table 3.18: Age of Youngest Child by Categories of Deprivation

Age Youngest Child	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20+
% of Total					
Very Disadvantaged	14	18	26	26	27
Disadvantaged	15	20	22	26	26
Marginally Below Average	12	12	13	15	15
Marginally Above Average	33	34	25	22	24
Affluent	24	15	12	11	7
Very Affluent	3	1	2	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Within both the very disadvantaged and disadvantaged small areas, the percentage as a total of each age category increases steadily with the age of the youngest child in the family. In more affluent areas, this trend is largely reversed.

Table 3.19 shows the large proportion of residents living in flats and apartments in the community which equates to 65 per cent of the total number of households.

Table 3.19: Households and Types of Accommodation

Type of accommodation	Households	% of Total Households	Persons	% of Total Persons
House/Bungalow	2486	29	6615	32
Flat/Apartment	5601	65	12767	62
Bed-sit	234	3	416	2
Caravan/Mobile Home	0	0	0	0
Not stated	252	3	722	4
Total	8573	100	20520	100

Table 3.20 illustrates the number of households and persons according to the type of household occupancy:

Table 3.20: Households and Type of Occupancy

Type of Occupancy	Households	Persons
Owner Occupied Mortgage	623	1525
Owner Occupied No mortgage	628	1276
Rented Private Landlord	3741	9208
Rented Local Authority	2062	5223
Rented Voluntary Body	324	623
Occupied Free of Rent	67	133
Not stated	1128	2532
Total	8573	20520

A total of 44 per cent of all households in the area rent from a private landlord while 24 per cent rent from the local authority. Only 15 per cent of all households are owner occupied. When cross-tabulated by category of deprivation, the concentration of households renting from the local authority in disadvantaged areas is evident. As Table 3.21 illustrates 60 per cent of the total number of households who rent from the local authority live in disadvantaged small areas compared to 6 per cent who rent from a private landlord, 17 per cent owner with a mortgage, and 20 per cent owner with no mortgage:

Table 3.21: Percentage / Number of Households and Type of Occupancy

Number of Households	Rent L/A	Rent Private	Housing Not Stated	Occupied Rent Free	Owner Mortgage	Owner No Mortgage
% Total in Category						
Very Disadvantaged	31	1	8	4	7	5
Disadvantaged	29	5	12	16	10	15
Marginally Below Average	14	10	16	16	18	21
Marginally Above Average	19	37	39	31	41	41
Affluent	7	37	22	16	19	15
Very Affluent	1	10	4	15	5	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 3.22 illustrates the percentage of total persons who live in each type of accommodation according to each category of deprivation. Eighteen per cent of the total numbers of persons who live in flats or apartments are resident in disadvantaged areas. This equates to 41 per cent for a house or bungalow. In contrast, 41 per cent of all resident in flats or apartments reside in the affluent small areas (9 per cent in houses or bungalows):

Table 3.22: Percentage / Total Persons and Type of Accommodation

Category	House	Flat Apartment	Bedsit	Not Stated
Very Disadvantaged	19	8	1	10
Disadvantaged	22	10	1	9
Marginally Below Average	18	9	12	17
Marginally Above Average	32	32	48	38
Affluent	9	32	38	26
Very Affluent	0	9	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

The CSO and Pobal data also provide evidence of the considerable number of non-Irish born residents who rent from private landlords in the community. The relationship between the numbers renting from a private landlord and the numbers of residents born outside of Ireland is illustrated in the scatterplot in Figure 3.1:

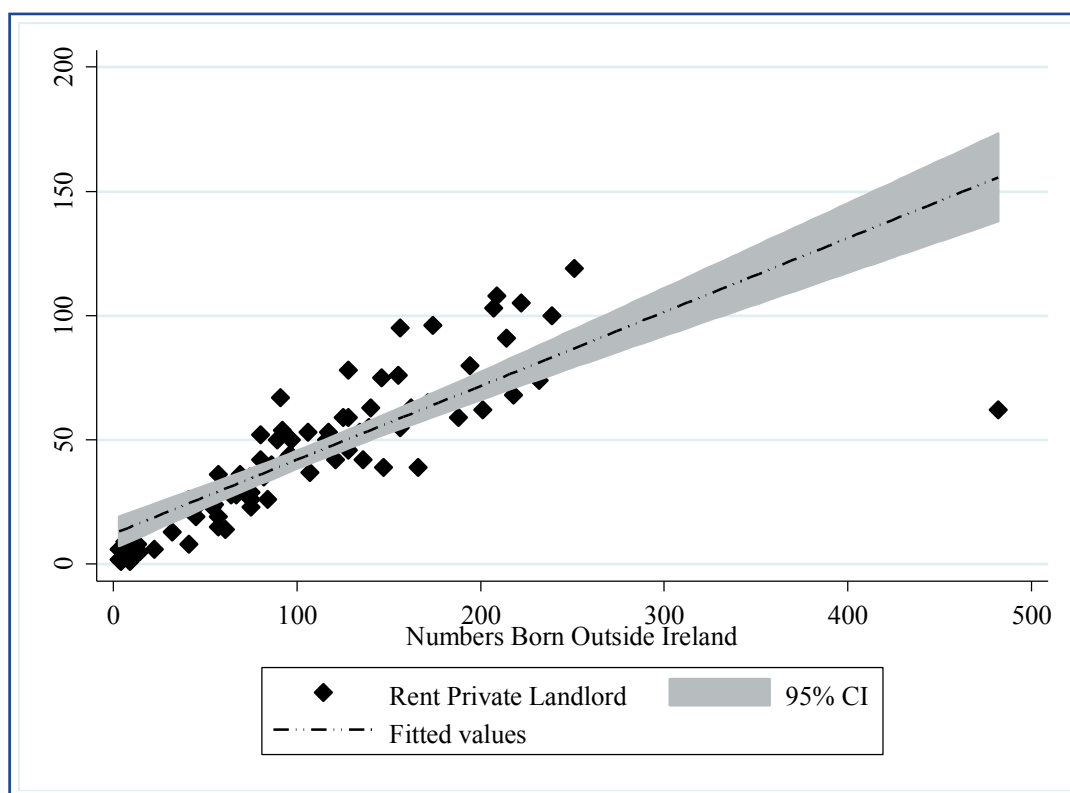


Figure 3.1: Scatterplot of Numbers of Non-Irish Born Renting From Private Landlord

3.3 EDUCATION

Despite advances, the most recent data indicates the disparity in educational outcomes and attainment within the NEIC. According to 2016 Census Small Population Area Statistics, at least 2130 of total residents ceased education at age of 16 or under. The precise figure is difficult to determine since 45 per cent of respondents failed to specify the age at which their education ceased.

However, 13 per cent of the total population aged 15 or more left school with primary or no formal education (18 per cent of those who specified). This figure masks significant disparities within the NEIC as a whole.

Table 3.23: Age Education Ceased

Age	Males	Females	Total	% Total	% of Total Stated
Under 15	488	549	1037	7	13
15	266	220	486	3	6
16	355	252	607	4	7
17	310	302	612	4	7
18	595	511	1106	7	13
19	213	198	411	3	5
20	169	167	336	2	4
21+	1881	1809	3690	25	45
Not Stated	3584	3165	6749	45	-
Total	7861	7173	15034	100	100

In the disadvantaged and very disadvantaged small areas, 1594 or 49 per cent of residents failed to declare the age at which their education ceased. Of those who specified, 30 per cent of the total number of residents ceased their education at 16 or under, 16 per cent of whom ceased education under of the age of 15. This is further illustrated in Table 3.24 which sets out the percentage of each age category within each category of deprivation:

Table 3.24: Ceased Education Categories of Deprivation

Ceased Education	15 or Under	15	16	17	18	19	20	21+	Not Stated
Categories of Deprivation									
Very Disadvantaged	23	20	17	10	10	6	3	2	12
Disadvantaged	28	26	19	15	14	8	4	4	12
Marginally Below Average	19	17	15	15	11	13	10	11	13
Marginally Above Average	23	23	29	37	36	38	39	33	32
Affluent	7	14	19	21	27	31	38	39	28
Very Affluent	1	0	1	1	2	5	5	10	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

As illustrated in Table 3.25, the proportion of the population with primary education only has generally declined during the period:

Table 3.25: Average Primary Education Only

Average Primary Education Only	2006	2011	2016
Electoral Division			
Ballybough A	30	30	23
Ballybough B	27	25	19
Mountjoy A	28	25	17
Mountjoy B	18	18	9
North City	12	13	10
North Dock C	24	24	24
Rotunda A	16	11	11

The proportion of the population with primary education only in disadvantaged areas has declined in the past decade as illustrated in Figure 3.2:

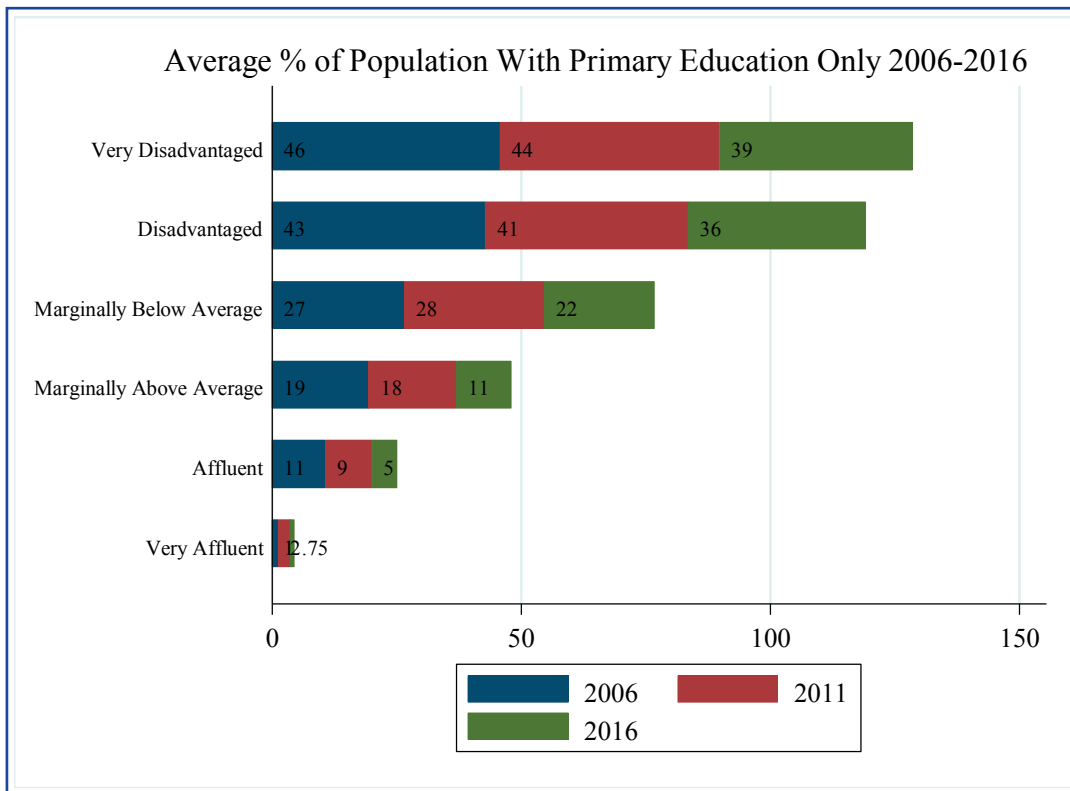


Figure 3.2: Bar Chart Average Percentage of Population by Primary Education Only

In terms of small areas of affluence and disadvantage, Table 3.26 confirms that while the proportion has decreased across all categories since 2006, the difference between disadvantaged and affluent areas remains stark:

Table 3.26 Average Primary Education Only Categories of Deprivation

Average Primary Ed Only	2006	2011	2016
Categories of Deprivation			
Very Disadvantaged	46	44	39
Disadvantaged	43	41	36
Marginally Below Average	27	28	22
Marginally Above Average	19	18	11
Affluent	11	9	5
Very Affluent	1	2	1

Figure 3.3 indicates that the level of third level education within the NEIC has also increased within the last decade:

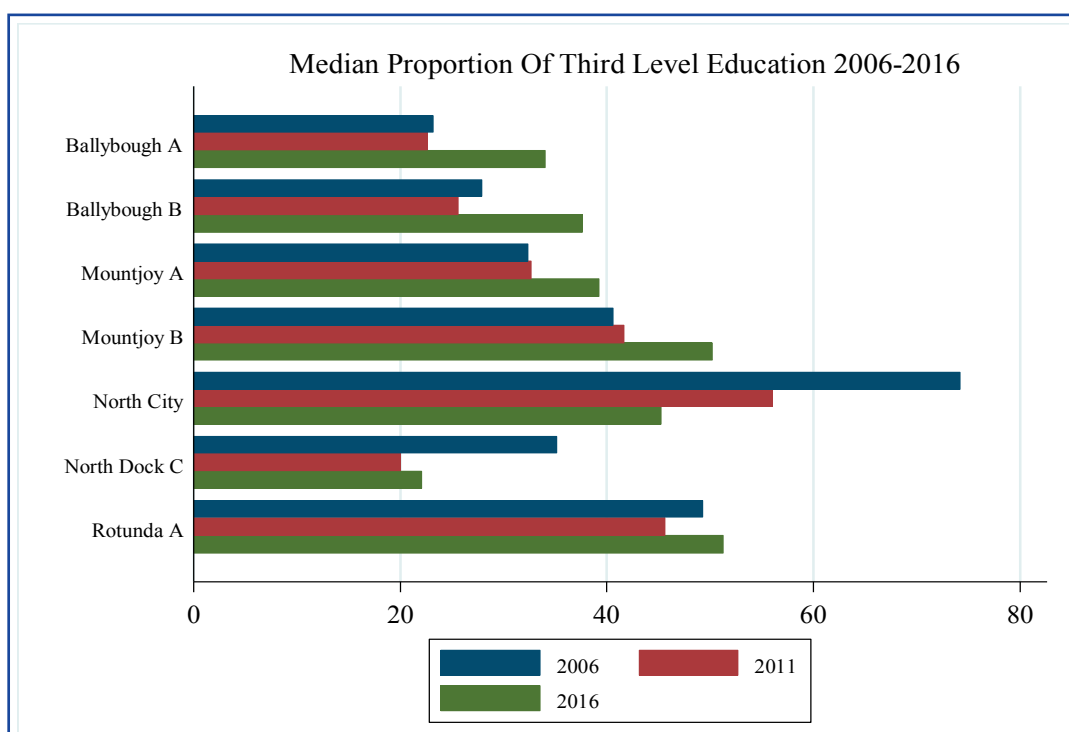


Figure 3.3: Bar Chart Median Proportion of Third Level Education

However, the percentage of residents with third level education in more disadvantaged small areas remains relatively stagnant, as is evident in Table 3.27:

Table 3.27: Average Percentage of Third Level Education by Categories of Deprivation

Average % 3rd Level	2006	2011	2016	Change
Categories of Deprivation				
Very Disadvantaged	6	3	5	-1.0
Disadvantaged	13	12	13	0
Marginally Below Average	28	25	33	5
Marginally Above Average	38	36	44	6
Affluent	50	54	60	10
Very Affluent	75	73	88	13

The proportion of residents with third level education in very disadvantaged and disadvantaged small areas has remained stagnant between 2006 and 2016, while both categories decreased in 2011. However, average third level attainment has increased in the same period in the marginal areas with approximately one third of the population in marginally below average areas now with third level education.

Finally, of 5,491 persons aged over 15 still in education, 2,795 are still in school or college. Table 3.28 breaks down the population still in education by electoral division including the percentage of those aged 15 or older as a percentage of the total population aged 15 or more:

Table 3.28: Numbers in School College and Other Types of Education

Education	School/College	Other	Total Ed	Tot 15+ Pop	% Total
Ballybough A	357	333	690	3099	22
Ballybough B	187	127	314	1700	18
Mountjoy A	629	679	1308	4756	28
Mountjoy B	674	491	1165	3541	33
North City	99	160	259	818	32
North Dock C	474	369	843	3306	25
Rotunda A	375	537	912	3295	28
Total	2795	2696	5491	20515	

3.4 EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL CLASS

The following subsection examines the data on employment and social class according to the 2016 Census and Pobal Geoprofiling data.

Tables 3.29 and 3.30 indicate the average unemployment rates for males and females respectively by electoral division according to Pobal Geoprofiling data.

Table 3.29: Average Male Unemployment

Electoral Division	2006	2011	2016
Average Unemployment Male			
Ballybough A	25.8	38.7	26.7
Ballybough B	24.2	45.3	24.9
Mountjoy A	23.2	35.6	25.3
Mountjoy B	20.7	36.7	17.6
North City	17.7	24.2	14.7
North Dock C	20.0	35.1	23.7
Rotunda A	13.3	21.4	17.3

Table 3.30: Average Female Unemployment

Electoral Division	2006	2011	2016
Average Unemployment Female			
Ballybough A	20.2	29.8	23.3
Ballybough B	18.4	32.5	17.3
Mountjoy A	19.9	26.3	18.9
Mountjoy B	15.3	28.5	17.8
North City	20.9	18.4	20.4
North Dock C	16	23.3	18.3
Rotunda A	13.3	16.7	15.3

These tables confirm that average male and female unemployment in 2016 is highest in the Ballybough A division at 26.7 and 23.3 per cent respectively.

When cross-tabulated by categories of deprivation, the disparities in employment within small areas of the NEIC are more apparent.

Although lower than 2011, in very disadvantaged and disadvantaged small areas, the average unemployment rate for males has nonetheless increased since 2006 and stands at 50.5 and 39.9 per cent respectively.

Table 3.31: Average Male Unemployment by Categories of Deprivation

Pobal Categories	2006	2011	2016
Average Unemployment Male			
Very Disadvantaged	39.7	60.6	50.5
Disadvantaged	32.6	49.5	39.9
Marginally Below Average	24.4	40.2	26.3
Marginally Above Average	18.4	31.1	15.7
Affluent	11.5	22.9	10.9
Very Affluent	6.6	6.7	1.7

In general, a similar trend is evident for average female unemployment:

Table 3.32: Average Female Unemployment by Categories of Deprivation

Pobal Categories	2006	2011	2016
Average Unemployment Female			
Very Disadvantaged	32.8	43.9	33.2
Disadvantaged	23.5	35.3	29.1
Marginally Below Average	19.8	30.0	23.2
Marginally Above Average	16.7	22.7	15.7
Affluent	9.8	18.4	10.8
Very Affluent	3.1	5.8	6.5

The 2016 Census categorised the entire population into particular social class groups defined on the basis of occupation.⁴¹ In comparison to Dublin City as whole, a higher proportion of residents are classed as ‘Unskilled’ and ‘Semi-skilled’ while a smaller percentage are considered ‘Professional Workers’, ‘Managerial and Technical’ and ‘Non-manual’ (Centre for Effective Services, 2018):

Table 3.33: Social Class and Gender

Social Class	Male	Female	Total
Professional Workers	608	486	1094
Managerial and Technical	1735	1711	3446
Non-manual	1198	1600	2798
Skilled manual	1582	991	2573
Semi-skilled	1410	1159	2569
Unskilled	721	843	1564
All others gainfully occupied/unknown	4768	4464	9232
Total	12022	11254	23276

⁴¹ According to the CSO, the occupations included in each of these groups are selected to bring together, as far as possible, people with similar levels of occupational skill. In determining social class no account is taken of the differences between individuals on the basis of other characteristics such as education. Accordingly social class ranks occupations by the level of skill required on a social class scale ranging from 1 (highest) to 7 (lowest). This scale combines occupations into six groups by occupation and employment status following procedures similar to those outlined above for the allocation of socio-economic group. A residual category “All others gainfully occupied and unknown” is used where no precise allocation is possible (CSO, 2017a).

Table 3.34 illustrates the percentage of each social class as a total of each category of deprivation:

Table 3.34: Percentage of Social Class by Category of Deprivation

Social Class	Professional	Managerial / Technical	Non Manual	Skilled Manual	Semi-Skilled	Unskilled	All Others	Total
Very Disadvantaged	1	6	12	10	15	12	45	100
Disadvantaged	1	7	12	10	14	13	44	100
Marginally Below Average	4	14	11	7	11	13	41	100
Marginally Above Average	4	15	12	7	11	11	39	100
Affluent	6	18	13	5	10	10	37	100
Very Affluent	15	30	11	1	3	2	37	100

This highlights a marked contrast in the number of professional and managerial/technical workers between the disadvantaged and affluent areas as shown in Table 3.35:

Table 3.35: Percentage of Unskilled Professional and Managerial Workers

Categories of Deprivation	Professional Workers	Managerial/Technical	Unskilled
% of Social Category			
Very Disadvantaged	1	4	12
Disadvantaged	3	6	15
Marginally Below Average	10	11	14
Marginally Above Average	29	33	33
Affluent	39	35	26
Very Affluent	17	11	1
Total	100	100	100

Only 4 per cent of professional and 10 per cent of the total cohort of managerial/technical workers areas reside in areas of disadvantage as opposed to 56 per cent of professional and 46 per cent managerial/technical in both categories of affluent areas.

Table 3.36 indicates the work status for respondents over the age of 15 in the NEIC. 57 per cent of the total population is at work:

Table 3.36: Principal Economic Status

Principal Economic Status	Male	Female	Total
At work	6324	5356	11680
Looking for first regular job	196	171	367
Unemployed, having lost or given up previous job	1370	939	2309
Student	1388	1407	2795
Looking after home/family	97	850	947
Retired	728	712	1440
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	494	417	911
Other	32	44	76
Total	10629	9896	20525

When cross-tabulated by category of deprivation, marked contrasts between small areas in the NEIC are evident, with 42 per cent of those at work resident in affluent areas compared to 14 per cent in the disadvantaged categories. Forty per cent of the total numbers unemployed in the NEIC reside in disadvantaged small areas while 17 per cent reside in more affluent small areas.

Table 3.37 confirms that 43 per cent of students reside in affluent areas compared with 18 per cent in disadvantaged areas, while 48 per cent of those unable to work reside in disadvantaged areas:

Table 3.37: Principal Economic Status and Categories of Deprivation

Principal Economic Status	At Work	Unemployed	Looking 1st Job	Student	Unable to Work	Looking After Home	Retired	Other
Very Disadvantaged	6	20	12	7	23	15	12	8
Disadvantaged	8	20	16	11	25	15	18	9
Marginally Below Average	11	17	14	7	18	12	13	18
Marginally Above Average	33	26	30	33	23	34	30	41
Affluent	35	16	27	33	11	21	24	22
Very Affluent	7	1	2	10	0	3	3	1

Further trends are evident when examining the proportion of each economic category within each type of category of deprivation.

Table 3.38 illustrates that the more affluent areas have the highest proportion of those at work, while the very affluent category has the highest proportion of students:

Table 3.38: Principal Economic Status Proportion of Each Category of Deprivation

Principal Economic Status	At Work	Unemployed	Looking 1st Job	Student	Unable to Work	Looking After Home	Retired	Other	Total
Very Disadvantaged	37	23	2	10	11	7	9	0	100
Disadvantaged	39	19	2	13	9	6	11	0	100
Marginally Below Average	53	17	2	9	7	5	8	1	100
Marginally Above Average	60	9	2	14	3	5	7	0	100
Affluent	67	6	2	15	2	3	6	0	100
Very Affluent	69	2	1	23	0	2	3	0	100

SUMMARY

This section explored the latest available socio-economic and demographic data for 85 small areas of the NEIC. The available data provides a comprehensive insight into many of the challenges facing local young people, including the continued disadvantage in many communities and marked disparity in outcomes within the NEIC as a whole. For example, 22 per cent of the total population and 26 per cent of 14-24 year olds in the NEIC live in disadvantaged and very disadvantaged small areas. There is an even higher concentration in terms of the 15-18 population, with 38 per cent residing in disadvantaged or very disadvantaged small areas, increasing to 45 per cent for the 10-14 cohort.

The data also indicates the large population of minority ethnic and migrant communities with 45 per cent of the total number of residents born outside Ireland living in affluent and very affluent small areas of the NEIC. The high volume of lone-parent families and the number of families consisting of mothers and children is also evident.

Without question, unemployment issues remain key in many parts of the community with residents in the NEIC more likely to be classed as “unskilled” or “semi-skilled” compared to figures for Dublin City and the country as a whole. While there has been an increase in primary and secondary educational attainment, third level education has remained relatively stagnant in disadvantaged and very disadvantaged small areas.

A large, light red, stylized letter 'C' graphic that serves as a background element for the title.

PART C

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

4. YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK, HARD TO REACH, AND SELDOM HEARD YOUNG PEOPLE

This section explores the concepts of young people at risk and “hard to reach”/“seldom heard” young people, as well as youth engagement and participation.

4.1 HARD TO REACH OR SELDOM HEARD YOUNG PEOPLE

While the term “hard to reach” is often used to describe groups of people who are difficult to engage in research or wider public and/or political institutions, the catch-all label is open to criticism. For example, the term lacks specificity and clarity, is often employed inconsistently, and is a potentially stigmatising term which problematizes groups and masks the diversity of young people and their life circumstances and experiences (Brackertz, 2007; Nugent and Schinkel, 2016). Moreover, the interchangeable use of “hard to reach” with “hidden” or “invisible”, implies that certain individuals and young people deliberately avoid engagement (Kelleher, Seymour and Halpenny, 2014). This can place primary responsibility for a lack of engagement on such people, while, in many respects, it is the deficit of existing approaches to public policy and service delivery which frequently leads to the effective exclusion of cohorts of some young people (Aldridge, 2017a). In fact, it can be particularly difficult for people living with multiple disadvantages to access public institutions which are relevant to their lived experience and to feel empowered to actively contribute to them. A significant consequence of ‘getting by’, coping with adversity, or surviving, is a lack of awareness of what is going on in wider society (Kearns, 2014; Kramer-Roy, 2015).

In this context, perhaps, the concept of “seldom heard” groups more accurately reflects the reality that many young people are excluded, not listened to, or given sufficient opportunities to voice their opinions (East Midlands Academic Health Science Network, 2015). “Seldom heard” groups are characterised as groups of people who lack a collective voice and are thus under-represented within democratic processes and public institutions. In addition, the term refers to under-represented people who need or potentially need social services but who are less likely to be heard and understood by public officials and decision-makers. As a result, seldom heard groups, including young people, are less likely to influence the very policies and services designed to meet their needs (Kelleher, Seymour and Halpenny, 2014). The concept of seldom heard, therefore, emphasises the responsibility of public institutions to engage more innovatively and to amend existing approaches as required, bearing in mind that members of seldom heard groups may need time to accept the idea that their views are of interest and importance.

Seldom heard young people are not a homogenous group. In many respects the concept is an umbrella term which encompasses the many heterogeneous and complex groups who experience isolation from both mainstream and targeted activities. As such, it is important to recognise and remain mindful of the diversity within this cohort. For example, some “hard to reach” or “seldom heard” young people may not wish to be heard and may regard research and public institutions as intrusions into their personal lives (Couch, Durant and Hill, 2014; Aldridge, 2017b).

Such issues are of significance to research since isolated people and seldom heard groups have the potential to be excluded from conventional social research studies if the methods used are not appropriate or sufficiently aligned with both innate and structurally-related vulnerabilities (Aldridge, 2014; Couch, Durant and Hill, 2014). The under-representation and exclusion of certain groups, including young people, obliges researchers to engage with subjects more proactively and creatively.

However, a review of the methodological literature in this area merely confirms there is no failsafe way to conduct research with “hard to reach” or “seldom heard” groups. In practice, the extent of compliance and engagement with a research study by certain groups depends on a range of factors including the characteristics of the group, the recruitment technique used, and the subject of interest. Irrespective of the potential advantages or limitations of the techniques used, the successful use of research strategies is therefore reliant upon familiarity with the specific characteristics of the target population and the respondent perceptions of the relevance of the research topics to their lives (Aldridge, 2017b).

4.2 VULNERABLE YOUTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK

Irrespective of the term used, hard to reach or seldom heard young people are often vulnerable and at risk. Such young people typically experience the adversity from a young age which is linked to poorer outcomes at later stages of development. The notion of vulnerability reflects the socially-constructed perception, and sometimes the reality, of a lack of social, political and economic capital in comparison to the majority of people in society. As such, minority, marginalised, and excluded populations are frequently considered vulnerable in social, political, and economic terms (Auerswald, Piatt and Mirzazadeh, 2017; von Benzon and van Blerk, 2017).

Adolescence is often characterised by initiation into and experimentation with so-called risk behaviours such as substance-use and rule-breaking which can precipitate ill-health and impact well-being (Plenty, 2018). Younger persons may indulge in risky lifestyles which render them more vulnerable to harm and victimization, and put them at higher risk of offending than adults (Erdmann and Reinecke, 2018). Risk factors, commonly understood as ‘deficits’, are individual, school, peer, family, and community influences which increase the likelihood that a young person will experience a social or health problem (Jenson and Fraser, 2006). ‘At risk’ young people are therefore at greater risk of mental and physical health problems, substance-abuse, unsafe and suicidal behaviours, criminality, academic underachievement, and disengagement from the educational process (Martin *et al.*, 2015).

Young people at risk are often described as having complex needs and multiple vulnerabilities. Malvaso, Delfabbro, Hackett and Mills define the complex needs of youth as “situations where young people are burdened by multiple and co-occurring problems” which may be related to mental health issues and/or social problems that often lead to multiple forms of assistance (Malvaso *et al.*, 2016). Some young people and social groups are at a ‘higher risk of risks’, or of experiencing multiple, complex problems simultaneously. These individuals are vulnerable, for example, to ill-health and social isolation, and live in circumstances in which they do not have adequate protection or a ‘safety net’ (Baillergeau, 2016). In reality, there are large variations in the kind of problems and needs which individuals labelled as a person with complex needs may have. For instance, young people with complex needs may experience mental ill-health issues while also being exposed to various and multiple risk factors such as difficulties in completing education, unemployment, substance-abuse and young offending. To mitigate the impacts of risk factors, young people require resources or protective factors. Typically, such protective factors are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, communities, and larger society that when present, lower the probability of an undesirable outcome for young people (Forrest-Bank *et al.*, 2015).

However, the term “youth at risk” like “hard to reach” is the subject to some criticism. The collective term, “youth at risk”, for example, draws attention to the negative aspects of the lives of youth and traps young people within pre-determined perceptions.

According to Wall and Olofsson, “research on young people and risk is often associated with risk behaviour and at-risk youth, that is, it concerns drinking and drug habits, crime, sexual behaviour and related diseases” (Wall and Olofsson, 2008).

“If youth at risk are primarily presented as ‘problematic youth’”, argues Follesø, “such characterization will also shape the dominant understanding of these youth” (Follesø, 2015). Furthermore, studies of youth inclusion demonstrate the limitations of the “deficit model”, wherein interventions focus on the assumption that the vulnerable young person only needs ‘to be fixed’. This approach neglects the necessity to examine and/or modify the structural conditions or wider environments in which young people develop. This analysis therefore does not adequately consider the type of society young people at risk are to be included into (Woodman and Wyn, 2013).

A growing body of research demonstrates how young people at risk who are exposed to harmful environments often rely on their own resources to cope with the issues they face, without protective factors or the support of significant others. Such young people can exercise agency and often demonstrate resilience and strong coping skills in the face of adversity and vulnerabilities.⁴² Resilience is understood as the ability to overcome adverse conditions and to function normatively despite exposure to risk, representing successful adaptation in the presence of risk or adversity (Forrest-Bank *et al.*, 2015). At risk youth often report that events appear to be beyond their control and attempt to cope with this by making the most of the least ‘bad option’. In other words, they develop strategies for ‘getting by’

⁴² While there is a general acceptance of children and young people as social actors, the concept of their agency is complex and contested (Horgan *et al.*, 2015).

and can become adept at seeking out resources within the limited options available to them (Munford and Sanders, 2015).

In light of this, recent research has consciously sought to generate a more nuanced understanding of risk and vulnerability leading to a shift from understanding marginalised and disadvantaged young people as “problem youth” to resourceful individuals whose actions are often attempts to take control of their life circumstances (Martin *et al.*, 2015; Baillergeau, 2016). This estimation of vulnerable youth, it is claimed, can better support young people to seek out positive opportunities to exercise their own agency and coping capacities in a supported context. Moreover, it generates spaces for fostering resilience and for building on the strategies young people have already demonstrated to seek out resources within their own social ecologies (Munford and Sanders, 2015, 2017).

4.3 YOUNG PEOPLE, PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Youth engagement and participation is influenced by broader socio-political contexts in which young people live and engagement efforts take place. A general lack of participation in societal and political institutions is understood to fundamentally limit the potential of young people (Chaskin, McGregor and Brady, 2018b). According to Mason and Prior (2008), “Engagement ... goes beyond a young person just showing up; it includes their motivation, commitment to, and participation in, activities offered in programmes of intervention” (Mason and Prior, 2008). This is an important distinction as young people may occasionally ‘show up’ or engage on an infrequent or intermittent basis.

However, the challenge of encouraging and sustaining the active engagement and participation of young people who are most marginalised, “hard to reach”, or “seldom heard”, is widely recognised within community and youth development as well as wider public and political structures (Chaskin, McGregor and Brady, 2018a). Young people’s non-participation and lack of engagement is seen as particularly likely and particularly problematic within disadvantaged or marginalised communities. Effectively engaging young people in community action and political processes is challenging, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those most affected by structural factors of inequality, disadvantage, and discrimination (Chaskin, McGregor and Brady, 2018b).

To increase engagement and participation, policy-makers are urged to pay attention to the significant structural inequalities that shape disadvantage and constrain societal participation among marginalised youth. There is a growing awareness that promoting engagement and participation among marginalised youth requires more diverse, multiplex, grounded, and flexible strategies. However, there is little evidence of the methods through which disadvantaged urban youth can be most effectively engaged and the potential effects such engagement can have on youth development, social change, and long-term citizen engagement (*ibid*). There is also a current relative lack of literature exploring the viewpoints of vulnerable and marginalised young people in relation to their continued engagement with youth work services (Holton, 2017). This maybe further problematized in the case of certain cohorts of young people, including girls and young women, migrants, and ethnic minorities. Ethnic minority young girls and young women living in vulnerable circumstances, for example, may face a more intensive form of marginalisation as a result of deprivation or a lack of skills, capabilities, or opportunities, and contradictory role expectations (Boomkens *et al.*, 2018).⁴³

Young people experiencing specific types of adversity may encounter considerable additional hurdles to engagement. Over the long-term, vulnerable individuals with complex needs can come to approach the social services with attitudes of mistrust, aversion, and low expectations, due to previous negative experiences and perceived power differentials. Furthermore, the range of services provided to people with complex needs includes both voluntary and desired interventions, and involuntary and unwanted interventions. Consequently, engagement with services and supports may be ambiguous or even resented and undesired (Grell, Ahmadi and Blom, 2016). Evidence suggests that hard to reach young people or young people with complex needs can find dealing with specialised social service structures to be challenging. Such organisations may appear confusing and hard to navigate, and may be further complicated by service fragmentations in which service-users simultaneously participate in an array of interventions (Grell, Ahmadi and Blom, 2016).

In terms of accessing wider social services and supports, studies highlight the importance of the quality of relationships between professionals and young people and in situations in which young people have an authentic voice. Positive

⁴³ Further, evidence from Europe has shown that boys tend to be overrepresented in youth work. This, it is argued, is a consequence of activities that appeal less to girls, and boys who often dominate the youth work space through more extravert and physical behaviour (Boomkens *et al.*, 2018).

relationships, safe environments, and autonomy are considered crucial for success outcomes of interventions (Zlotowitz *et al.*, 2016; Munford and Sanders, 2017). In fact, the perception that professionals relate to young people in an authentic way is crucial to a successful treatment outcome (Almqvist and Lassinantti, 2018).

Research has demonstrated how meaningful relationships with young people can be developed when trusted adults make a genuine effort to understand the realities of young people's lives and listen to accounts of how they make sense of their world and seek out resources (Barker and Thomson, 2015). Thus successful engagement with services largely depends on the identity dynamics which exist between service-user and service provider, with a sense of shared identity between both parties leading to positive interactions. A sense of shared identity forms the psychological basis of many aspects of co-operation within groups and promotes a shared worldview, trust, enhanced coping ability, and engagement with group authorities (McNamara, Stevenson and Muldoon, 2013). Skills such as empathy and being able to adopt another person's perspective are highlighted as crucial factors in building and maintaining good relationships or therapeutic associations between professionals, young people and their parents, which may increase the likelihood of successful intervention outcomes (Malvaso *et al.*, 2016).

Given that public services exist for the purposes of serving the local community, a sense of shared identity should facilitate a sense of trust and cooperation between service-users and providers, and hence encourage service engagement and use. Moreover, studies have underscored that young people in the criminal justice system respond most effectively to so-called non-stigmatizing services which draw on their skills, involve them in decision-making, offer diverse opportunities for success and the development of positive self-image, build on their strengths, and address many aspects of their lives simultaneously, including the opportunity to take up therapy (Zlotowitz *et al.*, 2016). Developing a relationship based on mutual trust, however, can take time.

5. KEY FACTORS IN ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESSION

This section explores a number of key issues in adolescent development and progression to adulthood in the context of existing academic and empirical literature. The issues identified are not intended to represent every concern but rather those of potential relevance to the NEIC and the objectives of the present research. The exploration of these issues is partly driven by the understanding that the lives of marginalised youth and those living in disadvantaged circumstances involve significant challenges which must be addressed if they are to receive the benefits of full and equal membership of society (Chaskin, McGregor and Brady, 2018a). Moreover, research on vulnerable young people has consistently demonstrated the importance of structural conditions and family and social connections.

Childhood is increasingly deemed a social and relational phenomenon that influences children through the structures and relationships in which they are embedded. As such, a young person's development is influenced by their environment, and the development of their abilities depends on the learning contexts to which they are exposed during childhood and adolescence (OECD, 2015e, 2016a). This ecological approach to the development and well-being of children and young people includes both proximal and distal factors in the child's environment, including family history, structure, and functioning, economic factors, levels of social support within the extended family and the community, and broader factors related to the local community and environment (Dex and Sabates, 2013). Such factors can provide a secure base for young people and instil the sense of security and belonging crucial to the smooth and successful development and progression to adulthood (Munford and Sanders, 2015). However, embedded structural factors including poverty, up-bringing in marginalised communities, poorly functioning schools, and early exposure to community violence and crime are resistant to change and also highly significant to development and outcomes (Foster *et al.*, 2017). A growing body of research demonstrates how difficult past experiences and relationships, limited support, and constant instability, can work to constrain and undermine young people's ability to develop positive identities and meaning. So-called 'caring connections' are therefore essential for vulnerable young people, which along with other supports, allow them to construct and develop positive identities (Noble-Carr *et al.*, 2014; Noble-Carr and Woodman, 2016). In light of this, the following section examines key issues in adolescent development and progression to adulthood.

5.1 ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT FROM CHILDHOOD TO EMERGING ADULTHOOD

Youth is a period of biological, psychological, and social changes, which can create challenges for young people as they navigate towards adulthood. For many young people, emerging adulthood is a positive and hopeful stage of development, filled with opportunities to fully explore, define, and begin to consolidate their identities, as well as roles in and views of society (McMahon *et al.*, 2018). Childhood is a crucial stage of this development (OECD, 2016a). Since children are not born with fixed abilities and commence their lives with the potential to develop them, their social and emotional skills are malleable, and can be developed through practice and reinforced through daily experiences between childhood and adolescence. Many skills can be developed over time, and emotional and social skills can be enhanced throughout the lifetime of an individual (OECD, 2016a).

However, it is held that children with strong early-learning are much more likely to achieve better education outcomes, employment, income, socio-economic status, physical and mental health, well-being, and civic engagement, and be less likely to participate in crime.

If a child has not developed early emotional, social and cognitive skills by around the age of seven years it is both difficult and costly to address their development gaps thereafter (OECD, 2015e).⁴⁴

Evidence suggests that children and adolescents require a balanced set of social, emotional, and cognitive skills in order to succeed in life, and a child's early years are integral to the development of such skills. Cognitive and socio-emotional skills interact and empower young people to success both in and out of formal education, and play a significant role in improving social and economic outcomes (OECD, 2015e, 2016a). Moreover, developmental neuroscience research has demonstrated the importance of early brain development in establishing cognitive and

⁴⁴ A five-year-old's level of self-regulation, oral language and communication, numeracy, fine motor skills, locus of control and social skills are also predictive of their later outcomes in terms of employment, income, educational attainment, and health.

behavioural risks which can create barriers for children's opportunities to advance in education and employment (Gatzke-Kopp and Creavey, 2017). However, evidence from *Growing Up In Ireland: The Lives of 13 Year Olds* demonstrates how the risk of socio-emotional and behavioural problems is higher in the context of social disadvantage such as lower levels of parental education, lower income and lower social class (Williams *et al.*, 2018).

Skills development includes vital socio-emotional skills such as perseverance, self-esteem, and sociability. Social and emotional skills play an important role in a variety of social outcomes and subjective well-being and have a significant impact on improving subjective well-being and health-related outcomes, and in reducing anti-social behaviours. In addition, conscientiousness, sociability, and emotional stability are significant dimensions of social and emotional skills which influence child outcomes, while there is also evidence to suggest that the development of social and emotional skills are more relevant to social outcomes such as depression, obesity, and behavioural problems than the development of cognitive skills (OECD, 2015e).⁴⁵

The early development of critical skills and subsequent development is dependent on a range of individual and structural factors which is often beyond the scope of young people themselves. Many young people are faced with structural-level risk factors, such as poverty, low-resourced communities and schools, and exposure to community violence. The relationship between contexts (family, community, school), skills (cognitive, social and emotional), and social progress (labour market, civic participation, health) are crucial in adolescent development and outcomes (OECD, 2016a; Foster *et al.*, 2017). According to the OECD, for example, it is the role of teachers, parents, and policy-makers to improve the formal and informal learning environments in which children develop by actively engaging in skill development in the domains for which they are responsible (OECD, 2015e).

Emerging adulthood is a later crucial phase of adolescent development, and presents a different set of challenges and opportunities for young people considered vulnerable or at risk due to early experiences of adversity. Even though they may lack maturity vulnerable young people are more likely to find transitions to adulthood accelerated and their adolescence compressed (Stein, 2012). This has led commentators to theorise that vulnerable and at risk young people experience an alternate pathway into adulthood (Berzin, Singer and Hokanson, 2014).

5.2 FAMILY

The influence of family, community, school, and society on adolescence involves the complex interface between intra- and inter-personal factors and structural conditions. Families are understood as dynamic and complex systems whose responses to adverse events have important implications for individual, relational, and overall family health and well-being. Families can shape a young person's social and emotional development by providing guidance, developing habits, imparting values, and sharing expectations (Champine *et al.*, 2018). Family structure and family socio-economic status, for example, are associated with important differences in child outcomes (Williams *et al.*, 2018).

Thus parents assume a great responsibility in their children's skill formation as they shape many of the environmental factors that influence their development. The dominant determinant of a child's early learning is attributed to the quality of the home learning environment. According to the OECD, for instance, the engagement which families have with their young children is more influential than parental income levels or employment status (OECD, 2016a).

Supportive and warm families who provide stimulating activities increase a child's emotional, social, and cognitive skills. Children are also socialized based on their parents' values, attitudes, goals, and behavioural models (OECD, 2015e). Parents with high levels of knowledge and skills are better able to create supportive home learning environments and may use their knowledge and experience to guide a child's own educational choices. Children, moreover, can benefit from closer involvement of fathers and enjoy higher cognitive and emotional outcomes and physical health in cases where fathers participate more fully in childcare and family life (OECD, 2016a).

However, families can face complex multiple challenges and difficulties. Research highlights the distinct and potentially overlapping sources of adversity which families can face, including economic resources and socio-economic status, as well as education, temperament, social skills challenges, psychopathology, and health. Educated parents, for example, place a higher value on education and are more equipped to promote their children's educational success while children who possess higher amounts of family cultural capital are also more likely to successful in

⁴⁵ These skills, it is claimed, improve behaviours and lifestyles including reducing levels of smoking, alcohol consumption, and the prevalence of eating disorders.

school (Kallio, Kauppinen and Erola, 2016). The challenges experienced by families coping with chronic illness or the death of a child or parent include poor quality of life, stress, poor psychological adjustment, potentially problematic family management style, and low future orientation. Moreover, the stresses of dealing with illness or the death of a family member may be exacerbated by loss of income, strained relationships, and disruptions in daily functioning (Champine *et al.*, 2018).

Youth socio-economic status (SES) is considered a key element of development and is usually derived from parental education, income, occupational class, or family affluence. Parents with a higher standard of living tend to transmit better educational, ability, and non-cognitive skills to their children, which ultimately also provide them with enhanced employment success and higher income status. Higher family SES is also thought to protect against engagement in risk behaviours through greater access to material and psychological protective factors, including positive parenting (Plenty, 2018). However, young people growing up in poverty often have restricted access to the out-of-school enrichment activities which are important for generating the ‘soft’ skills which support post-school transitions (OECD, 2016a).

Moreover, poorer families may require financial help which encourages children to move in the labour market or earn income for the family at an earlier age than children of higher means (Skattebol and Redmond, 2019). Perceived economic pressure and stress within the home also can have negative effects on children with low financial resources and poverty connected to the anti-social behaviour of adolescents; behaviour that in many ways mediates the effects of parental poverty on educational attainment (Kallio, Kauppinen and Erola, 2016).

5.2.1 Intergenerational Transmission of Family Outcomes

Research has emphasised the intersecting influence of family, school and community on young people’s development, and which influences their opportunities to participate in out-of-school activities, their knowledge about education and employment, and their capacity to develop valued skillsets and aspirations (Skattebol and Redmond, 2019). The influence of parents and family on child development highlights the prospect of the intergenerational transmission of outcomes within families.

Poverty, receiving social welfare, low education attainment, having children at a young age, and unemployment are also considered “social problems” which can be “transmitted” from one generation to the next (Kallio, Kauppinen and Erola, 2016). The two broad categories of transmission concerning parents’ social origins and their children’s level of educational attainment are commonly referred to as “genetic” and “environmental” transmission (Kallio, Kauppinen and Erola, 2016).⁴⁶

Research on intergenerational social mobility and reproduction has found that social status, whether measured through education, occupation, or income level, is transmitted from one generation to the next in every society, albeit to varying degrees. The study of the transmission of income and social class across generations has consistently confirmed that people tend to live in similar economic conditions to their parents. For example, the higher the education level of parents, the higher that of their children. *In It Together* showed how high income inequality reduces the capacity of the poorest 40% of the population to invest in their own skills and education, and in those of their children. In fact, in 2012, one in six young adults aged 25-34 attained a lower level of education than their parents (OECD, 2015a).

Moreover, irrespective of the European state in focus, social origin and community seem to have a strong impact on the outcomes of children.⁴⁷ Research from Finland, for example, indicates that social disadvantages are intergenerationally inherited, with family background strongly associated with early school-leaving and the receipt of social welfare assistance. In terms of family characteristics, parental receipt of social welfare was the most strongly associated with children’s social disadvantages (Vauhkonen *et al.*, 2017).

In addition to material and economic resources, it is contended that cultural resources and assets inherited from one’s family of origin can be an important source of social inequality. In this view, cultural aspects of reproduction, particularly the inheritance of education and the way in which education is intertwined with embodied cultural capital, are intrinsic to the reproduction of social inequalities.

⁴⁶ However, the specific transmission mechanisms of this disadvantage is not well understood and requires further research (Kallio, Kauppinen and Erola, 2016).

⁴⁷ This is true of Nordic Welfare states also which have rather small income differences and comprehensive welfare benefits including free school education and universal high quality day care services for small children.

Young people's education pathways therefore are strongly dependent on their ability to draw on the range of resources available in that socio-economic status and family resources play a central role in this process (Butler and Muir, 2017). The effectiveness of the upbringing and education of a child, can rest on an individual's own upbringing and education, ultimately extending and including pre-school family upbringing at home (Kallunki and Purhonen, 2017).

There is also a potential link between family and violence and criminal activity. For example, evidence suggests that violent offending is more concentrated within nuclear families than non-violent offending, and that the intergenerational transmission of violent offending is more pronounced than that of non-violent offending.

For example, a study which examines the intergenerational transmission of violent offending across three consecutive generations in the Netherlands found that a considerable number of men from all three generations were convicted for at least one violent crime, while the prevalence of violent offending in women was relatively low. Paternal violent offending during a son's childhood and adolescence increases the likelihood of him becoming violent. This relationship is often concentrated on father and son due to the low levels violent offending amongst women, and suggests that exposure to paternal violence plays an important role in the intergenerational transmission of violent offending (Van de Weijer, Bijleveld and Blokland, 2014).⁴⁸

As well as combating child poverty, measures to reduce the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage are needed to lower overall inequality and increase parities of opportunity. Enabling children born into disadvantage and poverty to transcend the circumstances of their birth and family necessitates ensuring that they develop the cognitive, intellectual, and behavioural skills needed to succeed at school and subsequent employment (Gatzke-Kopp and Creavey, 2017).

5.3 NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY EFFECTS

Children and families live in communities and neighbourhoods with distinct characteristics and resources. Interest in studying the effects of social environments, such as neighbourhood residence on child and adolescent well-being and educational achievement, has recently grown (Linnansaari-Rajalin *et al.*, 2015). In addition to family, the influence of neighbourhoods and communities on the life outcomes, and the extent to which disadvantaged communities impose further disadvantages on their disadvantaged residents, is now the subject of lively and contentious international debate (Lupton and Kintrea, 2011).

Communities as local environments provide a set of risk and protective factors which influence the well-being of community members (Chaskin, 2008). Well-functioning communities provide a range of material and psychological resources which promote individual resilience and enhance quality of life along with psychological well-being (McNamara, Stevenson and Muldoon, 2013). According to Sampson, important aspects of life are disproportionately concentrated by place and spatial arrangements constitute a fundamental organising dimension of social inequality with locally embedded social networks within disadvantaged communities becoming part of the process whereby poverty and class inequalities are reproduced (Sampson, Schachner and Mare, 2017). From this perspective, neighbourhoods are theorised as opportunity structures or pools of resources for living which constitute spatially defined distribution networks through which resources are available. As relational spaces linked to where people live, work and play, they inevitably contribute to the circumstances of everyday life (Moya and Yáñez, 2016). Marginalised communities therefore, are environments where spatial and structural inequalities are experienced. The community in which an individual lives, and the characteristics of that community, are likely to induce a multiplicity of effects upon individuals and their outcomes.

For example, 'soft' non-cognitive skills, such as the personality traits, goals, motivations and preferences which are valued in schools, labour markets, and inform aspirations, can be developed in local environments (OECD, 2015e). Individuals from poorer communities may have less geographical mobility than more affluent counterparts and are therefore more likely to perceive choices as those which exist in the immediate context (Gallagher, Pettigrew and Muldoon, 2015). The peers, social norms, experiences with violence and crime and physical community resources provided by the community are likely to differ vastly between deprived and non-deprived areas (Galster, 2012; McDool, 2017).

⁴⁸ However, this relationship is not well understood in the existing empirical literature due to the absence of longitudinal research. Longitudinal data on the criminal behaviour of multiple consecutive generations is necessary to demonstrate this connection but is expensive and time consuming (Van de Weijer, Bijleveld and Blokland, 2014).

Poorer outcomes can result in marginalised communities developing negative, stigmatised identities, with living and growing up in disadvantaged areas often perceived by non-residents as discrediting (Warr, 2005; Ward *et al.*, 2017). For many, stigma is more than a negative group stereotype, and is rather an active, corrosive process which undermines relations between communities and public institutions (Stevenson, McNamara and Muldoon, 2014). Stigma can lead to deprived areas being described as a distinct subculture which exists separately from the rest of society. At its most extreme, this stigmatisation can have a profound impact on a range of psychological and social factors including health, education, mental and physical illness, as well as an accumulating reduction in life chances (McNamara, Stevenson and Muldoon, 2013). Neighbourhood stigmatisation, or the attribution of negative characteristics to people on the basis of their area of residence, has been identified as a significant barrier to public service-use on the part of members of socially devalued and excluded groups. Stigmatisation can negatively impact interactions between service-users and service providers, including levels of trust. Stigmatisation therefore, may lead to the under-utilisation of community and government services, increasing the marginalisation and perpetuation of disadvantage among already deprived communities (Stevenson, McNamara and Muldoon, 2014).

5.3.1 Community, Neighbourhoods and Young People

Neighbourhood poverty or disadvantage places children and adolescents at risk for social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. So called “neighbourhood effects” have been associated with outcomes such as education, unemployment, health, and deviant behaviour (Nieuwenhuis *et al.*, 2017). Severe social disadvantage significantly constrains individual agency in young peoples’ occupational and life choices. For many young people living in the deprived urban neighbourhoods, social mobility is blocked when several factors are combined: unemployment in the regular labour market is high; negative discrimination is frequent in employment (especially for young people regarded as belonging to ethnic minorities); and the benefits of formal education are no longer self-evident (Baillergeau and Hoijsink, 2010).

Many young people face problems in trying to escape the intergenerational cycle of poverty and risk within local communities. This is supported by a growing body of literature which demonstrates how neighbourhood disadvantage in childhood is associated with a range of adolescent outcomes such as “deviant” behaviour, educational attainment, and cognitive development (Kleinepiers and van Ham, 2018). One of the most consistent empirical findings in support of this correlation is the association between neighbourhood socio-economic status (SES) and adolescent development (Anderson, Leventhal and Dupéré, 2014).

For example, analysis of the Longitudinal Survey of Young People in England (LSYPE) demonstrated how individuals living in a deprived area are less likely to obtain the expected educational outcomes at age 16 relative to characteristically similar individuals living in non-deprived communities. Furthermore, individuals with educated parents are disadvantaged by living in a deprived community to a greater extent than individuals with less educated parents in a non-deprived community (McDool, 2017).

The literature also demonstrates that young peoples’ view of what they can and should do is determined by their wider perception of the social and cultural context in which they live (Gallagher, Pettigrew and Muldoon, 2015). Neighbourhood disadvantage and poverty may be central to children’s functioning because it erodes neighbourhood institutions and social cohesion, which can cause a breakdown in shared norms and values regarding young people’s behaviour. Neighbourhood and community are an important social context for young people since they provide access to resources, opportunities, and interactions that influence their development. In this view, the opportunity structures that support young people to progress to adulthood are not only accessed through school or family, but also through participation in organised out-of-school activities, such as sports, music, and drama, which are typically available at a local level.

Therefore, the way in which young people perceive and negotiate access to locally available resources can influence their overall opportunities and aspirations (Butler and Muir, 2017). However, according to Nieuwenhuis *et al.* (2017) it is important not to overgeneralize the influence of neighbourhood effects, but to relate individuals to their neighbourhood, and to examine the differential effects of neighbourhood characteristics for different people (Nieuwenhuis *et al.*, 2017). The existing empirical literature on neighbourhood effects reveals a dearth of knowledge regarding how young people access opportunities for education, play, and work at a local level (Skattebol and Redmond, 2019).

5.4 FORMAL EDUCATION

Education is a key determinant of adult life chances and, as such, participation in formal education is a core component of adolescent development. According to the European Commission, education is a tool which can promote social mobility and break cycles of disadvantage and poverty (European Commission, 2012). Improving young people's performance in school can also encourage healthier lifestyles and greater participation in democratic institutions and other civil society initiatives and organisations. Education is further associated with good health outcomes and higher levels of social support and inclusion (European Commission, 2012). According to the OECD, education improves individuals' socio-economic outcomes and fosters social progress. Better-educated people are more likely to be employed, to report good health, to lead healthier lifestyles, to participate more actively in society, and to exhibit higher levels of life satisfaction than less education peers (OECD, 2015e).⁴⁹ Many economic and social problems are linked to low levels of educational attainment and skills. Furthermore, crime and other illegal activities may decrease since higher educated young people tend to be less involved in criminality (Schleicher, 2014).

Results from the OECD's *Survey of Adult Skills* study demonstrates the importance of literacy and numeracy skills, and qualifications in predicting labour market outcomes, health, volunteering, and political participation (OECD, 2016b). Education and the development of skills is critical to success in the current labour market which requires advanced cognitive skills (critical thinking and problem-solving), social-emotional skills (such as conscientiousness, goal orientation, and ability to work in teams) and up-to-date job-specific technical skills (OECD, 2015e; World Bank, 2018).

However, as previously discussed, the power of education is delimited in cases where a young person's cognitive, emotional, and social skills are not developed at an early age. Educational performance and attainment result from the interaction of young people's social background and their cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Ryberg *et al.*, 2017). Across much of the EU, education does not act as an engine of social mobility and children from poorer backgrounds often fail to develop key cognitive skills. A growing body of national and international evidence has underscored the link between poverty, socio-economic status, and educational attainment. According to the World Bank, for example, low income youth are less likely to acquire basic proficiency in reading, maths, and science. Much of the skill-divide among young people is a consequence of students' socio-economic background (World Bank, 2018). There is also evidence to demonstrate how the struggle of people in poverty to make ends meet can divert attention from other issues such as monitoring the learning progress of their children. Poverty can undermine student achievement in a number of ways including resources for books (World Bank, 2018).

Education outcomes are influenced by the performance and capacity of institutions which can also be influenced by place and geography. According to the OECD, attendance at schools located in disadvantaged areas can reinforce student's socio-economic inequalities. This provides a double handicap for many young people at risk since schools are unable to mitigate the negative impact of a child's disadvantaged background.⁵⁰ According to the World Bank and OECD, moreover, inequality in educational outcomes is also linked to the number of young people clustered together in "disadvantaged schools". Students in more equal, less segregated education systems throughout Europe, tend to perform better on aggregate (OECD, 2015b; World Bank, 2018).

It is claimed that inequality of opportunity to build and develop vital foundational cognitive and social-emotional skills and up-to-date, job-specific technical skills, will lead to a persistence of inequality over time, as well as hamper long term economic growth. Consequently, disadvantaged young people are at further risk of being squeezed out of the labour market in the face of technological change and automation (World Bank, 2018).

5.4.1 NEET Young People

In the past decade, there has been a particular focus on NEET young people or the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training. The renewed focus on NEET and early school-leaving is partly a consequence of high youth unemployment rates and the fact that the youth-to-adulthood transition has become

⁴⁹ Empirically, this relationship holds for age, gender and socio-economic background (ibid).

⁵⁰ OECD research demonstrates significant differences in the case of two students, one from a socio-economically average family in which one student attends an advantaged school, where most students come from more affluent families, and the other student attends a more disadvantaged school. On average across OECD countries, the first student is expected to perform 32 points higher in reading than the second student (Schleicher, 2014).

increasingly complex (González Pandiella, 2013). The transition from secondary to higher education and employment is an important milestone for young people in their transition to adulthood and independence (Denny, 2014). Success or discontinuities in these school-to-work transitions strongly affect occupational careers and behaviour later in life (Holtmann, Menze and Solga, 2017). However, all young people are vulnerable in the labour market and young people with low educational attainment face particularly high risks of unemployment and exclusion (González Pandiella, 2013).

Early school-leaving is defined as the proportion of young adults with lower secondary education or less who are not currently in the education system (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018). The current rate of dropout among young adults in Ireland is very low, at less than five per cent for both Irish and non-Irish, partly as a result of sustained policy efforts to combat educational disadvantage in Ireland (Smyth, McCoy and Kingston, 2015). However, early school-leaving remains a persistent problem among young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and disadvantaged communities throughout Europe, and including the NEIC. National and international research demonstrate the negative consequences of early school-leaving at both individual and societal level and its relationship to difficult life trajectories (O’Gorman, Salmon and Murphy, 2016). It is associated with adverse outcomes for young people in terms of social integration, economic prospects, and future health, and included a higher likelihood of long term unemployment, and even prison. Research has also highlighted links between internalising disorders or symptoms of depression and anxiety and early school-leaving (Melkevik *et al.*, 2016).

Early school-leaving is a consequence of student disengagement from school. Significant factors of disengagement include the lack of development of key cognitive and non-cognitive skills, low socio-economic status, complex family situations, social difficulties including bullying by peers, gender issues, language problems, cultural, racial or ethnic barriers, learning difficulties, mental illness, and carer responsibilities (Tarabini *et al.*, 2018).⁵¹ Growing up in families and communities experiencing poverty leads to many risk factors that may undermine children’s school readiness, educational attainment, and physical and mental well-being. These risks include the quantity and quality of parental educational, health, and employment resources, parental mental and physical health, the home environment, and the community’s norms and collective sense of efficacy (Tarabini *et al.*, 2018). Young people who live in households which experience such challenges often have difficulty in complying with many of the cultural expectations of mainstream, middle-class schools, while others may struggle with school-rules for reasons that range from behaviours associated with special needs (McGregor *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, children in disadvantaged communities are often poorly equipped to succeed in early school environments, triggering negative trajectories that can extend through life (Tatlow-Golden *et al.*, 2016).

In addition to young people and their family circumstances and backgrounds, the accurate identification of the causes of early school-leaving necessitates a holistic view of the school context and education system (O’Gorman, Salmon and Murphy, 2016). A growing body of national and international research highlights the complex interplay of individual, family, and school factors, in shaping patterns of early school-leaving (Tarabini *et al.*, 2018). For many vulnerable young people at risk of early school-leaving, these issues can be intensified by a host of school-related needs that may be unavailable or unguaranteed. From this perspective, the primary causes of early school-leaving are intrinsic to the school system itself and actually arise due to structural and contextual flaws in educational systems (Smyth, 2005; McGregor *et al.*, 2015). The nature of the school climate, in terms of the day-to-day interactions between teachers and students, may also significantly influence a range of student outcomes, including early school-leaving, academic achievement, academic self-image, stress levels, and intended and actual post-school pathways. Thus, schools are not neutral spaces, but dynamic settings that both shape and constrain opportunities for student success (O’Gorman, Salmon and Murphy, 2016). As such, schools act as key institutional fields in influencing young people’s educational dispositions and decisions (Tarabini *et al.*, 2018).

A systematic review of the literature on early school leaving identified a range of school factors to continued student engagement including flexible behavioural supports, embedding student culture within the school, the school as a safe space, and fostering a sense of community (O’Gorman, Salmon and Murphy, 2016). Educators therefore can influence and alter school conditions to support student retention. School retention can be further enhanced through developing the culture and environment of the school and by catering for the needs and behaviours of young people. School activities can cultivate a strong sense of community for young people by exploring culturally relevant perspectives, while teachers can infuse this knowledge into their classroom practices and interactions with students. Furthermore, behaviour support should also consider the individual needs of students. Rather than unilaterally opposing strict rules

51 Student dispositions, academic abilities, family factors and life circumstances contribute to the likelihood of school completion (ibid).

and procedures, students can benefit from the opportunity to explain their circumstances and negotiate agreements with staff regarding consequences. Indeed, staff can also benefit from developing specific skills to disengage from conflict and instead connect with reluctant students (O’Gorman, Salmon and Murphy, 2016).

Similarly, the predominant focus on NEET is criticised on various fronts which include overlooking the heterogeneity of young people’s experiences, framing them as “the problem”, and under-playing the complexity of transitions into work (Egdell and Graham, 2017). Research demonstrates how many young NEET people feel marginalised and perceive themselves to be viewed negatively by formal and traditional civic and community structures. This perspective affects young people’s belief in equal opportunities and results in the development of varying resilience strategies, “the most typical being isolation from and resentment to these structures” (Miller *et al.*, 2015). Thus, the attribution of NEET status purely to individual disposition and choice, while not accounting for wider labour market structures, is problematic. Interventions designed to address youth unemployment, should consider not only the individual but wider economic and labour market conditions (Egdell and Graham, 2017).

5.5 MENTAL HEALTH, DRUGS AND DUAL DIAGNOSIS

Youth is a period of change which can create challenges for young people as they progress to adulthood. The complexity of this can result in many young people requiring mental health support (McMahon *et al.*, 2018). Mental health problems are widely understood as barriers to progression in life, transitions to adulthood, and success in education and employment. A range of risk and protective factors (individual, family and social) exist and can affect the levels of depression and anxiety experienced by adolescents. A comprehensive body of research has identified a range of socio-demographic, psychosocial, and risk-taking factors, which determine the age of onset, severity, and persistence of depression and anxiety disorders (Dooley, Fitzgerald and Giollabhui, 2015).

Socio-demographic correlates of depression and anxiety include age, gender, family socio-economic status, family composition, poor parental mental health, and stressful life events. Additional psychosocial factors associated with depression and anxiety in young people include low levels of family cohesion, high levels of parental criticism, and low levels of peer and school connectedness (Dooley, Fitzgerald and Giollabhui, 2015). Mental health disorders are also linked to community. Young people in urban deprived areas, including Ireland, are considered particularly vulnerable to mental health (and substance-use) disorders. It is difficult for young people living in deprived areas to distance themselves from negative behaviour, and the stressful circumstances of everyday life can impact negatively upon progress in education and employment as well as including in society. Consequently, mental health disorders can push young people further away from social and educational development (Schaffalitzky *et al.*, 2015). As previously discussed, in these communities, residents experience social exclusion, including multiple and interconnected forms of deprivations such as poverty, unemployment, educational disadvantage, and poor housing (O’Gorman, 2016).

The treatment of mental health disorders among young people and timely access to services is critical. Research indicates that as symptoms progress, it becomes more difficult for young people to seek help. Early intervention is effective not only in terms of reduced costs to public expenditure, but also in improving the lives of those who struggle daily with emotional pain, high levels of anxiety, and addiction. Moreover, there is also potential stigma around mental health and fear of seeking help. Young adults often turn to family, friends, and the internet before engaging with a health-care professional. Consequently, many young people can become socially isolated through fear of stigmatisation (Schaffalitzky *et al.* 2015).

Recent data illustrates the extent of mental difficulties experienced by young people in Ireland. The most recent census data (2016) shows that the percentage of people with a psychological or emotional condition increased by almost 30 per cent between 2011 and 2016 (CSO, 2017a). The *Healthy Ireland* survey reported that almost 10 per cent of the Irish population over age 15 experience a “probable mental health problem” (PMHP) at any given time. This situation is more severe for children and young people, with almost 20 per cent of young people aged 19-24 years having had a mental health disorder and 15% of children aged 11-13 years also having experienced a mental health disorder (Mental Health Reform, 2018).⁵²

⁵² Further, research has demonstrated how students attending Youthreach in Ireland experience depression; self-esteem and body image issues; aggression and anger management issues; anxiety; substance abuse; self-harm; relationship difficulty; lack of personal care and coping skills for dealing with life events (McHugh, 2015).

5.5.1 Substance Misuse

Available evidence indicates a strong correlation between mental health problems and substance misuse including excessive alcohol consumption and drug problems. This is referred to as “dual diagnosis” (DD) or the comorbidity of a mental illness with a substance misuse disorder (Wall, Lambert and Horan, 2018). In such cases, problems in one domain can perpetuate problems in the other (James, Smyth and Apantaku-Olajide, 2013). The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) has estimated that polydrug use, including the combination of drugs and alcohol, and sometimes medicines and non-controlled substances, has become the dominant pattern of drug-use in Europe (EMCDDA, 2017). It has been argued that the misuse of prescription medication is at epidemic proportions (Schmitz, 2016) and concern has been expressed regarding high levels of benzodiazepine prescriptions globally (Wall, Lambert and Horan, 2018). Benzodiazepines are powerful prescription medications used for a wide range of indications, including anxiety, insomnia, and epilepsy. Recreational use of benzodiazepines can have acute and chronic effects, especially in formative stages of life, such as adolescence. The effects of benzodiazepine misuse impact the individual, their family, and society as a whole, through hospitalization, substance treatment, and crime (K. Murphy *et al.*, 2018).

Research within drug literature shows that early consumption is one of the factors that can lead to progressive dependence (Swift *et al.*, 2008). Young people who start experimenting with drugs at an early age are more likely to engage in polysubstance use, to have problematic use later in life, to suffer from health problems, and to experience psychological problems (Murphy *et al.*, 2013). However, while many young people experiment with drugs, only a minority become dependent on drugs in young adulthood.

Recent research has demonstrated the association of drug-use with depression and anxiety (Dooley, Fitzgerald and Giollabhui, 2015). Increasingly, addiction is considered a self-medication response to trauma and/or mental health (Murphy *et al.*, 2013).

Vulnerable young people who develop drug-dependence are more likely to report anxiety and depressive disorders, psychotic symptoms and disorders, and suicide ideation and attempts. Research into drug-use among young people in Ireland highlighted two main drivers reported in the use of BZDs: to avoid negative emotions; and various daily stressors.

Conflict in the lives of young people is a core motivating factor with drug-use serving as a key coping strategy in the absence of the ability to integrate and regulate their emotions (K. Murphy *et al.*, 2018).⁵³

According to the EMCDDA, those most vulnerable to drug-dependence are socially disadvantaged young people and those with family members and peers who use drugs. Such vulnerable young people may encounter difficulties accessing treatment or, where there are dedicated services for under-18s, may have difficulties in the transition to adult treatment. They are also more likely to be early school-leavers and unable to secure employment (EMCDDA, 2017).

5.5.2 Substance Misuse, Mental Health and Young Offending

Children who are engaged in the criminal justice system are disproportionately drawn from poor or working-class backgrounds and experience often multiple vulnerabilities (Bateman, 2017). Various psychosocial factors, such as an unstable family environment, attentional deficits, and poor emotional regulation, are established predictors of offending behaviour (Brooks and Khan, 2015). Research has started to consolidate the expansive current state of evidence into the different factors of significance for the development of offending over the life-course, defining 10 explanatory processes for persistence in and desistance from offending and adult-onset offending which focus on the phase of young adulthood. These factors include brain maturation, cognitive changes, life circumstances, behavioural risk factors, mental illness and substance-abuse, neighbourhood or community, and the response of the justice system (Loeber *et al.*, 2012).

Research draws attention to the relationship between mental health, young offending, and substance misuse, and the overlap in populations involved in recovery and desistance. Young people in the youth justice system present with

⁵³ The study also highlighted numerous negative effects associated with the use of BZDs including: blackouts, memory loss, poor school attendance, reduced engagement in hobbies and activities, and poor relationships with family members (*ibid*).

often significant and diverse mental health issues along with other complex needs. Furthermore, the availability of mental health supports is deemed essential to desistance and transitioning effectively to adulthood (McElvaney and Tatlow-Golden, 2016). The desistance journey from crime is more complex for young offenders who misuse drugs compared to non-using offenders. The differences in the onset, development, and motivations of drug misuse, as well as differences in the nature of the relationship between drug misuse and crime, often influence the desistance process and the elements determining desistance and recovery (Colman and Vander Laenen, 2017). A number of studies have identified parallels between recovery from substance misuse and desistance from offending (Best and Savic, 2014; Best *et al.*, 2017).

The intersection of offending and problem substance use is not only related to the co-occurrence of the two behaviours; it is also about societal responses. Desistance and recovery are aligned to access to opportunity. Thus interventions must not only inspire hope and belief in recovery but also provide access to community resources (including positive social groups and networks) which support meaningful and lasting change. The odds of sustained desistance improve when ex-offenders develop social links with people in different social hierarchies which facilitate access to wider social resources. Getting jobs, taking up new hobbies, and being exposed to new experiences, all assist young people in ‘moving on’ and building a new life, rather than merely existing (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016). Recovery pathways are initiated and enhanced by positive social networks and underlying changes in social identity are associated with the transition from stigmatised and excluded groups to positive and pro-social groups (Best *et al.*, 2017). Changes in social networks, and the underpinning changes in personal and social identity, are strong predictors of desistance from crime and recovery from substance-use (Best *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, community cohesion is an important predictor of desistance since community factors influence both social/cultural capital and the collective efficacy of communities in binding its members to social and legal norms (Best, Irving and Albertson, 2017).

5.6 INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY TRAUMA

A growing body of evidence demonstrates how traumatic life experiences can have a significant impact on people’s lives, and increase the risk of poorer physical and mental health and poorer social, educational, and criminal justice outcomes (Maynard, Farina and Dell, 2017). While trauma is a common phenomenon, its effects on people often remain hidden. Trauma has no age category and can affect people at any stage of their lives.

However, particular sections of the population, including children and young people, are considered more vulnerable to trauma, and risks of poorer outcomes are often compounded by the difficulties that those affected by trauma can encounter in accessing and using services (Champine *et al.*, 2018; Loomis, 2018).

It is known that the effects of trauma are cumulative. Thus youth who experience a greater number of traumatic events are more at risk for adverse outcomes and more complex symptoms through adulthood (Maynard, Farina and Dell, 2017). For many people in contact with mental health services who have experienced physical or sexual trauma, there is a strong link between childhood trauma and adult mental distress (Sweeney *et al.*, 2016).

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening, which has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. Traumatic events have been defined as “an event, a series of events or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening” (SAMHSA, 2014). Trauma is divided into two broad types: type 1 trauma usually relates to single incident events, such as rapes, assaults or serious accidents; type 2 or “complex trauma” relates to forms of trauma and abuse usually experienced interpersonally, which persists over time and is often difficult to escape (*ibid*). Complex trauma can evolve in various forms including, but not limited to, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, addictive behaviours, emotion dysregulation, reactive aggression, dissociation, and/or serious offending behaviours (Rapp, 2016).

Early adversity affects the developmental trajectory of young people increasing the risk of mental and physical health problems in adulthood. Further, there is growing evidence of the impact of grief from bereavement and loss of a close family member. The risk of suicide, deliberate self-harm, and psychiatric illness is heightened following the loss of a close relative, especially in susceptible subgroups such as young people (Guldin *et al.*, 2017). Early exposure to trauma places young children at risk of impacted developmental outcomes, both in the short-and long-term. Early trauma and adversity is linked to impaired socio-emotional development, below-average academic literacy skills,

and behaviour problems, and increased rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and internalising symptoms in adulthood. For example, young people who have experienced trauma are at significant risk for impairments across various cognitive functions. These include IQ, memory, attention and language/verbal ability, poorer academic performance and school-related behaviours such as discipline, early school-leaving and attendance, and higher rates of behavioural problems and internalising symptoms (Maynard, Farina and Dell, 2017).

Complex trauma which occurs during infancy and childhood can have a significant impact on the developing nervous systems of young children and, if not addressed, can lead to relational, emotional, and behavioural concerns throughout childhood, adolescence, and even adulthood. It can also lead to impairment in capacities to emotionally self-regulate and to relate or attach to others in an adaptive manner, and is often experienced in the context of close relationships (Howard, 2018). The experience of interpersonal trauma, particularly in childhood can therefore disrupt the ability to form and maintain healthy and supportive relationships with others. Furthermore, early childhood trauma is associated with greater psychological distress in adulthood compared to later-onset childhood trauma, demonstrating the critical period of exposure in early childhood (Loomis, 2018).

Trauma-surviving young people can develop self-protective behaviours such as withdrawal, flight, or anger responses.

Such young people are at higher risk for developing child traumatic stress reactions that can have both short- and long-term implications for their development, relationships, behaviour, mood, and cognitions (Walsh, Conradi and Pauter, 2018). A recent study by Public Health Wales, an NHS Trust, found that trauma increases the likelihood of young people being involved in the criminal justice system, of using cannabis, high-risk drinking, and being victims of violence themselves (Welsh Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, 2015). In addition to individuals, traumatic stress can differentially affect subsystems within the entire family, and can impact upon family processes, structures, relationships, and coping, which can further be shaped by cultural and broader contextual norms (Champine *et al.*, 2018).

More recently, there has been an expansion in conceptualising trauma from the individual level to the collective level, typically within the community. Community trauma is understood as a toxic or negative event or condition which disrupts an entire neighbourhood or population, affecting social groups or neighbourhoods long subjected to interpersonal violence, structural violence, and historical harms (Pinderhughes, Davis and Williams, 2015). Research suggests that the causes of community trauma lie in the historic and ongoing root causes of social inequities, including poverty (Falkenburger, Arena and Wolin, 2018). Research further outlines how traumatic events are more frequently experienced by people in low-socio-economic groups and minority ethnic communities (Sweeney *et al.*, 2016). Marginalized communities are particularly vulnerable to community trauma as they live with the daily stressors of violence and concentrated poverty, which can stem from historic and structural conditions of racism, exclusion, and isolation. Communities that experience high rates of violence can be plagued with high rates of trauma, even following a reduction in violent events or incidents (Pinderhughes *et al.*, 2015). Unlike a natural disaster where the wider community is quick to respond with assistance, communities that experience entrenched violence and crime are often isolated from the rest of society. The whole community can be labelled as dangerous or unstable and those in neighbouring communities may even blame victims, assuming they are involved in gang or criminal activity (Peachy and Cutts, 2016).

In response, trauma-informed practices or approaches are increasingly incorporated into public institutions and services, such as schools, social services, and health. This, in part, is informed by a growing awareness of the potential for current (non-trauma informed) practices to re-traumatise individuals with trauma histories (Loomis, 2018). Trauma Informed Practices (TIP) or Trauma Informed Approaches (TIA) refer to approaches which integrate awareness of traumatic stress throughout an institution or service in order to enhance the quality and delivery of services provided to trauma-exposed individuals. A comprehensive conceptualisation of TIP recognises the signs, symptoms, and potential widespread impacts of traumatic stress, and responds by incorporating understanding of this experience into relevant policies and practices (Champine *et al.*, 2018). According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a trauma-informed programme, organisation, or system, is one that:

- 1) realises the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery
- 2) recognises the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved
- 3) responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
- 4) seeks to actively resist re-traumatisation of both persons served and staff

The six key principles of a trauma-informed approach include:

- 1) safety
- 2) trustworthiness and transparency
- 3) peer support
- 4) collaboration and mutuality
- 5) empowerment, voice and choice;
- 6) cultural, historical and gender issues

(SAMHSA, 2014)

In Scotland, the public sector now proceeds on the basis that everyone has a role to play in understanding and responding to people affected by trauma by engaging in a trauma-informed approach. This approach is mindful that those in most need of services may also be the hardest to reach and most unlikely to engage effectively with them. This does not mean that every public servant is required to be a trauma expert, but rather that all public servants, in the context of their own role and work remit, have a unique and essential trauma-informed role to play in responding to people who are affected by trauma (NHS Education for Scotland, 2017). Such practice is not designed to treat trauma-related difficulties. Instead it seeks to address the barriers that those affected by trauma can experience when accessing the care, support, and treatment they require (for example in health, education, housing, or employment) (ibid).

A workforce that is trained to recognise how an individual may be affected by trauma and adapt practice accordingly in order to minimise distress and maximise trust can engage in two important tasks. First, the workforce supports the recovery of those affected by trauma by providing them with a different experience of relationships; one in which they are offered safety rather than threat, choice rather than control, collaboration rather than coercion, and trust rather than betrayal. Each encounter is considered an opportunity to reverse the association between trauma and relationships as an important part of recovery. Second, the workforce minimises the barriers to receiving care, support, and interventions that those affected by trauma can experience when memories of trauma are triggered by aspects of the service or interactions with staff (NHS Education for Scotland, 2017) .

Finally, there has been significant growth in the promotion and provision of trauma-informed approaches within formal education, with many studies justifying school-based initiatives internationally (Howard, 2018). Schools are increasingly used as intervention points to address childhood trauma due to the well-established links between childhood trauma exposure and poor child well-being outcomes (Loomis, 2018). Furthermore, the role for formal education is an acknowledgement of the amount of time students spend in school and the malleable nature of young people of school age.

SUMMARY

This section explored key factors in adolescent development and barriers to smooth progression to adulthood with reference to the theoretical and empirical literature. Adolescent development involves the complex interplay of individual and structural factors. The development and progression of young people is influenced by family, school, community, and the wider economy. Issues and vulnerabilities experienced by young people that impede adolescent development, including mental health, trauma, and substance misuse, are often interlinked and may call for more holistic interventions.

6 MIGRANT AND MINORITY ETHNIC YOUNG PEOPLE

This section explores key issues in the lives of migrant and minority ethnic young people resident in Ireland and the inner city and barriers to their inclusion and integration. Migration is integral to modern life in Dublin and young people are central to this process since there is a growing and diverse cohort of migrants and non-Irish born residents in the NEIC area. However, local services and supports in the NEIC recognise that particular cohorts of young migrant and minority ethnic young people are harder to reach, experience barriers to engagement, are not accessing available mainstream youth services or social supports, and are not fully integrated or included within social and cultural life in the inner city (YPAR, 2012). While this is particularly true of the young Roma people resident in Dublin, the overall diversity of a heterogeneous young migrant population in the area presents specific challenges. Young people in the area differ significantly in terms of nationality, status, ethnicity, religion, time spent living in Ireland, and English language skills. They also originate from EU and non-EU member states, and include asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants.

6.1 DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATUS

The share of foreign-born persons living in Ireland is high following a sharp increase from 2001 to 2011 (Gonzalez Pandiella, 2016). As of 2017, Ireland has one of the highest percentages of foreign-born residents among EU Member States at 17 per cent (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018). According to the 2016 Census, there are 535,475 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland originating from 200 different nations and representing 13.7 per cent of the total population (McGinnity, Grotti, *et al.*, 2018).⁵⁴ The wide variety of nationalities in Ireland aligns with most European countries wherein the profile of migrants is extremely heterogeneous in terms of ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2017). With reference to the available data, the NEIC area has a greater proportion of migrants and non-Irish residents than the national average, including third level students.⁵⁵

Ireland generally receives three broad groups of immigrants: returning Irish emigrants; migrants from other EU countries; and migrants from the rest of the world, including refugees, asylum seekers and the undocumented. Migrant children have been defined as those whose mother was born outside Ireland, excluding those with Irish ethnicity (Darmody, McGinnity and Kingston, 2016). For migrants from outside the EEA, access to employment and education depends on status and stamps. Since non-EU residents must satisfy the Habitual Residency Condition (HCR) this cohort is rather diverse and includes undocumented migrants, skilled migrants entering via work permits, family members of immigrants and Irish nationals, and asylum seekers and refugees. While the number of refugees is relatively small they are widely considered to be the most difficult integration challenge (Gonzalez Pandiella, 2016).

The migrant cohort include young migrants in Direct Provision, a system of minimal support which applies to adult asylum seekers, whereby they generally live in large institutional settings where they are given accommodation, full board and a weekly payment of €19.10 per week per adult (an amount that has remained unchanged since 2000) and €15.60 per dependent child (O'Reilly, 2018).

Migrants living in direct provision do not have residence permission, have very limited opportunities to study, and do not have a right to work (Arnold and Ni Raghallaigh, 2017). Within the cohort of young asylum seekers and refugees, it is possible to further distinguish between young people who come to Ireland with family and those who come alone. Applicants who are under 18 but with an adult relative who is claiming asylum are normally included in the adult relative's application. However, a number of unaccompanied minors or separated children migrate to Ireland each year. For example, the figures for unaccompanied minors applying for international protection in Ireland was 20 in 2013, 30 in 2014, 33 in 2015, and 34 in 2016. The number of unaccompanied minors who arrived in Ireland and were referred into the care of the Social Work Team for Separated Children was 120 in 2013, 97 in 2014, 109 in 2015 and 126 in 2016 (Arnold, Ryan and Quinn, 2018). The cohort of separated children in Ireland is heterogeneous. Of the 585 separated children seeking asylum in Ireland in the period 2010 to 2015, 58 per cent of these children were male, with Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, and South Africa the most common countries of origin (Richason, 2018).

⁵⁴ The largest cohort is Polish nationals at 122,515, followed by 103,113 UK nationals, and 36,552 Lithuanians. Dublin City (91,876), Fingal (46,909) and Cork County (42,002) had the highest numbers of non-Irish nationals in 2016. Leitrim (3,526) and Sligo (5,892) had the lowest numbers (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018).

⁵⁵ The NEIC also has a lower proportion of non-White Irish compared to Dublin City, and a higher number of residents who do not speak English well (Centre for Effective Services, 2018).

In terms of undocumented migrants, it is possible to distinguish between three categories in Ireland and in Dublin: visa over-stayers; migrants with unenforced deportation orders; and children of undocumented migrants (Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, no date). The MRCI estimates a number from 2000-5000 children and young people born to undocumented parents in Ireland. Undocumented young people consider Ireland their home but have no rights to residency or citizenship. As such, they exist in a legal limbo upon leaving secondary school and when seeking employment or accessing further education (ibid).

It is also possible to distinguish between first and second generation migrants. Ireland differs somewhat from other European countries in that the share of children born in Ireland from a non-Irish mother was lower at the beginning of the previous decade. As a result, the relatively recent nature of migration into Ireland means that most non-Irish nationals are first generation immigrants having arrived here as adults (Kenny, Darmody and Smyth, 2017). However, while smaller in size than generally found in other OECD countries with a longer history of immigration, the second generation cohort is now growing rapidly. Today one in four children born in Ireland have a non-Irish born mother and approximately half of the non-Irish born mothers comprise women originating from non-EU Member European countries. Children born in Ireland are also of increasingly diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Asian and African mothers account for four per cent and three per cent respectively of total children born; a figure which is also rapidly growing (Gonzalez Pandiella, 2016).

Ireland has a considerable population of Roma who are widely held to be the largest and most disadvantaged minority group in Europe. While estimates of the Roma population in Ireland typically number 5,000, with no ethnic identifier for Roma in the Census, the precise number is difficult to determine. A national needs assessment of the Roma population in Ireland estimates the number living in Dublin to be 1500 (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality, 2018).

The existing literature provides important insights in the lives of minority ethnic young people, young migrants and their families and barriers to integration and engagement in Ireland and in Europe which will be explored further in the following section.

6.2 INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

Defining integration is a complex matter. Integration can refer to the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and the social changes which follow immigration (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018). In the context of current Irish policy, integration is defined as the “ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all of the major components of society without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity” (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017).⁵⁶ The children of immigrants have become an important part of the national social fabric in Ireland and a particular focus of national youth policy.

More than a mere act or event of relocation, migration is, above all, a process which can open up new opportunities. For some however, including many young people, migration may also be a necessity (Punch, 2015). Importantly, migrants from more developed states may have a greater level of cultural and social capital at their disposal leading to a less complicated period of transition. In contrast, migrants from less advantaged backgrounds, as well as refugees and asylum seekers, may have higher levels of needs and vulnerabilities (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2017). Instruments of social integration are understood as two-way processes within which support-providers and support-receivers must interact and participate in designing processes and activities of integration (Rambaree, Berg and Thomson, 2016). In terms of first generation young migrants, it is noted that young people may have little agency in their family’s decisions to migrate. The level of agency in migration decisions and motivations for child migration can impact the subsequent process of integration and adolescent development in Ireland.

While migration seeks to improve the lives of all family members and is driven by the best interests of young people, the decision to move and the initial period in a new country may be upsetting, difficult, and distressing (Moskal and Tyrrell, 2016). The lack of input into family migration decision-making, as well as not knowing what to expect in their migration destinations, may contribute to the challenges children experience in adjusting to new countries. Young migrants may feel that they have not been active decision-makers in their families, regardless of whether they themselves were migrating, remaining in their country of origin, or experiencing a period of separation from one or both parents who migrated (Moskal and Tyrrell, 2016).

⁵⁶ According to the Integration Centre, integration is “achieved when immigrants enjoy economic, political, social and cultural equality and inclusion” (McGinnity *et al.*, 2013).

In contrast, independent child migration can be, and often is, a positive decision taken by the child with the aim of improving life opportunities. According to the Immigrant Council of Ireland, such children migrate to join family members, to seek improved employment or educational opportunities, and in search of a better life. In some instances, their parents or siblings may be entitled to work and live in Ireland as citizens of the EU or granted an employment permit to work in Ireland (Mannion, 2016).

The ensuing integration and resettlement of migrants is of huge significance as most young refugees, asylum-seekers, young migrants, and their families, face multiple internal and external challenges including those directly arising from the migration experience, their own personal growth and development, and the process of integration and settlement in their new environment (Rambaree, Berg and Thomson, 2016). More generally, migrant children can often find themselves as an ‘out group’, especially if they do not share common interests or activities with the native children of host countries (Darmody, McGinnity and Kingston, 2016).

Young migrants are often highly vulnerable and experience a range of problems and challenges including separation and bereavement from family and friends, social isolation, language barriers, emotional and mental health problems, discrimination, and racism. In addition, they often live with the constant anxiety of possible removal from the country or uncertainty as to their future (Richason, 2018).

Unaccompanied minors and separated children, in particular, have been widely recognised as a group of “vulnerable” children and adolescents, in need of special care and reception structures (Derluyn, 2018). Such young people are likely to have undergone traumatic and challenging experiences prior to their arrival in Ireland, including the migration journey. Once in Ireland, they must then face the testing challenges of settling into life in a new country, and often encounter difficulties and stigma related to their identities as both asylum-seekers and as young people in care. Moreover, their transitions to adulthood can be overshadowed by uncertainties about their future (Sirriyeh and Ní Raghallaigh, 2018).

Irrespective of the level of agency in the decision to migrate or circumstances of arrival, evidence demonstrates that family and friends in home countries and fellow nationals in Ireland can be an important source of emotional support for young migrants. Migration and integration processes involve social-bonding and bridging. Strong social connections are central to the process of integration with social-bonds with like-ethnics and social bridges with native populations’ key components of young migrants’ lives. Maintaining social and emotional connections with family and friends in their home countries while developing connections with new people and places in migration destinations is therefore considered an effective strategy in assisting young people to adapt (Moskal and Tyrrell, 2016). However, the social-bonds forged with fellow migrants can occasionally come at the expense of building local social bridges and delay progress in language acquisition and forging social networks with Irish people (Gilmartin and Migge, 2015).

A key element of integration is proficiency in the language of the adopted country, which influences inter-ethnic relations and social integration. Proficiency in the language of the receiving country is often considered the main influence on social integration (Darmody and Smyth, 2018).⁵⁷ However, across Europe, many migrant parents struggle to help their children to become fluent in a new language while maintaining strong social-bonds with their native country and its traditions. The social-bond with their country of origin is cemented by their skills in their mother-tongue (OECD, 2015b).

Specific research of second generation children born and raised in Ireland, whose families will face different challenges to those that moved here with their foreign-born children, is limited (Röder *et al.*, 2014). Evidence from comparable countries shows that the second generation migrants tend to overcome some of the challenges their parents faced, but continue to experience certain disadvantages, such as in education and employment. Much of this is attributed to the lower socio-economic status of migrant parents, which is often characterised by lower skilled work and high unemployment.

A second set of factors relates more specifically to particular challenges allied to migrant background, such as language and discrimination on the basis of ethnicity (Röder, Ward and Frese, 2015).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Language proficiency is understood as a sociocultural resource that facilitates the acquisition and transmission of information through social interaction (Bukenya and Schaeffer, 2013).

⁵⁸ Experience in other countries indicates that integration outcomes among second generation immigrant’s communities tend to be closely determined by ethnicity. International experience also suggests that early action is critical to prevent that native-born children of immigrants have lower outcomes than the children of natives and to avoid marginalisation and “ghettoization” patterns observed in other countries (Gonzalez Pandiella, 2016).

A growing body of evidence suggests Irish residents with a different ethnicity or cultural background such as Travellers, Roma, refugees or asylum-seekers, may face particular barriers to social and economic integration in Ireland. This is attributed to a number of determinants including low education levels, nomadic lifestyle, and prejudice or discrimination (McGuinness, O'Shaughnessy and Pouliakas, 2017). The situation of young Roma in Europe, in particular, is characterised by low levels of education, a lack of marketable skills and qualifications, low levels of participation in public life, and additional barriers to the exercise of their human rights. Young Roma women are considered particularly vulnerable to social exclusion due to discrimination on the basis of race, gender and age, both within and outside the Roma community. Since the embedded patriarchal system within Roma communities bars active female involvement in either community or public life, young Roma women are held to be one of the most disempowered and excluded groups across Europe (Marian, 2015). Recent evidence from Ireland indicates similar experiences (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality, 2018).

Existing studies in Ireland have identified a number of factors that impact integration including legal status, English language proficiency, and the quality of social interaction with peers and teachers (Darmody and Smyth, 2018). Furthermore, delays in addressing a child's immigration status in a timely manner can restrict or prevent their access to further education, employment, social welfare, and housing, since all such provision is contingent on secure immigration status. According to the Immigrant Council of Ireland, inadequate consideration is given to the wide range of situations in which immigration permission is granted to individuals. This failure to consider the rights of children in different situations restricts their access to education, housing, and social welfare (Mannion, 2016). Moreover, recent research published by NYCI highlighted a number of issues facing ethnic minority young people growing up in Ireland. Young people must negotiate being accepted by both their minority ethnic peers and their majority ethnic peers who make conflicting demands and judgements on them. These difficulties combined with balancing the home culture and attempting to adapt to Irish norms can place strains on familial relationships. Thus young people are obliged to juggle complex and competing identities, cultural expectations, and value systems (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2017a).

6.3 EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

Serving as the main source of migrant income, employment is a key instrument of integration. Employment leads to financial independence, reduces the risk of poverty and social exclusion, enables immigrants to contribute to the economy, and confirms social standing in the host society (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018). According to the OECD:

...jobs are immigrants' chief source of income. Finding one is therefore fundamental to their becoming part of the host country's economic fabric. It also helps them - though there is no guarantee - to take their place in society as a whole, by, for example, clearing the way into decent accommodation and the host country's health system. Work also confers social standing in the eyes of the immigrant's family, particularly children, and with respect to the host-country population. (OECD, 2015d)

The available evidence reveals high levels of employment amongst 15-64 year old immigrants in Ireland, with the employment rate among non-Irish nationals at 69.6 per cent: percentage points higher than that of Irish nationals. This rate also masks significant disparities among different cohorts of migrants. For example, African nationals indicated the highest unemployment rate of any group in 2016, at 14 per cent. Further, unemployment among Africans increased from about 14 per cent in 2016 to 16 per cent in 2017, marking a divergence from the general trend towards declining unemployment (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018).⁵⁹ Moreover, despite high levels of educational attainment, migrants tend to fare less well than Irish nationals in the labour market across a range of indicators, including access to higher paid and higher status jobs, experience of discrimination at work, and levels of unemployment (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2017).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ This evidence also demonstrates how non-Irish nationals were hit harder by the recession than Irish nationals.

⁶⁰ Further, despite being highly qualified, many immigrants work in occupational areas below their skill level and thus receive lower pay (Darmody, McGinnity and Kingston, 2016). There is evidence that the immigrant-native skills gap is mainly driven by English language proficiency in Ireland. This is in keeping with research which shows that language proficiency is an important determinant of immigrant productivity (Darmody and Smyth, 2017b).

In addition, certain cohorts of migrants are at particular risk of homelessness and face barriers to accessing suitable accommodation. Research published by Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) and the Economic Social Research Institute (ESRI) demonstrate how non-Irish nationals are more likely to live in overcrowded conditions. Non-EU nationals are also found to be at 3.2 times more likely to be at risk of over-crowding than Irish nationals. Even within the same income brackets, non-EU migrants are 2.5 times more likely than Irish nationals to live in over-crowded conditions (Grotti *et al.*, 2018). Migrants are also substantially over-represented among the homeless population, and in November 2016, non-Irish nationals accounted for one-quarter of rough-sleepers in Dublin. In ethnic terms, despite composing the vast majority of the Irish population, White Irish only make up 56 per cent of the homeless population. Non-Irish Whites are also under-represented, reflecting the high levels of education among immigrants to Ireland from EU15 and North American nations (Kenny, Darmody and Smyth, 2017). There are clearly divergent experiences for different migrant groups. British, Polish, Latvian and Lithuanian nationals account for relatively small proportions of the homeless population for their group size. Romanians and Africans, by contrast, are notably over-represented among the homeless, with Africans making up over four per cent of the total when missing cases are excluded, despite representing less than half of one per cent of the Irish population (Grotti *et al.*, 2018).⁶¹

Homelessness is often a result of the application or misapplication of rules in relation to social welfare payments. Once homeless, immigrants may not have access to the same range of support services from non-governmental and other organisations due to language and other barriers (Grotti *et al.*, 2018). Despite the growing concern with homelessness as an issue for migrants across Europe, the limits on the forms of social protection available to immigrants in Ireland who are at risk of homelessness are enforced through two key mechanisms: the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC); and the “right to reside” test.

The HRC must be met for an individual to qualify for social welfare payments including jobseeker’s allowance, non-contributory pensions, supplementary welfare allowance, child benefit, and disability allowance. Certain limited exceptions obtain to EEA citizens who may not be required to satisfy HRC for family benefits and supplementary welfare (Gilmartin and Gallwey, 2015).

In addition to housing, migrants may face additional barriers in accessing health and other social services. Research conducted by Cairde, for instance, indicated that many migrants do not seek help for mental health difficulties and may lack familiarity with the Irish health-care system and other health services. The bureaucracy of the system can act as a significant barrier to minority communities attending services and, when seeking help from professionals, migrants often prefer to speak to someone from their own ethnic or cultural background (Cairde, 2015). In 2014, Mental Health Reform highlighted similar views amongst ethnic minority communities in Ireland. According to Mental Health Reform, there is a view that mental health professionals and available services lack understanding of the social and cultural context of a person’s mental health difficulties. There is also a lack of knowledge of available services and how to access them. Stigma and communication barriers are also underscored, along with a lack of understanding of how ethnic minorities view existing services and their use of them within the mental health system (Mental Health Reform, 2014).⁶²

Lastly, research into the lives of young migrants in Ireland has identified the problem of racism and discrimination. Numerous studies concur that racism is a feature of the lives of many young migrants (Ní Laoire *et al.*, 2009; McGrath and McGarry, 2014; National Youth Council of Ireland, 2017a). Both overt and covert discrimination and racism hold significant implications for the well-being of ethnic minority communities. For some migrants, dealing with racism constitutes an everyday battle, and sustained experience of racial and ethnic discrimination has been associated with mental health problems such as stress, depression, anxiety, substance-abuse and suicide ideation (Cairde, 2015). This is also evident for young Roma who do attend education. There is a high level of perceived discrimination at the individual level, while institutional discrimination is evident in the terms of access to accommodation, employment, and even social welfare (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality, 2018).

61 The most at-risk ethnic and cultural groups are Irish Travellers and Black people composing 9 per cent and 11 per cent of the homeless population respectively (ibid).

62 Cairde has recommended the development of mental health training, general awareness of available services and anti-stigma activities to boost engagement with mental health services. Mainstream services, according to Cairde, should be more accessible for ethnic minorities. This can be achieved through addressing cost, language and interpretation, and cultural mediation. Cultural mediation, argues Cairde, can build bridges between health care providers and ethnic minority patients, creating greater cultural awareness amongst healthcare professionals (Cairde, 2015).

6.4 EDUCATION

The challenges for integration and progression of young migrants/minority ethnic young people are evident in the context of education. Education is widely accepted as a key factor in the integration process for immigrant adults and children since it can play a significant role in improving economic and social outcomes (Kenny *et al.*, 2017).⁶³ Education is also widely regarded as one of the most effective mechanisms for inclusion and the realisation of rights (Kennedy and Smith, 2018). A higher level of education translates into higher earnings, better health, and a longer life, making academic outcomes a crucial aspect of well-being for young people. For young people generally school is also one of the most important social environments in their lives (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018).

However, empirical studies throughout Europe have found migrant and minority ethnic students to be disadvantaged in most educational systems (European Commission, 2015a).⁶⁴ A growing body of research highlights the ‘aspiration-achievement paradox’, whereby the high aspirations many migrants do not translate into high achievement. Limited language proficiency is widely considered a key barrier to progression and has been found to prevent migrant children from fully participating in activities at school (Arnot *et al.*, 2014; OECD, 2015b). Many migrant students must learn a language in which they not familiar and in which their parents may lack skills.

The social environment, available resources, and the overall capacity of schools is tied to achievement and progression (Darmody, McGinnity and Kingston, 2016). School performance has an impact on achievement and the clustering of young migrants/minority ethnic young people in disadvantaged schools has been linked to low performance. Before accounting for socio-economic disparities, evidence from OECD countries demonstrates that students who attend where the concentration of migrants is high tend to perform less well than students in schools without immigrants. This is not a consequence of the concentration of migrant children but rather a result of the concentration of socio-economic disadvantage (OECD, 2015b).⁶⁵ Consequently, school-based and home-based efforts to support children’s overall academic progress are critical to supporting their later outcomes (McGinnity, Darmody and Murray, 2015).

These issues are also evident for migrants in Ireland who are generally are well-educated and have high educational expectations for their children. Despite this ambition, children from migrant/minority ethnic backgrounds tend to be disadvantaged by education systems and can struggle to integrate. Many young people in Ireland from these cohorts cope with multiple sources of disadvantage which block them from reaching their potential. In the case of young people, it is clear that supports in formal education do not always address the complex needs of young migrants (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2017).

Recent data demonstrates how educational outcomes and attainments vary. For example, immigrant students from non-English language backgrounds have lower statistically significant PISA scores in the core skill of reading at age 15 than Irish students. However, no significant differences between immigrant and Irish students were found for Mathematics or for Science. Interestingly, the gap between immigrants with different levels of English language skills is greater than the immigrant/non-immigrant gap (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018). This indicates the importance of language competency in shaping educational outcomes and, considering the reliance on English language fluency for a range of secondary school subjects in Ireland, confirms that poor proficiency in English may weaken performance in other subjects (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, school enrolment policies in Ireland tend to favour settled indigenous families in the immediate area. This increases the likelihood of migrant students attending large urban schools containing a concentration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Typically DEIS schools are located in areas characterised by socio-economic disadvantage and higher levels of unemployment including the NEIC. For example, 25 per cent of African children attend the most disadvantaged schools (urban DEIS Band 1), compared to nine per cent of Irish children (McGinnity, Darmody and Murray, 2015). According to the latest school census, 80 per cent of children from immigrant backgrounds were concentrated in 20 per cent of primary schools. In 15 schools, more than two-thirds of pupils are of non-Irish background. While this is partly linked to the geographical location of migrant communities (Gonzalez

63 Education is a right of all migrants in Ireland including asylum seekers until 3rd level. Children and young people under the age of 18 living in Direct Provision, for example, are entitled to attend primary and secondary school.

64 The extent of this disadvantage, however, varies across countries.

65 Assisting migrant students also requires high skills from teachers. According to the OECD, the quality of teaching is one of the most important factors in shaping student achievement even controlling for socioeconomic status and other demographic factors. Migrant students tend to gain the most from high quality teaching but evidence from Europe shows that they are less likely to receive this. Further teachers do not always have the requisite diagnostic skills and tools to assess students’ language and cognitive capacities (OECD, 2015b).

Pandiella, 2016) recent research has found clear evidence of educational segregation in the Dublin Archdiocese, which represents almost one third of the entire population of Ireland (Ledwith, 2017). The study also shows that school choice plays a role in the concentration of Irish nationals in primary schools, demonstrating how children are being educated in schools which are more segregated than the neighbourhoods in which they are located. This is potentially problematic in terms of the future economic integration of second generation migrant youth, given that the composition of school has a disproportionately negative impact on ethnic minority students (Ledwith, 2017). This is in contrast to recommended policy which cautions against the clustering of young migrants in disadvantaged schools (OECD, 2015b).

In some cases, the level of education of ethnic minority groups is particularly low (Mc Guinness *et al.*, 2018). This is marked in the case of the Roma population where much of the available evidence emphasises the relative lack of education and English language skills compared to other migrant groups. A national needs assessment of the Roma population in Ireland highlighted key barriers to education including finances and resources, language skills, poor accommodation, and early marriage. School attendance and completion is a cause for concern, particularly for young Roma girls, who are often removed from school due to childminding duties, pregnancy, and even marriage (Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality, 2018).

Lastly, in terms of third level, many groups of migrant students experience specific barriers to accessing higher education. Disadvantage stems in part from their country of origin as non-EU students are required to pay substantially higher fees than their EU peers. For example, school-leavers who do not satisfy the habitual residence condition are ineligible to avail of the 'free fees' scheme, EU-level fees and/or apply for a maintenance grant. Consequently, college is out of the reach of many young migrants (Darmody, Byrne and McGinnity, 2014). This has been identified as the primary barrier to accessing third-level education and is also experienced by family members of beneficiaries of international protection (Arnold and Quinn, 2017). Research conducted by the Immigrant Council of Ireland shows how access to third-level education is a key priority for young migrants and their support workers and recommended the removal of barriers which restrict migrants' access to further education (Mannion, 2016).

6.5 NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

The social inclusion of all young people, including those from a migrant background, is a key aim of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018. Policy-makers are inclined to view formal education as the primary mechanism for addressing intergenerational disadvantage and promoting social inclusion and mobility (Kennedy and Smith, 2018). The OECD has recognised the importance of the formal education system to fostering the effective integration of migrants, stating:

The way in which education systems respond to migration has an enormous impact both on whether or not immigrants are successfully integrated into their host communities and on the economic and social well-being of all members of the communities they serve, whether they have an immigrant background or not. (OECD, 2015b)

However, the dynamic process of social integration for young people can develop both within and outside school.

In addition to language skills and formal education, social engagement and social interaction are significant correlates of migrant integration and well-being and can foster a sense of belonging (Gsir, 2014). The sense of belonging of young people is critical since promoting positive affective states is a worthy goal in and of itself and because it is associated with promoting healthy social and psychological development (OECD, 2015b). Children's involvement in structured social and cultural activities has also been found to enhance their academic development. However, this can be problematic for some migrants, as the transient nature of migration means there is a constant need to adapt to new systems, networks and make new friends (Darmody, McGinnity and Kingston, 2016).

The emphasis on non-formal education activities including youth work is rooted in the understanding that young people spend only part of their time in schools and that youth services and other cultural and social activities can therefore serve as important opportunities for social interaction and belonging. School-based activities should be complemented by additional initiatives for increased academic, social, and emotional support and participation (Darmody and Smyth, 2017a). While important for all migrant/minority ethnic young people, these are of particular

importance for newly-arrived migrant families and their children. Contact with peers outside the formal education system is considered particularly important for the newly arrived children of immigrants as it provides an opportunity for newcomers and native-born children to learn about each other. Involvement in sport and recreational activities is also linked to increased confidence and self-esteem and the development of peer and social networks (Darmody and Smyth, 2018).

Much of the available evidence in Ireland reveals a gap in participation in recreation and sport, and out-of-school activities between migrants and Irish born young people. In Ireland, such activities vary by social class, parental education, gender, and special educational needs, as is made evident in the case of migrant and minority ethnic young people. Analysis of the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) study, for example, demonstrates how social engagement in structured activities is lower among immigrant-origin children and young people than among their Irish peers. For the most part, this participation gap is explained by proficiency in English, rather than by school or family background factors.⁶⁶ According to the GUI study, at nine years of age, formal participation in sport and fitness activities is popular across all groups, but significant differences by national group are evident, with primary school children of Irish, UK and Western European origin more likely to belong to a sport or fitness club compared to Asian and Eastern European students. Furthermore, significant differences are evident in participation in cultural activities with only 26 per cent of Asians and 31 per cent of Eastern Europeans involved (McGinnity, Darmody and Murray, 2015).⁶⁷ These gaps emphasise the importance of activities and supports within local communities including youth clubs.

6.6 YOUTH WORK

Across Europe, there is a clear emphasis on the role of youth work in promoting cultural integration and the active inclusion of young migrants and minority ethnic young people. It is now widely accepted throughout Europe that all young people are entitled to access youth work services and a range of activities and supports which respond appropriately to their needs, problems and interests. Moreover, when faced with particular problems, all young people should have access to social workers who can offer psychosocial support and help them to develop suitable strategies for dealing with their problems. According to the EU, youth work and non-formal learning can respond to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing numbers of minority ethnic young people, young migrants and refugees in the EU by helping new arrivals learn about and make European values their own, by encouraging intercultural dialogue, and by building mutual understanding between new arrivals and receiving communities. To achieve this, youth work must reach out to young people of migrant background and cooperate closely with civil society organisations and public services (Commission of European Communities, 2009).

Youth work helps to promote the active citizenship of young people through youth organisations, clubs, and associations (Cuzzocrea, 2017). A central role of youth work is to support young people to grapple with certain processes, including their self-image as individuals, their own life experiences and future prospects, their membership of communities, and their living conditions in society (Scherr and Yüksel, 2017). Furthermore, youth work can help young migrants/minority ethnic young people to cope with the range of problems they face including discrimination, and promote anti-racism and cultural tolerance and understanding between migrant young people and non-migrants (Scherr and Yüksel, 2017). Social interaction through local youth projects can provide a variety of protective functions for young people including a sense of belonging, emotional support, and a source of information.

The Irish Government recognises the importance of communities and outside school activities to successful integration. In line with European strategy, the recent Irish integration strategy also emphasises the importance of youth work to integration, in seeking to ensure that young people from ethnic or religious minorities, migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, have access to youth services in which they feel safe and protected and which assist and enhance their integration (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017). The Communities Integration Fund, moreover, was established by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration to meet commitments laid out in Actions 6 and 51 of the current integration strategy. With a budget in excess of 500,000, the fund is designed to finance actions by local community organisations which promote integration within local communities (Office for Promotion of Migrant Integration, 2018).⁶⁸

66 Moreover, affordability is significant and can explain part of this divide as lower income families are less likely to take part in sporting and cultural activities which mostly charge fees (Darmody and Smyth, 2017a).

67 Moreover, in terms of close friends, Eastern Europeans have the smallest friendship networks while African and Asian children also have fewer friends than their Irish counterparts (Darmody, McGinnity and Kingston, 2016).

68 131 groups and organisations including in the NEIC were in receipt of funding under the scheme (Office for Promotion of Migrant Integration, 2018).

The realisation of integration, however, requires additional resources and capacity-building within the youth work sector, along with strategic engagement between communities, civil society organisations and state agencies. The engagement of young migrants with local services and supports in youth services has been an area of concern for organisations within the NEIC for a considerable period of time. For example, in 2012, the International Young People sub-group of YPAR held a seminar attended by then Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald, and a wide range of stakeholders including senior officials from local and statutory agencies. The seminar highlighted the groups of young people not accessing available services as well as the difficulty for many migrant young people in engaging with youth services. The need for youth services to directly engage and target young people through outreach youth work was underlined, particularly in terms of groups/areas of the exceptionally marginalised, such as young Roma people and those from non-EU families (YPAR, 2012).

The issues raised in the NEIC and Ireland in relation to Roma participation have also been highlighted widely throughout Europe. In 2011, the Council of Europe organised its first Roma Youth Conference in order to develop a *Roma Youth Action Plan*. During this conference, Roma young people and Roma youth organisations discussed the main concerns, issues, and challenges affecting young Roma today. These issues, many of which also pertain to the Irish context, included weak Roma organisations and the lack of Roma youth structures, low levels of Roma participation in mainstream services and Roma voluntarism, a lack of youth models and leaders, and tensions between different Roma groups and/or Roma elders and other groups in society (Belgian National Roma Platform, 2018).⁶⁹

More generally, the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) has made a series of recommendations on youth work and new communities in Ireland in order to achieve the main aims of the current migration strategy. The current approach to intercultural youth work, it is argued, must be adapted to encompass more diverse strategies of including young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Recommendations include ensuring that appropriate supports and spaces are available, ensuring appropriate training and education is delivered, supporting advocacy and leadership with and for minority young people, and undertaking research and mapping to address gaps in existing knowledge. More specifically, this involves accounting for the specific needs and contributions of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds within the development of organisational strategies, work plans, and actions. Since safe and supported services for young people enable them to share their views and experiences with others from ethnic minority backgrounds, more flexible or alternate approaches are required to address the numerous challenges that young people over the age of 18 may face (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2017a).

Training for youth organisations including in terms of anti-racism, inter-culturalism, and religious literacy, is also necessary to ensure that local organisations are better equipped to support young people and forge positive relationships between migrants, ethnic minorities, and native Irish. In addition, the need to allocate resources at national, regional, and local levels in order to strategically fund dedicated youth workers to support intercultural youth work and open up youth work funding opportunities to minority ethnic-led youth work organisations which aligns them with current youth work services are also identified. The report from the NYCI also underlined the distinction between existing youth services which integrate or include migrant children and the development of new migrant or ethnic minority specific organisations and youth services (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2017a).

SUMMARY

This section explored the key issues of integration and social inclusion of young migrants and minority ethnic young people in Ireland. A growing body of evidence increasingly highlights challenges in terms of education, access to social services and supports, and engagement with youth services. There is also evidence of disparities in the outcomes between specific cohorts, with African, Roma, and non-EU residents more likely to face integration difficulties.

⁶⁹ Further, the conference and report highlighted limited access to political participation and absence from relevant decision-making bodies and processes, limited or no participation in mainstream youth events and initiatives, an absence of Roma youth issues from related mainstream legislation and policies at national and international level, high levels of discrimination, stigmatisation and exclusion of Roma youth and their families, a lack of access to essential goods and services, low levels of education and training among Roma youth, low levels of access to secondary school and tertiary education, high levels of poverty, a lack of birth certificates, identity documents and citizenship status, meaning that Roma are often invisible to public bodies and subsequently denied the possibility of exerting their rights (ibid).



PART D

METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH FINDINGS

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology of the research.⁷⁰ As previously stated, this research aimed to discover and analyse the current and future needs of “hard to reach” 14-24 year olds in the North East Inner City, and identify gaps and obstacles to their engagement with services and supports. Primary research was therefore conducted with representatives of local projects and services and with young people in the NEIC using mixed methodological methods including survey questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Thirty-five interviews or focus groups sessions were conducted with staff from a diverse range of projects and services in the NEIC encompassing over 50 professionals. This built on an online questionnaire which received 31 responses. 96 young people participated in interview or focus group sessions including migrants/minority ethnic young people and members of the Roma community.

In light of the research objectives and the extent to which the young people in question are variously hard to reach/at risk or vulnerable, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodological approach was deemed most appropriate. Participatory methods are considered a powerful tool for enabling active engagement in research pertaining to marginalised people and seldom heard groups (Aldridge, 2017b). This process involved the principal researchers working in tandem with research collaborators from local projects and services predominately under the YPAR umbrella in the design and implementation of the study.

Designated people in services and organisations who work or attempt to work with young people and their families, and services/organisations that have contact with young people in the course of their work assisted with the collection of data and wider engagement with young people for the research. The identification and participation of young people was, in many cases, negotiated through trusted professional partners. Data gathering from “hard to reach” young people was facilitated through local social, youth, and community practitioners in local organisations. To ensure young people who do not engage with local services on a regular basis were also represented; potential participants were invited to take part in the course of outreach street work, formal education, and through drop-in services.

This overall approach was held to be most appropriate for the project due to the potential vulnerability of the young people concerned, the general complexity of conducting research with “hard to reach” or “seldom heard” young people, and the context of North East Inner City where issues of trust and potential reluctance to engage with external researchers from outside of the community can arise. It is emphasised that the research collaborators comprised knowledgeable professional practitioners, conversant with the relevant research and ethical issues, trained in collaboration and working with young people, and skilled in managing boundaries in interpersonal communication/relationships in complex situations.

The overall design and implementation of the study was informed by several participatory research training sessions conducted with collaborators during the planning and design phase as well as key elements of ethical research with young people. The PAR sessions helped to identify the most suitable approach to engaging with young people and established the ethical basis of the research. The ethos underpinning the PAR methodology seeks to minimise the power imbalance between the researchers and the researched, to maximise understanding from the perspective of young people, and to ensure that dignity and respect underpin all social relations within the research process (Aldridge, 2017a). Furthermore, in designing and carrying out the study, the research sought to adhere to key elements of best practice in research with young people.

All involved remained conscious of the need to carry out ethical research while ensuring that “hard to reach” young people were invited and included in research on issues of direct relevance to their lives.

The target population of 14-24 year olds is a relatively wide age spectrum. As such the overall cohort is potentially vulnerable and at risk for a variety of different reasons. These issues include anti-social behaviour, drug and/or alcohol use, mental health, lack of education and employment, and homelessness. In addition, many hard to reach young people in the NEIC area have complex needs and may suffer from multiple disadvantages. With this in mind, the researchers and partners in local organisations deliberated whether engagement with young people involved an

⁷⁰ This project received Ethics approval from the University of Limerick’s Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (2018-09-03-AHSS).

unacceptable degree of risk or would cause distress to young people, prior to, during, and/or following the interview process.

However, all involved sought to recognise the competence and autonomy of participants and were conscious that participant self-perceptions may not always accord with those of others or easily align with external identifiers or classifications, particularly when “at risk” participants see themselves as resilient rather than vulnerable in certain contexts (Aldridge, 2014). Indeed, the researchers were eager to avoid stereotypical, and potentially discriminatory and exclusionary views of young people, as vulnerable, ill-equipped, and unable to give voice to their own experiences and decisions in relation to participation in the research (Kearns, 2014).

To this end, young people themselves were consulted on the types of questions asked and the ways in which data gathering sessions were conducted and carried out. In light of feedback from young people and youth workers, a need to engage young people in environments and situations in which they are comfortable and familiar was identified. There was also an attempt to use context-specific methodologies which are relevant and make sense to the young people involved, and to foster a safe and familiar environment for participants. In line with key principles of ethical research, the involvement of collaborators from local projects was used to optimise participant comfort and their sense of safety as research participants.⁷¹

To ensure that informed consent/assent was freely given by all participants, the nature and purpose of the research was explained to all prior to commencement of the data collection. Informed consent and assent was obtained and parents and guardians of those under 18 were made aware of the study through an information letter and by research partners in local projects. The principal researchers were mindful that consent in research involves more than merely agreeing to participate and involves allowing time to decide, being able to ask questions about the research, and being free to say yes or no. As consent is an ongoing process rather than a one-off event (Alderson and Morrow, 2004) parents and guardians were also informed of the option to withdraw young people under 18 from the study following the interview process, and that any young person could terminate the interview or withdraw from the entire process at any stage.

In terms of the target population, the PAR sessions and collaboration with local practitioners drew an important distinction between “hard to reach” young people who do not engage at all, those who may engage on an infrequent or intermittent basis, and those who engage only at a time of crisis or adversity or following referral from youth justice services.

The need to elicit the views and experiences of young people once considered “hard to reach” and now engaging in a project, but who remain vulnerable or at risk, was also identified.

⁷¹ Researchers, it is recommended, must create a safe, interactive environment, and minimize power differentials between researchers and young participants. While power imbalances cannot be entirely eliminated, various steps can be taken to minimise its impact including: creating a relaxed atmosphere; ensuring participants understand that data collection processes are not ‘tests’, that all responses are equally acceptable, valid and welcomed, dressing informally and avoiding formal seating or room layout (Kearns, 2014; Aaltonen, 2017; Aldridge, 2017b; Auerswald, Piatt and Mirzazadeh, 2017).

8. ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE VIEWS OF STAFF IN NEIC

This section explores a range of key issues in respect to “hard to reach” or young people at risk in the NEIC from the perspective of local service and support staff including specific barriers to engagement. The analysis is based on 35 interviews or focus groups conducted with staff from a diverse range of projects and services in the NEIC, along with an online questionnaire which received 31 responses. The interviews and questionnaire responses were transcribed and analysed thematically through qualitative content analysis. The analysis presented is based on the most prevalent themes within the data across all types of projects and services from the perspective of those interviewed. Where necessary, references to specific types of projects/services are made. Quotations from interviewees are also used to further illustrate key themes.

As outlined, despite the availability of a range of projects and supports, many young people who do not engage or participate on a voluntary or consistent basis, are vulnerable, at risk, and/or engaged in risky and harmful behaviours. There is a widespread belief that the developmental, learning, and emotional needs of young people are not being met either within the home or through formal education, in many respects because they have not been identified or received adequate attention at a young age. In broad terms, local professionals who work with or try to work with young people emphasise the importance of focusing on the needs of individuals and families but are cognisant of the need to situate these in the context of wider cultural, economic, and social issues within the community and society.

In terms of “hard to reach” or engage young people, staff in local projects and services distinguish between those who do not engage at all, those who are invisible, hidden or unknown, and those who may access services, but due to changes in life circumstances or their lifestyle (drugs, crime or other personal issues) disengage from services for an extended period or present behavioural challenges. A distinction can therefore be made between “visible” and “invisible” hard to reach young people. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of “hard to reach” can be complicated in the context of referrals or in times of crisis. Again, in such situations, engagement can be sporadic and infrequent despite involvement in the youth justice system, and young people can refuse to access specialised services following referral from statutory agencies, including social workers. Young people who are referred to mental health, drug-treatment or GYDPs may not initially wish to attend or to engage. The section therefore begins with an analysis of barriers to engagement.

8.1 BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

The following analysis identifies key barriers to sustained engagement with local services and supports and the barriers to smooth and successful transitions to adulthood and independent lives for young people in the NEIC.

8.1.1 Needs and Vulnerabilities

Many young people in the NEIC experience a range of complex needs and vulnerabilities including substance misuse, mental health, and dual diagnosis, along with learning and behavioural difficulties. The importance of personal skills for engagement and progression, including resilience, self-esteem, self-confidence, and positive thinking, is therefore a common theme among local staff. The adolescent and cognitive development of young people at risk, who experience difficulties in regulating emotions and self-expression, is delayed. Many “hard to reach” young people who engage with services, for example, can struggle to regulate themselves, to communicate in a way which is ‘appropriate’ in a work or learning environment, may lack the maturity of many of their peers, and experience difficulties working and functioning in groups and in building positive relationships with peers.

“Hard to reach” young people, as well as many young people in the NEIC more generally, demonstrate low esteem and low feelings of self-worth, and often lack the self-confidence to engage in activities which young people in other communities may take for granted. Accessing services and entering unfamiliar spaces for the first time, including youth projects is even more difficult as lack of confidence extends to meeting and socialising with new people and developing trusting relationships with staff.

The lives of the hardest to reach young people in the community are often chaotic and unstable. They frequently exhibit erratic behaviour and struggle with formal rules and boundaries, and as they are accustomed to living from 'day to day', their ability to think and plan on a longer-term basis is often unformed. Such young people, for example, can struggle with maintaining regular routines, including getting up in the morning and being on time for appointments and scheduled activities. Everyday life experiences then can cause stress and anxiety. Such young people often require help and support from support workers to engage in activities and to keep appointments.

According to one staff member: *"...consistency with youth workers is hugely important. You have to remember that the ones who are hardest to reach, most live in chaotic situations, in their home, social life, their mental state, so they are not always capable of structuring things in a timeframe that is linear to us. Like, can I meet you at 2 o'clock? They are dealing with something that happens in the moment, they need to talk to you then but we may be off, so that is the question: How do we deal with that?"*

Another reflected: *"So, we have quite a few young people who are, well we could not just say, we will meet you on a Wednesday at 12 o'clock. It requires a lot of contact with that young person to get them down. Some of them won't come down unless you collect them, which is not ideal, so a lack of consistency in the chaos of their lives."*

Many hard to engage young people can struggle in overly formal or inflexible environments and many not be experienced in facing the consequences for their actions and/or crossing boundaries set by parents and care-givers. Rules can form a barrier to engagement and cause difficulties for them when participating in projects and services. Their behaviour is challenging for local services and supports as well as the formal education system. However, some staff who work with young people highlight how the struggle to adapt to structure/rigidity can be perfectly functional in the context of the environment in which young people live and grow up.

Young people may also experience difficulties when placed in situations or activities which take place outside of their own community or immediate environment. In these cases, youth workers and other professionals must help young people develop skills to meet the demands of engaging in everyday activities, and to build their confidence and self-esteem as these skills are often not developed within the home or in formal education settings. This can result in a "co-parental role" for staff in which, in many respects, they assume the traditional role of parents or guardians.

Mental health is a significant cause for concern cited by staff, with young people experiencing anxiety, depression, and stress, along with feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Mental health is relevant to all young people in the NEIC but of utmost concern in the case of young people at risk. Mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression which contribute to negative mind-sets are a barrier to engagement and progression and some hard to reach young people who feel hopeless about their life circumstances are alienated from wider societal institutions. Difficulties within families and violence within the wider community mean many young people are affected by grief and trauma. For such young people it is a struggle to articulate and express, let alone to adequately cope and manage, the impact of this on their lives.

The lack of readiness, skills and resilience, as well as mental health issues and self-esteem, are also regarded as barriers to employment while the inability of young people to meet the demands of further education and training is often a significant barrier to progression. Moreover, it is held that the structure of further education and training courses and the predominant focus on certification is too narrow and restrictive for young people with complex needs who may initially struggle with rigid structures or formal boundaries. For those in the Further Education and Training sector, there is an awareness of the need to adapt courses to better meet the complex needs of young people in the community.

According to one CTC staff member: *"...there is a delayed adolescence, with a lot of the young people in this area. They are actually behaving and operating at an age profile younger than they are. So, it would not be uncommon to have an 18 year old here to be acting as a 14 year old, that maturity has not kicked in, and a formal and rigid service like ours won't meet their needs; the gap is too wide...A lot of young people coming in here, their educational attainment is low, their academic level is quite poor, and they will have associated conditions like dyslexia and ADHD or ADD, along with that. Then you will have behavioural issues and substance misuse issues. So it is very hard to try to manage all that and to create an environment in which you are trying to get them to settle in and function in what you would call a 'normal' classroom training setting."*

Young people, moreover, can struggle with matters of gender, sexual identity, and body image. This along with other mental health issues is often a consequence of or exacerbated by bullying and intimidation occurring online and via social media. These experiences increase anxiety and stress for young people as such forms of bullying do not adhere to geographical or physical boundaries. Online bullying proceeds throughout the day, at home and within school. Excessive social media use can therefore produce a state of hyper-awareness in which young people are afraid of missing out on something taking place within a social network or group.

More widely, young people are also considered harder to engage because of computer gaming which can decrease the likelihood of them leaving home, outside of school. The excessive use of computers in the home by young people is a source of isolation and lack of meaningful engagement in community activities. Excessive use of technology can also lead to lack of sleep and tiredness during the day. For example, young people in the community may stay up playing computer games and/or on social media until four or five am.

This impacts their level of engagement in youth programmes and in school, and can be a source of difficulties in school and at home.

Those who work with young migrants and minority ethnic young people particularly highlight the importance of addressing and alleviating their isolation and disconnection through positive engagement in education and social activities as well as with the broader community.

However, depression and associated mental health issues are significant challenges to progression and engagement. Migrant and minority ethnic young people are prone to loneliness and isolation, and in the case of separated children, emotional and physical disconnection from family and loved ones. Many migrants suffer trauma and violence in their home country and/or in the transition to Ireland. Undocumented migrants endure a range of stresses and anxieties in relation to their lack of status. For those in the asylum process, there is widespread boredom, stasis, and a lack of progression. Furthermore, the lifestyles associated with living in temporary/emergency accommodation and Direct Provision can discourage motivation and/or willingness to engage. Moreover, the institutionalisation brought about by years living in these forms of accommodation, produces lethargy and mental health issues which are not conducive to building and maintaining regular routines.

Lastly, while here in Ireland, young migrants and minority ethnic young people can encounter discrimination and racism which adversely impacts their mental health. When accessing education and employment, for example, Roma young people often actively try to hide their ethnicity in order to prevent discrimination and stereotyping.

8.1.2 Parents and Family

The following analysis based on the experiences and understandings of staff from local services and supports, is cognisant of the wider structural and intergenerational issues within the NEIC. As with the characteristics of young people, the focus on parents and family in this section is not intended to attribute blame for people's problems or failures or to place the emphasis on the complex problems on individuals; in this case, parents.

There is widespread acknowledgement of the children who are doing well in the community, and the positive engagement from families, many of whom are actively involved in counselling, family support, and seeking to improve their own lives and the lives of their children. Nonetheless, a recurring theme in the research is the need for greater family engagement, support and supervision for the harder to reach or young people most at risk in the area. These young people can experience attachment issues and have more complicated and problematic relationships with primary-care givers. Families in such circumstances can demonstrate poor relationships between child and parents, between siblings, and an absence of trust and communication.

Relationships therefore can be strained and increasingly negative as young people grow into adolescence. In these cases, 'normal' family boundaries do not exist, with parents often lacking the ability to set and enforce clear limits for their children. Parental supervision and parental engagement in the activities of children is often missing leading to a lack of structure and routine in the lives of young people. Poor family relationships at a young age can lead to anger and frustration with wider authority figures including staff in local projects and services, as well as the formal education system. The problem with authority often begins in the home with conflict in the family leading to a first

negative experience of authority figures. This adversarial experience with authority can escalate to difficulties in school and initiate contact with the criminal justice system.

Gaps in parenting may contribute to problems among young people relating to mental health issues, unhealthy lifestyles such as lack of sleep, poor diet, excessive video gaming, and drug-use in the home, and short-term thinking with respect to employment, education and training. There is a sense of a tradition within some families of a lack of engagement in positive, pro-social, community-based activities, which is transmitted from generation to generation. Some NEIC families can therefore have an historical or long-standing involvement in certain types of anti-social and criminal activity. Formal education in these instances is often undervalued.

From the perspective for interviewees in drugs projects, moreover, the hardest to reach young people are often the ones in which drugs are ingrained in the family, often through multiple generations.

For some young people, there is an absence of parental engagement with activities. For example, staff might win initial engagement from parents upon joining a youth service which then falls away over time. According to one youth worker: *"...[some young people in youth clubs] are from the households who are interested. You will see them. They drop kids off, sign forms, and that sort of thing. But we are struggling to get a consent form signed; we are ringing four or five times. We call up to the house, they will rarely ever come down to us. We might meet them on the street, but it is never a consistent chat in which we sit down and discuss how the child is getting on. It has happened many times, where we had to escort young people to the guards to make a statement, we were their guardian.... We had a graduation ceremony recently...and no parents or grandparents came."*

There is a widespread belief that engagement with young people across a broad range of services could be enhanced through greater parental buy-in as greater engagement from parents can often lead to a more effective intervention and engagement with young people. According to one project worker: *"Sometimes the parents will say, 'don't tell them anything, they will only tell the social workers, they will take you into care'. But we say, 'no, we will work with you, we work with you and we will help the kids at the same time and if there is a parenting course where you might be struggling in dealing with some behaviour then we will get you on the course, we will go with you'. Even though we are working with young people, we work with the parents as well, because there is no point in doing all this great work because they have to go home and they will be facing the same problems"*.

A lack of engagement is often a consequence of their own personal problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, for which they also require support and treatment. Parents, it is claimed, fear external scrutiny of outside agencies and are therefore suspicious of social workers and other professionals. In some families there is a fear of attracting external attention through the involvement of children in services which is often internalised by young people and manifested in their engagement with local services and supports.

The difficulties of parents including addiction, illness, or bereavement, can result in young people assuming a caring role in looking after siblings, and even supporting families financially. In the case of young migrants, this is often a consequence of family circumstances in which parents work extended hours. This places a huge burden and responsibility on young people at a very young age, reducing their time and space to socialise and engage in other activities, including education. In some cases, poor relationships can result in child-parent violence resulting in family breakdown and young people leaving home. This is often a consequence of drug-related intimidation and involvement in drug-related criminal activity.

A recurring theme of local staff is the need for parents to access additional help and support and develop skills to better meet their own needs and those of their children. While a growing number of parents and families are engaging in family support, counselling, and mental health programmes, there is nonetheless a belief that the available supports which exist for families within the community could be more widely accessed. A lack of engagement from parents, and their own complex needs and problems can also lead to difficulties with the Meitheal process, such as delays in organising an initial Meitheal meeting.

However, interviewees referred to the benefits of success or positive engagement with one family member and how it can lead to further interaction from others. An older sibling or cousin reporting a satisfactory experience from participation in a project or service can lead to additional family involvement. Thus, a satisfactory experience for a family member is considered a great advertisement for a project or service since it may help to engage other young people, while building and strengthening relationships with other family members.

Diversity in the background and status of migrants make generalisations difficult. As previously discussed, migrant/ethnic minority young people in the NEIC are first and second generation residents who originate from a wide variety of countries both inside and outside the EU. In some migrant families, the language skills of parents can be a barrier to development and engagement while others have strong English capacity. Consequently, family is of relevance to young migrants and ethnic minority young people, albeit in different ways. Migrant families do not always fit neatly into geographic groups or engage in geographic spaces such as the NEIC. On the contrary, they are often transitory and can move from place to place, or from one accommodation type to another, while separated children in the foster care system can experience disconnection from family and loved ones who are resident in other countries. Irrespective of status, many migrant families live in inadequate accommodation with large families living in a small number of rooms. This is often a source of mental stress and conflict. This is a growing concern more widely in the NEIC regarding families in emergency and temporary accommodation as the lack of stable, secure, and suitable housing can adversely impact family life and young people in a number of ways.

In terms of participation in non-educational activities, a barrier to engagement for young migrant families with youth projects is to some degree a consequence of divergent cultural understandings of the role and significance of youth work. Some cultures do not have the same experience or emphasis on youth services.⁷² Rather, many young migrants and their families often focus primarily on education, as is reflective of a fierce commitment to education particularly in secondary and third level within many migrant families. This understanding is articulated by one interviewee who commented: *“In some cultures, in many countries outside of Ireland, they don’t really have youth work the way we have it in Ireland. Parents will say, especially the parents from some of the more academic-minded cultures, India, Pakistani, they would say, ‘I don’t see the point’. They would come to a youth project and see people playing pool or doing arts and crafts and they would ask, ‘Why? I want my child to be studying or in school or at home studying’. They don’t necessarily see the value of it’.”*⁷³

Children from new communities with families in Ireland can be expected to do more within the home than most Irish children. For example, some perform a caring role and must look after siblings. This is often a consequence of family circumstances in which parents work extended hours. One practitioner explains: *“I have a family now and the kids are doing okay but there are complications. There are complications with health. They are doing well in schools, they want to do well, but they are isolated around friendships. They have to figure that out, and where do they do it? An awful lot of the time the responsibilities at home are far higher than for an indigenous person, their responsibilities far exceed the indigenous Irish I have come across unless they are carers, so they have all of that. Then the parents are working day and night, cleaning or whatever it is, and they can work horrendous hours and not be paid very well, and an awful lot of the time, the young person could be looking after younger children. That is not unusual. I think it is the isolation and the language barrier that is huge.”*

8.1.3 Peers

The social aspects of involvement in local projects can be both positive and negative for young people. More widely, peer pressure and bullying is considered significant in the lives of all cohorts of young people in the NEIC both on and off line. To reiterate, many young people are excessive consumers of social media and computer games resulting in hyper-awareness in which young people are afraid of missing out on social activity online during school and elsewhere. This can lead to other forms of peer pressure as well as online bullying and intimidation.

From the perspective of interviewees, peers and peer groups can influence the frequency and intensity of engagement. For many young people, the opportunity to socialise with peers within safe spaces in youth projects is positive. On the other hand, however, some young people may not attend due to peer pressure or unfamiliarity with other young people. They may wish to participate but as their friends do not, ultimately decide not to attend themselves. This dilemma is captured by one youth worker who explained: *“Some of them, peer pressure is a barrier because some of them are being pressured, especially the older ones, not to come into a club. So, the older ones, they wouldn’t be coming up unless their mates are coming up, and if their mates are not coming up, they won’t come up, even if they wanted to.”*

⁷² Moreover, due to cultural factors, parents may prefer more culturally informed including gender specific forms of youth services for their children.

⁷³ Another reflected: *“I think the information thing is really important and maybe people feeling like you know youth work and projects we know what that is, what they are, but for someone coming from a different country where they might not have heard of non-formal education or youth services, it is a whole new set of things that they have to learn about, so it comes back to they don’t know what they don’t know, and that is probably the biggest barrier.”*

Furthermore, according to some staff, in the context of youth work the presence of some individuals may determine whether a young person attends. For example, the presence of “hard to reach” young people can be a barrier for others with parents reluctant to allow their children to attend a service as a result.

Peer pressure is a common dynamic for those involved in anti-social or drug-related activities. There is a widespread belief amongst staff that the peers of the harder to engage, particularly those involved in the drug-trade, are disparaging of local projects and encourage young people not to attend. A youth worker explains: *“I think one big one is for the very hard to reach, the cohort who is engaging with drugs and crime, I think it is intimidation. The image and front they have to project on the street, for their peers, to be seen to engaging in these services, might be seen as weak. So, that is one big part of it.”*

This is also often the case with GYDPs as one worker reflected: *“Yes, I would say some of the real difficulties would be peers. If their peers are more on the at risk scale, then you won’t reach them. We still try but they have very derogatory views of the GYDP and they would tell their peers not to come here. We are “rats” and it becomes this sort of culture.”*

For some young people at risk, the social aspect of youth services actually acts as a barrier to engagement. Young people at risk, who often lack self-confidence and social skills, may not wish to engage with unfamiliar people. Others may not be attracted to group-based activities particularly from the age of 15 or 16 onwards as such young people are often uncomfortable in groups. One youth worker explains: *“Again, I think it comes down to these young people can be quite vulnerable and fearful of who we put them into a room with, and there is always that underlying thing of, ‘is that person safe with that person, and is everyone safe?’ But there is no reason why you can’t if you set the foundation right. Who is his peer group that you could put him in a group with? Can you provide the group work in a safe and secure environment? You don’t just throw him into it, in a building he doesn’t know with people he does not know because it won’t work and you pay the price for it. I think a huge thing these young people lack is safety and security, and that type of work, you have to provide an environment in which he can relax.”*

The youth worker continued: *“So it is about the environment. It is not that these young people are unable; it is not that they are not capable of mixing with others. It is that they have a higher range of needs in terms of what the environment needs to be, and what the topic of the conversation needs to be. You cannot expect them to sit around in a circle with people they don’t trust and talk about things, about what is often quite a traumatic life experience, whether it is stuff they have done to others or stuff they have had done to them. And that safety is so important, and that, to me, it is not capability, or they are too bold. It is that you need to build security.”*

In these cases, staff emphasise the importance of one-to-one mentoring and, where possible, gradual development and integration into group-based activities. According to one youth worker: *“...there has to be a relationship with the youth worker but you need to have group work. One-to-one and group should not be fighting with each other; they complement each other. I am a massive advocate of one-to-one mentoring. It works if it is done right, and you build a relationship first. You can then build on that in group work. You can challenge them first, and they can hide a little in the group. They go hand in hand; one can’t work without the other.”*

In response to this, interviewees stress the importance of early intervention and of engaging young people in pro-social activities and group-based activities in youth projects (and school) at a younger age.

8.1.4 Substance Misuse and Drug Related Criminal Activity

From the perspective of many local staff and workers interviewed, problems with substance misuse and involvement in drug-related criminal activity is a fundamental barrier to engagement with local services and supports, along with progression in employment and the formal education system. A recurring sentiment of interviewees is the “normalisation” of alcohol consumption and drug-use even among children as young as 13 and 14. Polydrug use of weed and tablets mixed with alcohol is a particular cause of concern. According to one project worker: *“Often they might start to experiment with alcohol. Then start with cannabis, weed, and might start with tablets, and depending on the family environment, some of those drugs might be readily available in the home environment as well as what is available in the wider environment.”*

Substance misuse is also understood as a consequence of underlying emotional and development deficits, as well as a response to grief, to trauma, and loss.

Worryingly, some young people seem to simply enjoy alcohol and drugs and do not necessarily see the harm in substance misuse even at a young age. In terms of education and providing advice to young people beginning experimentation with drugs, one project-worker observed: *“One of the challenges with young groups I have found, is that they are starting to use drugs, they are enjoying it, and they do not see any issues with it. The challenge is to get to explore the idea that there are issues with it. But if they are actually in a phase where they are enjoying using then that is a challenge, and how it makes it them feel. Sometimes you get that in groups - they are enjoying drugs. They don’t see it as an issue.”*

The intergenerational nature of drug-misuse in the community is widely recognised, with local projects treating multiple generations of families for problematic drug-use. The drug-use of parents has considerable implications for young people. As well as the difficulties for the carrying out the tasks of parenting caused by drug-use, young people can often suffer considerable associated mental health issues, including anxiety and stress. Children may also effectively grow up without a parent or guardian. As one drug project-worker explained: *“We would be working with young people who are part of an intergenerational family where addiction would be part of the family, unfortunately... so growing up, there was obviously certain choices, and growing up they would have seen certain behaviours that they thought was common ground for them to try. So we are working with young people who are third or fourth generation unfortunately, and they have addiction issues themselves. We would be working with young mothers, young fathers, and also young fathers who would struggling to try to have an input into their children’s lives, but they have been unable to because of their behaviour... and so we would be working with a lot of young people who would be carers in their family, who would have a huge sense of responsibility put on them at a young age - whether their father has passed away or their mother is unwell in the house. So they would be in a position where they would be the main breadwinner in the house.”*

It is not uncommon for young people to struggle to cope with the toll that alcohol and/or drugs takes on their parents and siblings, with substance-abuse and addiction further undermining trust between loved ones. One practitioner reflected: *“I would say the majority of young people who come here for drug problems, you can say their basic needs weren’t met from an early stage from either family or school or the system itself. And I think they probably turn to drugs to escape and for comfort. They would have lacked confidence so they get confidence from the drug, and they felt that the friends they met from using drugs, people using drugs become their close friends at the time, and they felt more comfortable with them.”*

Death and illness caused by drugs can result in further grief and trauma within families with the loss of loved ones taking a huge emotion toll. As one practitioner explained: *“I have grown up in this area, and I have seen devastation. Some families bury three or four of their siblings...and it is what they left behind...families and kids left behind to grow up without a father so that makes things worse. A lot of the families in the area would have had people die early.”*

In addition to substance misuse, involvement in drug-related criminal activity at a young age is also a key barrier. Drug-related intimidation and involvement in drug-related criminal and anti-social activity is a regular feature of life in the community for many young people. This is deemed a consequence of the financial rewards and associated lifestyle. “Gangland” is part of the culture of the community and its influence on the consciousness of young people is apparent.

According to one youth worker: *“Two years ago, we had a group of young people who were coming in here and they were playing with pool-cues, using them as guns, AK-47s, Glock hand-guns, re-enacting the Regency Hotel shooting. They were handing each other them and were re-enacting that. So, when you hear that the alarm bells are going off in your head and then the next time you talk to them about that...you ask them questions, delve into and then eventually you bring them into a group and discuss it. They see gangs are being positive; they give you money and power.”*

Young people may feel more connected to and respected by older participants in the drug-trade than with teachers and other authority figures in the community. Drugs and criminal activity represent an alternative lifestyle for some young people in the NEIC and their families. The potential income, power, and status associated with drugs and crime are difficult to counteract, making engagement in education, employment and youth services less appealing

or desired. The local drug industry and related criminal activity is considered a form of competition to local projects and services. This industry ‘employs’ and ‘supports’ young people, offering them short-term easy access to money. Young people who have their own means of generating an income no longer perceive the need for local services and supports, except perhaps at a time of crisis. Involvement in the drug-trade and its associated rewards are considered as ‘achievable’ and ‘realistic’ career paths for some young people.

Consequently, there is a lack of real incentives to entice young people involved in crime/drugs to engage in youth work programmes and/or further education and training. This view is captured by one interviewee who stated: *For young people themselves, in parts of the NEIC, the fact that there is a high level of criminal activity, and the lure of the amount of money that can be made, and given what I said about the education system earlier, it lends itself to young people asking, ‘why would I go to school, go through all of this, and at the end of that, go out and find a job that could be minimum wage or less? But if I go out and do what is being done in the area...?’ Given that they see this on a regular basis, and the wealth that is accumulated, that option is very attractive. Obviously they do not understand the consequences of it, but if you can earn that money, why go to community training, why stay in further education?”*

Involvement in drug-related activity means young people do not participate at all or engage meaningfully if they do attend. One staff member in the further education sector commented: *“It can be very easy to fall into a social group that is involved in criminal activity or some sort of anti-social activity, anyway, in the area. Those would be the young people who would engage briefly. We would see them briefly. They might make an attempt to, they might join, but we do not see them after the initial period, or their attendance is so sporadic that you might wonder, what is the point of them being in contact with us?”⁷⁴*

Younger people involved in this activity can be the victims of both insidious and more obvious forms intimidation by older members. This is often a barrier to engagement with local projects and services and desistance from crime and young offending. Some interviewees, moreover, spoke of hostility from more senior participants in the drug-trade while engaging in detached or street-based youth work. Staff engaging young people on the street, informing them of projects, and offering them alternative activities, can themselves encounter hostility and intimidation.

Drug misuse increases the likelihood of drug debts and drug-related intimidation (DRI). Drugs are often provided to young people on credit, often while out late at night and under the influence of other substances. Large debts can be run up quickly, leading to pressure to repay through engaging in criminal acts including selling and holding drugs. Consequently, the distinction between young people with substance misuse issues and drug-dealers is not straightforward. DRI has a profound impact on families and the wider community. If a young person cannot pay, passes away, or goes to prison, the debt must still be paid off by loved ones. Drug debts undermine trust between family members, with parents or siblings who often help pay debts.

Furthermore, due to connections between substance misuse and dealing, family members are often unsure whether the money is needed to pay off debts or will actually be used to procure more drugs. The impact of drugs on families and drug-related intimidation is articulated by one project worker who reflected: *“[Drugs] tears families apart, really. We have situations where young people, I would say about 60 per cent of young people who come here, have been recently only put out of a home due to the impact that drugs would have on the family. With that, the house is getting raided, guards are calling to the door, subtle intimidation, cars driving up and down the road, people knocking at the front door. That is the start of it, I suppose. The property gets damaged, cars, walls, windows, and that is kind of progress for the individual unfortunately. And then intimidation. Beatings. A lot of people can end up in a bad, bad, way - even hospitalisation. What we would see is that, we see a lot of the trauma on families in terms of the relationship with families; even the granny and grandads, the siblings in the house.”*

Drugs debts and drug-related intimidation leads to family breakdown and child-parent violence. This is articulated by one social worker who explains: *“...so it could start off really minor that they started using drugs themselves and now they are dealing. Then all of a sudden they find themselves answering to the big drug dealers in the area, and then you have people coming to their door demanding money, sometimes smashing up their house. So their parents just can’t manage it anymore and ask them to leave or the young person has a lot of arguments with their parents and they will leave”.*

⁷⁴ Another reflected: “And for that cohort that got caught up in that criminality, drug use and drug dealing, there is a value in that they are getting money for it, they are getting drugs from it, and they are not going to come in to a service unless they are mandated to.”

In these situations, child-parent violence is not uncommon as one social worker attested: *“The other big one we get is child-parent violence and a lot of parents will ring in and say we can’t manage and again it is linked to drugs... or parents challenging them over their behaviour with drug-use... Then the children get violent back, actual physical violence, and then we have parents coming in and/or ringing in and saying, hey look, we can’t manage them. They have become violent and they could become violent towards their siblings as well as parents too...”*

This raises the difficult question of how best to help young people and families experiencing drug-related intimidation/involvement. This can be a real moral and ethical dilemma for local projects (and families) who seek to support and protect young people in times of crisis. As one youth worker summarised: *“...we put safety first; that is my approach to it. And as much as it kills me to do it, I do not want young people to have pay these debts but they need to put safety first. We have had young people who have used debt collectors who are very visible in this community to pay them off, and credit union loans are used to pay off debt collectors. And we will always do a bit of work with young people to help them to get a loan to pay them off, but if they get a loan, go through with them the system in place and how are they going to pay it back? How are we going to do it? Then progress to ‘we need to look at your drug addiction’ but there is no easy answer on what you do.”*

8.1.5 Fear and Stigma

The role of peers and family in engagement also raises the issue of fear and stigma. While parental engagement is widely considered important to the frequency and quality of engagement and the achievement of positive outcomes of interventions, as previously discussed, fear and stigma for parents is considered a barrier to engagement. A common theme amongst interviews is the fear and stigma of many young people and their families towards services and supports, with mistrust, suspicion, and paranoia of authority at the beginning of engagement.

Families are often reluctant to engage with services and supports due to fear of outside scrutiny as it is thought that family involvement in a specific club or project may result in the additional external investigations of social workers or other agencies. Young people can also fear the implications of honest and sustained engagement with services due to fears over their family. One project worker explained: *“Also, there can be a fear of getting involved because of being protective if there is family stuff; a fear to expose things. So they won’t always go there in terms of naming things because they feel like, ‘oh god, what have I said?’ A new referral that I have, a ten year old girl...she is afraid to talk about what is going on, afraid to open up because she is afraid she will be taken away from her Mam. Now that is not going to happen but because we are one of a number of agencies working with a child, it can be a social worker, a JLO, NYP, or whatever. So they have to tell their stories. So depending who they are telling their story to, it might change depending on what that service needs to know. So, fear is huge. Fear for themselves and scrutiny on the family. Also fear of being seen going in to a service.”*

Another reflected: *“In the work that we do, it can be quite slow to build a relationship with young people because they have a lot of trust issues from their background; how they grew up. They might think they will be stigmatised or stereotyped for being bold or not good for anything, so it takes a while for them to think you are not like that. In my experience, young people don’t want to talk to you because they hear stories of social workers taking kids from families, so it is about trying to get past that, and having role clarity, because they see you are someone who is coming to spy on their family. So it is hard to get past that.”⁷⁵*

Local services and projects are also stigmatised by those involved in drugs and associated crime. This mind-set is captured by one project-worker who observed: *From my perspective, I came to the youth project on a regular basis...14 onwards. Nowadays when you are nine and 10 you can make a lot of money. There is now a stigma attached to youth projects for the hard to reach. ‘I am not going in there for a formal session with the youth workers. I don’t want to do that, and I can make money on the street.’*

Hard to reach teenagers often dismiss youth projects as aimed at “children”. One social worker commented: *“The main challenge is the young person; do they actually want to go? I have had so many cases where we put everything in place and try to make them go, but they didn’t want to go and I thought a lot of it too, was the stigma, ‘oh, I am not*

⁷⁵ A GYDP worker reflected: *“So, it is about first impressions and what is being said about that project in the area. So GYDPs would have a problem with stigma. Some parents I met never even met the staff, who are brilliant. It is just the stigma surrounding it. Sometimes we try to have a parents’ night and to invite the parents but very few ever come. But if you invite them in to meet one-on-one with a cup of tea, then they will come. They probably don’t want other parents to see them. A lot of that is personal issues.”*

going to that place because everybody knows me'. I think particularly with the girls as well, a lot of the time. I work with teenage girls - they try to pretend they are older than they actually are. So they are kind of embarrassed to go to a service because there are kids there and they do not want to go in there and play games in the afternoon but they would go drinking. So there is a lot of stigma of, 'oh, I am not going to that service, I will not engage' ...it is such a small community and everyone tends to know each other and they can be embarrassed nearly. 'Oh, I am not going to that service because people know me and I am going to go out drinking on a Friday night because I am this grown up girl, but then I go to this project during the day and people are going to know that.'"

There is also fear of other people in the community being aware of issues and difficulties. This perception ties in with the stigma of receiving help and support.

Staff in GYDPs and Further Education and Training also cite the issue of stigma. Youth diversion is often associated with An Garda Síochána which is often a barrier for families with a negative experience and/or view of the criminal justice system. This stigma can be a barrier to engagement for families despite a primary referral from a Juvenile Liaison Officer.⁷⁶ Staff in CTCs, moreover, are aware of the adverse reputation of the further education and training in wider society which is evident in the NEIC also. Further education and training centres, "the FÁS", are often held in poor regard and not always attractive to young people.

An educator in the CTC sector explained: *"If you can develop a sense of pride of learners coming in to these places, they are more likely to come. I mean, here they actually slag each other for coming here for too long. They still call this service "the FÁS", and they say, 'oh jaysus, I am going to be at the FÁS for two years', and it is a negative... None of them come through the door are particularly proud to be here."*

Finally, there is also stigma in relation to seeking support with mental health issues. This is not unique to the NEIC and is widely acknowledged nationally. However, the prevalent culture of crime and image of masculinity in the community are considered further barriers to mental health, particularly amongst young males. One GYDP worker reflected: *"there are so many mental health issues in this area, and in this area it is very much how hard you are, how tough you are, and not a lot of people talk about their feelings. So, a barrier to mental health would be the stigma, definitely. Oh, you are weak or the word 'faggot' gets thrown around. It is a huge issue because a lot of the young people bully others for going to mental health services, they need mental health services the most but they just don't want to admit it. So it would be a lot of boys who wouldn't go. We had a young lad here who went but nobody else knew. It was the biggest kept secret...that we had in the project...we were going out and collecting him and saying we were bringing him out for a one-to-one but we were bringing him up to a counselling service and then bringing him home so no one knew about it, because he was so ashamed of it."*

The stigma within families in terms of mental health services is gradually changing through greater awareness and availability of community-based counselling and the mental health services provided by YPAR and Jigsaw. However, fear and stigma, including towards mental health, still remains relevant to some migrants and minority ethnic young people. This is to some extent cultural. In terms of mental health, migrant-specific staff highlight cultural stigma as well as an absence of understanding of the importance of mental health services and counselling. A youth worker in the migrant specific sector explained: *"...even for anyone to make step of going to a counsellor is a big thing and for someone to do it when English is not their first language, and it might not be culturally appropriate, or they are from a culture that does not talk about their problems. For example, I was chatting to one young person who I worked with. She is from Africa, and she talks a lot about African approaches to mental health and how it is a taboo subject, and young people would not generally seek out help for that sort of thing, or to discuss them. And even non-African young people. I have one and she knows it would be good for her to talk to a counsellor, and she is like, 'no way would I go do that; no way would I talk to them'. So, you can tell them about Jigsaw: that this is on offer; you can do this; it is free. But there always seems to be hesitancy there."*

More widely in terms of public services, migrants may come from countries with corrupt, dysfunctional, or authoritarian governments, and have suffered negative experiences of public services. Furthermore, certain migrant groups may be suspicious of public services and public institutions in general, often in consequence of perceived discrimination and racism. In this respect, as outlined, Roma often attempt to hide their ethnicity from society as much as possible to prevent discrimination. Moreover, many migrants living in Ireland illegally or with insecure

⁷⁶ One worker commented: *"And then we are kind of linked with the Guards, we are a GYDP, and many young people who are at risk of offending or have offended would think we are Guards or rats, or rats to the guards, so it is hard to get past that, and to do that, it is a lot of small slow building relationship sessions with these young people."*

status are reluctant to expose the accommodation and living conditions of their families to statutory or local agencies, forming yet another barrier to engagement.

8.2 HOW TO BETTER ENGAGE WITH HARD TO REACH AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK?

This section of the analysis explores ways in which local projects and services can better engage with hard to reach people and with young people at risk and their families. It therefore begins with a discussion of the perceived importance of early intervention and prevention.

8.2.1 Early Intervention and Prevention

A common sentiment expressed by interviewees across the broad range of services is the importance of early intervention and prevention. Early intervention is considered important in preventing young people from becoming “hard to reach”, in identifying and reducing risk factors in young people and families, and in developing a culture of engagement with services and supports among young people and their parents. Staff therefore stress the importance of building a rapport and positive relationship with parents and families of young people at risk from a young age; before they require more specific interventions such as Meitheal, become involved in the youth justice system, or are in need of crisis or emergency supports.

Furthermore, early education is widely seen as important in the context, not only of mental health, alcohol and drug-use, but in the wider ramifications of drug-use, such as debt, intimidation, and violence.⁷⁷

While they do not advocate or wish to cease engagement with older “hard to reach” young people, some staff question the efficacy of engagement with young people who are heavily involved in anti-social behaviour, young offending, drug-related activity, or those with little or no history of positive engagement in local projects. The likelihood of meaningful engagement with “hard to reach” young people decreases with age, particularly for those involved in crime or other forms of anti-social behaviour. Moreover, in cases where the behaviour of young people who do come to services is challenging or violates the rules of service, they are more likely to need access to more targeted, crisis, or specialised interventions. As such, there is a need to place a specific focus on 8-12 year olds.

One interviewee reflected: “...what you do is to bring a relationship or a rapport with young people, hence why we are taking them in early now. We’re supposed to take them in at 12 but we are taking them in at 10 because they are brother and sisters of those who are here and who know the family circumstances and background - what is happening in the family. We know that if we wait those two years, we are wasting our time, because the problems are there. They are huge, they will exacerbate, and we will struggle to deal with them... Their outlook on life is so glum that no matter [what] we are telling them at 14, 15, 16, it is really, really challenging to change their mind-set because this mind-set is too far gone; that it is difficult. Yes, in terms of the really “hard to reach”, we may get one or two of them that will come around, that one or two is out of 20 or 30, to your way of thinking, so if you have that rapport and you have relationship [from a young age], it really helps a lot.”

A professional in the further education sector commented: “...it’s hard for a young person once they reach the age of 16 or 17. Their lifestyles, they have so much going on in their life... 10 or 20 charges, some of them. They are going to court once or twice a week, so engaging with a service like ourselves is nearly impossible for them. And rarely does that young person get to a position in which they are settled enough to attend. Now it is rare, but you might have one or two whose attendance is atrocious at the beginning, but then they settle down.”

8.2.2 Identifying What Young People Want and Empowerment

There is a widespread belief among staff of local projects and services of the need to identify the needs and wants of all young people, and to design interventions and services to meet this in closer partnership with them and, where necessary, with their families. As with early intervention, the development of youth voice and empowerment is

⁷⁷ Early intervention and education is also widely considered to be important to building levels of mutual respect with young people in the community and members of the emergency services and An Garda Síochána through community policing. A more targeted and specific approach to education might help build a culture in which police are not considered as the enemy by young people.

considered part of a longer-term strategy. It is not necessarily seen as a way to engage “hard to reach” young people in the short-term, particularly for those who are involved in drug-related criminal activity, have poor experiences of public institutions such as formal education, substance misuse issues, and/or low levels of personal efficacy. More broadly, staff are aware of the need to design services in closer consultation with young people, and highlight the need to provide greater opportunities for young people to have a voice, to influence the types of programmes and services on offer, and to give them a role in devising programmes which are of more practical relevance to their lives from a young age.

This type of young-person specific process emphasises the importance of youth voice and empowerment, and is considered a means to appeal to groups who are less likely to engage with youth services, but who are not at risk or engaging in risky behaviours. For example, 18-24 girls in the community are considered particularly hard to engage and “hidden”. They are not visible on the street, seem to leave the NEIC to socialise, and are frequently unresponsive to particular programmes such as Young Mother’s clubs. While current youth policy extends to the age of 24, there is a belief that standard youth services may not be attractive to emerging adults in their current form. It is therefore recommended that programmes should offer tangible benefits for young people, be tailored to their specific needs, and offer clear pathways for progression in life. Young people must buy-in and believe that services are responsive to their needs and interests. One interviewee maintained: “...*the first thing you have to do is to listen to them, because what you are offering might not be what they want. So constantly, you have to ask yourself the question, ‘are we delivering the service that young people will actually engage with?’ And you need to review this regularly.*”

While aware that this closer partnership maybe challenging for some projects and statutory agencies, it is held that solutions or specific interventions should no longer be imposed upon young people and that the desires and needs they voice should be respected and acted upon as much as possible.

Voice and empowerment is of particular relevance to migrants and ethnic minority young people due to their life experiences prior to coming to Ireland and/or experiences in Ireland. For example, as previously outlined, young migrants can endure adverse experiences with public services and/or experience discrimination and racism in Ireland engendering a mistrust of the ‘system’; and a general sense of alienation and disempowerment. There is an overwhelming desire among interviewees for greater integration of new communities and to use youth projects to increase the links between young people of different nationalities and cultures. Developing youth projects which cater for the needs and desires of all nationalities within the NEIC is considered an effective means to challenge and prevent racism and to increase the cultural awareness of Irish people, as well as a means to connect new communities to the NEIC. There is a general belief in the benefits of giving greater consideration to the specific needs and contributions of migrant/minority ethnic young people. The work of NYP2 and Swan Youth Service in engaging young migrants and minority ethnic young people in the NEIC has been widely praised, along with the networks facilitated by YPAR.

To increase engagement, from the perspective of those involved in the migrant sector, “mainstream” youth projects and services must identify and then meet the needs of young migrants and their families.

However, there is recognition that the desires of young migrants and their families in terms of youth services might be challenging since a number of migrant communities prefer more culturally or ethnic-specific forms of youth work. Some young migrants would like to see more people ‘like them’ involved in projects and have the opportunity to engage in activities and programmes which relate to and are cognisant of their own specific culture and identity.⁷⁸ From this perspective, there are potential benefits to more culturally-specific youth projects geared towards the minority ethnic community. While it is difficult to generalise across different cultures and communities, through culturally-specific projects, higher levels of engagement from migrant young people and their families may be achieved, albeit at the potential expense of integration and connection with Irish young people.

However, despite the focus on more culturally-specific projects, interviewees from both the migrant specific sector and more general services underscore the need for balance between integration and culturally-specific activities and programmes. This is summed up by one interviewee who maintained: “*Ideally, you would want both; it is hard to say. If you have a project that is working with a particular migrant group, working with Afghanis or Somalis or*

⁷⁸ Further, there may be differences in the desired approach to youth work in an Irish and African cultural context, for example, and differences in opinion on how best to support young migrants in the development of their identity in an intercultural context. This is also relevant to religion, and some migrant youth workers identified the religious and cultural beliefs are possible barriers to engagement with mixed or mainstream youth projects.

whatever, the risk then is poor integration, you know? But the benefit is that you will probably have higher numbers of participation from migrants. So, I would say ideally both, both should happen. And young people should have the option of doing both. And you have things like the International Youth Club in Swan/NYP2, and it is very beneficial. There should be, as much as possible, chances for interaction and integration with other kids."

8.2.3 Extending the Availability and Scope of Projects and Services

A recurring theme among interviewees is the need of projects and services to undertake regular evaluations of their effectiveness and their capacity to meet the needs of young people. The needs and wants of young people are subject to change, and as such, community organisations should adapt and evolve accordingly. Consequently, there is a need to ensure the culture of an organisation enables a project or service to meet the needs of service-users and to introduce and implement effective approaches to reach all groups.

It is held that the current offering of projects and services may be too restrictive or inflexible to properly engage young people who are most hard to reach and/or those most at risk who present with complex needs. Interviewees, for example, stress the necessity for greater flexibility in the times and types of services offered, of extending service hours, including youth projects, to run as late as possible during the week and to offer greater provision of services at weekends. A need for expanded hours of social work provision in the NEIC and wider afield in Dublin was also highlighted. The lack of a 24/7 professional social-care service which includes crisis response to emergency situations is considered a huge deficit to the community and in engaging and meeting the needs of hard to reach young people more generally. In this respect, seven day services and greater availability of services during "anti-social" hours are recommended.⁷⁹ This is summed up by one staff member who observed: *"One of the things I feel the hardest to reach need, is that they need to feel they can walk in the door at any time of the day or night. However, because of our remit, it is very difficult to provide that service. However, if there was an open door youth service and they could just walk in, and have a relationship with a youth worker there, I think that would work really well."*

Another reflected: *"Another barrier to our service is that we are Monday to Friday, nine to five. That suits me but it doesn't always suit the clients."*

In addition to opening hours, the benefits of providing more varied forms of services including drop-ins, residentials, outreach, detached youth work, one-to-one mentoring, as well as group activities and traditional youth work, are underscored. In terms of youth work, a need to incorporate more trips, and 'high octane' activities and residentials into programmes are identified, since staff consider these integral to building positive relationships with young people and to incentivising and rewarding engagement. Furthermore, greater resources and scope to engage with families as well as children is also considered of potential benefit, particularly with younger teenagers. In cases where a child is not engaging, a number of interviewees cited the benefits of engaging with and supporting families and parents of children who are hard to reach or at risk.

As previously discussed, while youth policy extends to the age of 24 there is a perceived lack of services for young people who reach adulthood. For example, practitioners from within the social-care field spoke of the difficulties in ensuring that young people aged 18-24 who have previously been in care, transition to independent living. In fact, the volumes of younger adults accessing homeless accommodation is considerable and negotiating these adult services can be a difficult adjustment for those who have only engaged in adolescent, youth-based services previously. For instance, in addition to the potential risks for young people, they are often expected to be more self-sufficient and independent in their interaction with adult services.

Flexibility and more specialised supports are also relevant to issues of further education and training. A greater emphasis within the sector on the development of personal and social skills in tandem with earning certification is a common theme for staff, while the lack of a proper remit and adequate resources to address the personal issues of young people is considered a key deficit. The inability of young people to meet the demands of further education and training is often a significant barrier to progression but the structure of the educational course and its focus on attainment and certification, is arguably too narrow and restrictive for many young people. This makes it difficult for staff in CTCs and other services to assist young people to meet the demands of courses.

⁷⁹ There is an awareness of the potential difficulties arising from extending opening hours and providing services to young people late at night. Young people, for example, must be in bed at a reasonable hour, and young people socialising late at night may disturb neighbours and people in the community.

According to one staff member: *“The emphasis is on certification and progression and a lot of the young people coming in to us, they are nowhere near being able to complete and get a certain amount of certification. There are a lot more basic needs that are more of a priority for them. And one of the biggest areas where there are no real resources or space to deal with is the whole area of personal skills and social skills development. That would be one of the major things, the deficits that we have...I think broadly speaking across CTCs and Youthreach, they are fairly long-standing staff; they are there a long time and they are committed into their roles. I would say that about 50 per cent of their time is given over to trying, helping a trainee work through, around their personal issues, and the rest, obviously, goes into trying to work on their training.”*

As this is related to the need to measure the qualitative and so-called soft outcomes of local projects and services, funders could pay more attention to this type of “hidden” work and focus less on traditional indicators of “success”.

As previously discussed, there is considerable awareness of the difficulty in engaging with certain sections of the minority ethnic/ migrant community, including young Roma. From the perspective of some professionals engaged with these cohorts, there is a need to be more flexible in the approach to young people from migrant or minority ethnic backgrounds due to the transitory and often issue-driven nature of their lives. More widely, migrants and minority ethnic young people are more mobile and have social networks which spread beyond clearly defined or narrow geographic areas. Furthermore, migrant groups in Dublin are often self-organising, issue-driven, or project-based. However, migrant and minority ethnic communities in the Dublin inner city area are looking for space and facilities to organise and to socialise. They may lack physical space and infrastructure and can struggle to meet the demands of governance and red-tape to access funding and to keep projects going.

8.2.4 Outreach and Street-Based Youth Work

In terms of expanding the range of services on offer to engage hard to reach young people, greater outreach and more detached street-based forms of youth work are widely considered to be important. Outreach services enable youth and social-care workers to meet people where they are at; whether on the street or in their own homes/in their own communities. Outreach work is widely considered a tool of initial engagement and a first step in developing a trusting relationship. More outreach youth work can help to identify young people who do not engage, to follow-up if they disengage, to better explain services on offer, and to increase contact with parents and families. According to one worker: *“Despite the best efforts and strategies already put in place by local services and projects it is still difficult to engage a certain number of young people. This also includes young people who do come into centres but are difficult to engage even when present...The development and implementation of an appropriate outreach service needs to be put in place to make the initial contact and identify what is the potential for engagement, and at what level, and what supports are required to make it happen.”*

Some interviewees within local drug services, moreover, spoke of the particular benefits of outreach in raising awareness of treatment services among young people who are engaging in substance misuse. Outreach and detached youth work is also considered a means to interact with young migrants in their own environments in order to identify their needs and wants. Considering that many migrants are in emergency or temporary accommodation, work long hours, and lack financial resources and child care, the migrant-specific sector is particularly mindful of the limitations of expecting migrants to travel to services for assistance.

Moreover, for young people who will not engage or who are currently unlikely to come into a project or service, street-based youth work should be provided to provide services on the street, to meet them in their own spaces, and to build a profile among hard to reach young people and families. This approach is distinct from outreach. Outreach and street-work are a means to build trust with young people who are inherently suspicious of services or distrustful of authority figures since consistent and regular outreach demonstrates authenticity and a real willingness to engage young people who are unlikely to enter youth projects. This can promote trust and lessen suspicion of both youth workers and local services. However, it is clear that such a process can take time and is a longer-term project in respect to some “hard to reach” young people.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ There is also awareness of the difficulty of outreach and detached forms of youth work in the context of the ongoing feud and drug dealing in the area. As outlined, some workers spoke of the difficulty in engaging young people on the streets who are interested in youth services due to the presence of older, more senior people in the drug trade who keep young people away and can, at times, engage in subtle forms of intimidation.

As one youth worker explained: *“We work on a system of outreach. We will knock on your door, we will come back the next day; we will walk to the areas we think you are, whether it is the park or the flats; and we will go back, and we will go back, and we will go back. So, relentless outreach is the real term...that is what we say to them; ‘we won’t give up on you and when you are ready, we are ready’. For that, if the person won’t talk to you today, you say, ‘well, I will be back tomorrow at three o’clock’, and you better come back at three o’clock. And it could take up to 20 times before the young person talks to you, but they know then we are never going to go away.”*

The youth worker continued: *“We will always send a message to them that, ‘your place is not gone; you have a place with us, and when you are ready to try it, it is there for you’. And that, I think is...it is not easy. It can be extremely demoralising for youth workers. It can be risky and unsafe, so you need a plan for what you are doing. But the most important thing is that the young person gets the message that I am going to follow through on what I say I will do.”*

8.2.5 Effective Transitions Within and Between Services

Youth policy generally extends until the age of 24, ostensibly bridging the gap between adolescence and young adulthood. Depending on the type of service on offer, however, some services cease engagement with young people at 18 while others are available up to and including 24. Such inconsistency in the age range of services can mean young people get cut off from a service they are reliant upon and may struggle to find a suitable alternative afterwards. Thus there is widespread recognition of the importance of extending the age-range of services to ensure young people do “age out”, but maintain links with services and supports as needed.

In this regard, practitioners highlight the importance of managing transitions in emerging adulthood and the continued availability of supports for young people. Blunt transitions and rigid age limits do not allow for the context of adolescent development wherein maturity is often delayed. Vulnerable “hard to reach” or at risk young people do not neatly slot into particular age categories. Consequently, there is a need for flexibility within age requirements with services obtaining the formal funding remit to continue to engage with young people where necessary.

Young people in the care system with complex needs, for example, may have access to a range of supports until the age of 18, after which services become more sporadic and less responsive to the complex needs of young peoples’ entry into adulthood, while the social-care field has also underscored the lack of timely access to mental health supports for young adults. “Aging out” is also an issue in drug-treatment services, as one practitioner explained: *“We are noticing that the people who are presenting to us, they are getting younger. And there had been an opportunity for us to lower the age to 12, from 14-21, and maybe raise the age to 23 because with drug-users, a lot of peoples’ development stunts. So, even though we are working with a lad of 22, he may have the developmental age of 16.”*

At 18, young people also progress to the adult justice system, and those involved in GYDPs are considered too old to continue their engagement. Thus, in a formal sense, the age-limit for GYDPs ends relationships between young people and youth justice workers. However, young people who “age out” of diversion projects may require additional support both in desistance from offending and in making the transition to employment and further education. For some young people, the relationship with a GYDP worker remains significant following the formal conclusion of their involvement, and practitioners in the field spoke of maintaining relationships with young people after the age of 18 and 19 and of receiving requests for support and assistance in times of crisis, even many years after the end of engagement with a GYDP. This is highly significant in the context of often vulnerable young people who may have trust issues and difficulties in forming positive relationships with adult authority figures. A GYDP worker explained: *“How can we expand our age remit? That is difficult, but youth-work goes up to 24, yet GYDPs go to 18 and that is an issue. That is a legal issue we can’t get around because they are in the adult criminal process. In this case, legality trumps care. You can’t record as a service when the 18-21 year old comes to you; it’s no longer our remit, but we can’t turn them away.”*

The sentiment is echoed by another project worker who maintains: *“We should cater for 12-18 year olds, but we have many 19 year olds who will come back to us. So, that is another grey area. I suppose we would also provide support for young people who are in crisis situations. They might be 19 or 20, but they still have a relationship with us, they come back to us, so we will deal with the situation at hand. Only this morning, I had a call from a 21 year old. He would have a lot of dependency issues...drugs...and as a consequence of that he said he got arrested.”*

Yet another reflected: *“We tend to talk about “hard to reach” and focus on 14 or 15 but the huge gap is 18 plus. When you start to look at programmes for 18 plus then the well starts to dry up and this is national. There are very few places. Now there are places being set up and they are new, but we have to disengage with young people when they are 17; we might at a push get to 19. We have to justify it formally to funders, but we have to put forward a very strong case. In my experience, I have had 18-21 year olds walk back into that door not knowing where to go; there are [at] the stage when they find it hard to start again. They try to find another worker to invest in but we put the years in and when you spend four or five years with a young person, how do you expect them to go off and start something new again?”*

These issues foreground the importance of ensuring young people at risk have access to suitable supports and can continue relationships with trusted professionals where necessary. This is considered a positive means to prevent young people engaged in services from becoming hard to engage and to continue supporting young people into adulthood.

Moreover, from the perspective of staff who work in the migrant sector, it is evident that undocumented migrants or those without legal status in Ireland cannot transition into adulthood properly or safely. For example, they are unable to access legal employment or formal education which arguably pushes many into illegal work in the service sector where they are often poorly paid and subject to the ill-treatment of employers, and occasionally, co-workers. Undocumented migrants may also become involved in the drug-trade or prostitution to earn money. Furthermore, the transition from secondary to third level is considered a particular challenge as young migrants are often ineligible for bursaries or grants and have to pay international fees, which are significantly more costly than for Irish and EU citizens.

8.2.6 Timely Access to Community Based Specialised Services and Supports

Staff emphasise the importance of timely and consistent access to community-based specialised supports for young people and their families. Since many young people in the NEIC engage in risky behaviours there is a need for additional supports for those with a range of complex needs. Young people who seek help need timely access to services which can provide effective holistic responses as extended waiting periods for support and interventions can lead to family breakdown, further involvement in crime, and continued drug-use. The importance of timely access is clearly evident in the case of drug-treatment and combating drug-related intimidation. This is of particular significance as the desire and willingness to seek treatment for drug misuse must be responded to immediately. Drug treatment services in the area seek to do an initial assessment as quickly as possible as delays can lead to further difficulty for a young person.

Greater provision of crisis trauma response for young people impacted by crime and violence is also considered important. This is summarised by one worker who explained: *“There is a lack of a crisis trauma response in the area, given the violence and drugs. I am not just talking an immediate response; I am talking a month, or even six months after. There is no response like that in the area. We have young lads who have witnessed the shootings, and there is no available response to that kind of thing.”*

While individual supports for drug, education, or mental health are available, some young people would benefit from a more holistic service in which one trained worker or organisation could provide treatment for multiple issues or dual diagnosis. Staff underline the potential benefits for a holistic service or community based “one stop shop” or multi-disciplinary teams within some services. More generally, the availability and timely access of community-based supports and interventions may require additional resources from funders.

Staff in local projects stress the importance of timely access to mental health services for young people and their families, and as such, many interviewees welcomed the recent funding for additional teen and family counselling provided by YPAR. Where possible, mental health services for “hard to reach” young people should be community-based, adaptable, and flexible, and accommodate the often chaotic lifestyles of young people. Workers in GYDPs and youth projects, moreover, argue in favour of mental health practitioners attending local projects more frequently in order reduce fear and stigma around accessing mental health services and to address the needs of young people more immediately and effectively.

Despite recent additional resources in the NEIC, many staff cited difficulties in referring young people to mental health services and highlight long waiting times. One social care practitioner spoke of the delay and difficulty in accessing services in a timely manner and ensuring that young people have immediate access: *“I had a child who was referred for counselling but they told me the waiting time was going to be 14 weeks. But I thought this child needed counselling straight away so I rang Teen Line. They said, ‘well, if you fill out an application for Teen Line, well then, the other application in Lisdeel is gone, because it is the same service’. Whereas what I was looking to do was to put something in place for the 14 weeks while the other service was waiting, but no one could offer me that.”*

Many professionals are critical of the CAMHS model which they consider too clinical and too rigid. In addition to often long waiting times, there are also often lengthy gaps between appointments. Furthermore, a number of staff questioned the extent to which young people have a positive service experience and place trust in CAMHS staff, and claimed that some CAMHS personnel can be reluctant to engage with other services in the community, and/or share information with professionals from other projects and services. One interviewee reported: *“Getting people into CAMHS, we have to go through their GPs, and if they don’t write a strongly-worded letter for the young person, the application which takes three months to go through is rejected, and you are back to square one. You are going back to the GP saying you must have diagnosed them incorrectly, this kid is off the edge, and he needs some sort of help.”*

Another concurred: *“We have had cases in which children have threatened to self-harm but actually haven’t self-harmed, so mental health services won’t take them on. But for us, they are threatening to do it. So what do they actually have to do to get in? Do they need to physically harm themselves in order to get into a service which is designed to prevent them from doing that? That is a big gap.”*

Furthermore: *“I had a case too where a girl was self-harming and every time we sent a letter to mental health they would say, ‘no, actually she doesn’t mean to kill herself; she is just looking for attention’, and I thought that was just awful. So, letters went from the GP to CAMHS and they kept sending letters back saying she does not meet the threshold for their assessment or their piece of work to start, and we did not know where to start, where to place her, to put supports in place.”*

This experience is also echoed in schools. As one practitioner in the formal education sector explained: *“The services that are there, the access signs to them are difficult for schools because a lot of these places, we can’t refer to CAMHS; it has to be a doctor referral. So you may have a student you know for four or five years, who all of sudden has become very depressed, even suicidal. There are massive concerns around their mental health but you can’t make a referral. They must be referred by a doctor who may have seen them once or twice in the last 10 years. They have to make a quick snap judgement assessment, fill in a form, send it off, and schools are not contacted about it; whether they are in or not; when appointments are. So, if there are appointments, to bring them down, sometimes parents don’t want them to go there, but communicating with schools, helping schools to refer would be a lot better because doctors don’t know them. And it can be difficult for parents who describe things in the home to us to put them across to the doctor in five or ten minutes.”*

The difficulty in accessing CAMHS is partially related to the professional distinctions between “behaviour” and “mental health” which can lead to disagreements between CAMHS and social workers. This ‘battle’ is summarised by one social-care practitioner who revealed: *“To be honest, the battle is always around whether this is mental health or behavioural. And that is an ongoing battle we have with mental health services. They are linked; there is no doubt about that, but it should not be a battle. I am not putting the blame fully on mental health services but it should not be a battle between professionals... ‘oh, this is mental health’ or ‘oh, this is behavioural’. What is the diagnosis? While we are arguing about this the child is going nowhere and it is not getting better. Now it is not good for a child to come here and we say speak with your counsellor if you are feeling this and that, and then the counsellor is saying, well speak with your social-worker about that. And, of course, the young person will say, ‘you know what? I am not going to speak to any of you about it because none of you want to listen’. And that is as much on us as it is on CAMHS, and there is no service for in between the waiting time, if a child is waiting.”*

8.2.7 Skills of Staff and Relationship Building

Staff across the range of projects and services emphasise the importance of good relationships with young people and in having the expertise and experience to engage with young people at risk, to respond to complex needs and behaviours, to build trust, and above all, to provide an effective and inclusive service.

In terms of the most hard to reach, or those most reluctant to engage, challenging behaviour and a deep mistrust of services and authority figures are significant obstacles to overcome. A key theme is the importance of continued professional development and the need for high levels of expertise to respond to the complex needs of the most vulnerable young people, and to deal effectively with challenging behaviour. In addition to an ability to build relationships, better engagement with “hard to reach” young people requires specialised skills and training.

From this perspective, all staff must fully understand and be equipped to respond to the complex behaviours of the most “hard to reach”. This also obtains to the formal education system. Specialised skills are considered a means to better engage but also respond to the challenging behaviour of young people. This places an emphasis of continuing professional development and access to training in specialised areas such as trauma, restorative practices, and non-violent resistance training.

Furthermore, the presence of large numbers of international young people and ethnic minorities places an emphasis on the importance of cultural awareness and understanding, and the ability of staff to engage young people from diverse backgrounds. From the perspective of those who work with migrants and the ethnic minority community, skill-building is needed more broadly within the mainstream youth sector with additional education and training to improve intercultural work and integration. A parallel need for diversity in the background of the youth workers employed to engage with young migrants is also highlighted, along with awareness that although young migrants are often engaged in leadership training, they may not study youth work and/or social-care at third level.

A key aspect of the role of staff is the relationship with young people and their families. In a climate of suspicion, first impressions and initial interactions with staff are often crucial for young people and parents, and can help to minimise stigma and other barriers to engagement. Since relationship-building, however, can be very slow and time-consuming, practitioners highlight the importance of engaging in initial small pieces of work to establish trust and to demonstrate the benefits of engagement for a young person. Furthermore, building relationships is considered key to the lasting and sustained engagement of young people at risk and their families, thereby helping to reduce barriers to engagement and increase the effectiveness of interventions. One practitioner explained: *“Relationship-building is fundamental because if they feel they can have a rapport with you, that you are genuine, you have empathy with them, you listen also, but you can build a relationship; you can challenge them a little around their behaviour; around the child. But you cannot do that if the relationship is not there, if the engagement is not there.”*

While relationship-building with young people is generally complicated and slow to develop, within a community like the NEIC, the process is magnified. As previously discussed, young people may lack trust and have issues with attachment and highly contingent relationships with authority figures. Moreover, the sporadic and infrequent engagement of young people with a project complicates this task. One professional in the further education sector reflected: *“...and if you think about it from the POV of a trainee who is coming in here, ‘my Mam doesn’t care where I am. I just arrived home at five am. And they arrive home at five am and you expect them to be here at nine am. It ain’t going to happen. And then you might have a young fella who, because of the situation at home, might not have a bed to sleep in, he could be sleeping in an arm chair; you don’t know. So, it takes a while to build up the trust with them, to get to know where they are coming from. You can’t always judge a book by its cover and it takes time. But once they see you are willing to engage, see and know you treat them with respect, and feel safe and confident with you. And with that, you can deal with those hard home issues. The biggest part is trust. We need to have more time and resources to build that.”*

Relationship building is also relevant to migrants and ethnic minority young people. For example, youth workers involved in migrant-specific youth work and services cite the importance of building trusting relationships with young migrants. This, however, can be a slow process. As one practitioner; elaborates: *“...in terms of involving young people from the very beginning, that often does not happen and it is hard to do that with those young people because you need to have a relationship with them. So you cannot go up to a group of young lads in Direct Provision who you have never met before, you don’t know them, and say, right lads, ‘what do you do want get out of this project?’ You have to put in the groundwork and maybe that is connected to the barriers to engagement. That is a huge of amount that I have been doing with the young people I know, is just relationship-building, like years of building relationships and then involving them in a project. So, you almost need to spend the time to build the relationship between you and them, and maybe in a non-formal youth café setting or a drop-in, and then you can bring them on to the more detailed or bigger piece of work. But... if you skip that step, it is often a real struggle.”*

Consistency between staff and young people and their families is vital in building relationships and rapport, and for developing trust and confidence. This staff turnover and retention can be problematic, and undermine relationships between a service and young people. Establishing new relationships can be arduous and time-consuming. Staff turnover can also exacerbate the challenging and problematic behaviour of young people.

Newer members of staff, for example, have experienced difficulties replacing workers who leave and in building relationships with young people from scratch. It is often difficult for new workers to build relationships and gain the trust of young people and families. The need for support to improve the transitions between old and new staff and to assist new workers in building relationships with young people and their families is therefore highlighted by newer staff.

A mix of highly-skilled and motivated staff from inside and outside the NEIC is considered important to engaging with hard to reach young people and in building relationships. Staff from outside the NEIC community can broaden horizons and expose young people to new experiences and perspectives, while local staff draw upon prior knowledge of the community and families to reduce potential barriers to engagement. The future development of staff from within the community, as well as developing the next generation of young community and youth-leaders, is considered an effective means to engage with young people from the area. To achieve this, it is important to incentivise young people from the community to train in community/social or youth work, and then to go on to postgraduate education. Where possible, local graduates in social-care or the youth sector, should also be encouraged and incentivised to work in the NEIC upon graduation. That said, while there is a shared tendency to hire local people where possible, it is clear that irrespective of background, all staff should be well-trained and motivated, and demonstrate the requisite skills to engage and build relationships with young people.

8.2.8 Local Groups and Services Collaborating and Working Collectively

In terms of engaging more effectively with the “hard to reach” and meeting the complex needs of young people, interviewees cite the importance of collaboration and close relationships between services. Staff are aware of the benefits of such cooperation and extol the tradition of interagency work in the community through organisations like YPAR.

In fact, YPAR is considered by practitioners as a vital resource to the community and an effective network for groups and young people to connect with and forge relationships between a wide range of organisations, including statutory agencies and the formal education system. YPAR assists local projects and services to work more cohesively and collaboratively by raising awareness of the services available to young people, and identifying other local supports for referrals. Through YPAR, many projects and services work closely together and ensure that referral pathways to more specialised services remain open. For example, interagency work assists local youth services in identifying the best possible service or intervention for young people, and in dealing with the complex needs of young people through interventions such as Meitheal.

YPAR sub-group meetings also are welcome, facilitating practitioners from often diverse fields to discuss and identify joint problems and propose solutions. There is a common desire to see them well represented by all organisations who work within the NEIC. These sub-groups can increase communication and dialogue and information-sharing among those who attend. In addition, sub-groups are seen as an opportunity for staff across diverse fields such as the Garda Diversion, drugs, and mental health, to establish relationships and on-going contacts which ensure young people have access to necessary supports.

In the case of the most hard to engage and those most at risk, interviewees stressed the potential benefits of closer collaboration and increased dialogue across the wide variety of projects and services operating in the NEIC. ‘Competition’ between projects and ‘territorial’ mind-sets are considered barriers to engagement with the most “hard to reach”. Thus, the potential for closer collaboration and strategic engagement to better identify and engage young people and to retain those who may be at risk of disengagement is identified.

Many project-workers also emphasise the importance of consistent communication between local projects and services in terms of better engaging with “hard to reach” young people. One professional in the youth sector reported: *“We all know who is not engaging, or may not be engaging. There might be a staff member who could work with them*

[young people]. They might have a different relationship to that person than we do. So, it is almost like partnering up in a sense, like the outreach in Swan. It is great when they come in to us, because we know if something is going on with a young person. They are coming across young people all the time; they are out there more than us. So we might miss someone for a couple of weeks, and they may say we saw “X”, and fill us in.”

Another explained: “A big thing that is missing is joined- up thinking...youth projects should come together and have regular meetings and discuss the people they are working with. They shouldn’t get into conversations about ‘our’ young people, ‘your’ young people. If a young person comes to five services over five different days – success, happy days. We, here, don’t need a young person to come through our door to prosper. The funders should see if they are using five services then that is a success; they are getting a different perspective. The joined-up thinking would be they are not coming here to do a programme on health and fitness here, if they are getting it over there on a Tuesday, or they not coming in here asking me questions on a topic over a cup of tea, and then going to another place and getting different answers...it causes confusion.”

Yet another practitioner observed: “I think it is more communication. We know young people go around the different services. If something happens here, they will go somewhere else and then return to us. So, it is about flagging that, and having a list of young people who are using another service, what is happening there, your intervention. You know they are coming to us and will be somewhere else, so you know you have lost them for a few weeks, and try to bring it back to what happened originally and try to move it forwards. Why not try to communicate in that way with other projects that could work.”

In the youth work sector, further collaboration can potential minimise the unnecessary duplication of programmes and enable youth projects to offer young people different activities on different nights throughout the week. Closer collaboration will further allow projects to pool or share resources to organise more dynamic and exciting activities for young people on a more regular basis. Moreover, the knowledge and experiences of staff should be widely shared with others working with “hard to reach” young people in the NEIC. Many staff are eager to learn about the work of peer projects and to identify how best to engage with “hard to reach” young people. Through such dialogue and joint learning, local projects can reflect on best practice, share what works, and evaluate the efficacy of strategies for engaging and retaining the involvement of hard to reach young people.

This collaboration is also considered a potential solution to dealing with the problematic behaviour of the most hard to engage who may present particular difficulties when they enter a project or service. For instance, a particular local project may be better suited to building a relationship, or better dealing or responding to complex behavioural needs, and could become a key worker for that young person, while another project may be in a better position to offer an activity or programme more suited to needs and wants of a harder to engage young person.

In terms of young people at risk who may be attending multiple youth projects, cooperation and communication is considered a means to determine the reasons for such engagement and to identify potential risk factors in the lives of young people at a younger age. However, it is widely acknowledged that extensive in-depth collaboration is resource intensive. Some interviewees therefore referred to the need to organise more local events and conferences for stakeholders to come together and to ensure staff have the flexibility and time to attend.

It is also acknowledged that young people at risk and in the care system are obliged to interact with numerous staff from multiple agencies. This can be complicated and overwhelming for some young people and produce service ‘fatigue’. A number of interviewees therefore drew attention to the centrality of a key worker, as it is quite common for a young person to develop a more positive and meaningful relationship with one professional above others.

Collaboration and dialogue, moreover, requires the sharing of information. The lack of information- sharing is a particular source of frustration for many interviewees. In some cases, it is considered a barrier to providing an effective service for young people at risk. In particular, practitioners within certain statutory agencies are regarded as reluctant to engage in closer integration, joint-planning, or sharing information. As a result, it can be difficult to get updates from other agencies on important events in the lives of young people who access their services.

Collaboration is also considered important in the case of young migrants. Greater engagement with migrants is possible through greater networking and awareness of what is going on. The work of NYP2 and Swan Youth Service in engaging young migrants in the NEIC has been widely praised, along with the networks provided by YPAR.

Many interviewees highlighted the possible benefits of a more focused collaborative engagement of local youth projects with migrants and young people from new communities. Despite positive conduits such as the YPAR International sub-group, some respondents from the migrant/ethnic minority sector cited a lack of communication between some migrant-specific projects and other projects, which has, on occasion, led to different organisations running events which cater for young migrants on the same date.

Furthermore, in the context of migrant-specific youth work and services, youth workers stress the difficulty of reaching young people, whether in direct provision or second generation young people, and of engaging with them on a consistent basis. As with the problems experienced with engaging certain indigenous Irish young people in the NEIC, adults and leaders of new communities therefore wish to offer alternatives to social problems experienced by young people, but can struggle to achieve this. In fact, they remain unsure how to most effectively engage young people either and may lack the experience and resources to engage more directly with their own community. The further engagement of young migrant/ethnic minority communities including Roma may be improved through strategic dialogue and partnership between groups like YPAR, statutory agencies and funders, Dublin City Council, and representatives of the migrant community.

8.2.9 Schools, Formal Education, and Future Prospects

School and the formal education system is considered a key component of adolescent development, engaging with young people, preventing young people from becoming “hard to reach”, and identifying young people at risk. Schools are also considered a vital resource that could be used more effectively within the community and be a more vibrant part of the community outside of school hours. The link between the formal education system and projects and services in the community could also be stronger.

While engagement with schools is accepted as crucial, there is a belief within some local projects/services that collaboration between schools and projects could be further developed and receive more formal backing at policy level. Currently, the relationship between schools in the community and local projects is ad hoc and inconsistent. Despite the commitment and engagement of individual staff in the formal education sector, many of whom go above and beyond their ordinary professional obligations and jobs as educators, the lack of formal engagement between schools and local communities at a more strategic level is considered a deficit. For example, under the current education system, educators often lack the flexibility, time, or resources to link in with local projects. This more formal engagement is of particular importance in terms of educating young people on the impact of drugs and drug-related intimidation, in managing the transition from primary to secondary school, and in preventing early school-leaving. Staff operating in local drug projects, for instance, praise the engagement of some schools in relation to education in the perils of drugs at a young age, but maintain this activity could be developed further.

In respect of continuing education and preventing early school-leaving, a common theme amongst interviewees is the importance of better managing the transition between primary and secondary school. This, it is argued, could be done in partnership between schools and local projects. This period is seen as crucial to ensuring that young people at risk who can find the transition a particularly daunting adjustment, persevere in formal education and develop key skills. One local practitioner reflected: *“The transition programme idea is one worth of consideration. I think most young people are well supported in primary school but when they move to secondary it is much looser. When issues seem to start to emerge in young people it is around that time...Now, some services will do work on that but I think for the wider area, there needs to be a greater emphasis on it.”*

The importance of the transition is also recognised within the secondary system and a formal collaboration in transitions between primary and secondary schools in the NEIC advocated. According to one practitioner: *“The transfer is an afterthought a lot of the time. It is not done as part of the curriculum. I go in to some of the primary schools. We do some role playing, give them timetables, and it is good to hear from a different voice who knows. And a lot of the schools are good, particularly with SEN. They let kids know in advance about how things will be but it is still a little ad hoc in some places, with no consistency across the board, in terms of the school the child goes to. That transition and support can be a big problem around here, and we have tried to do some work on it. Some schools are interested; some aren't.”*

Increased communication between local projects and schools can also assist in addressing behavioural problems and identifying risk factors. Staff in local projects are eager to assist schools in cases where young people experience difficulties or engage in challenging behaviour, as a means to reduce disciplinary cases and prevent early school-leaving.

Along with greater involvement in education and a more strategic engagement between the formal education sector and the community, the need for young people to believe in their future prospects and to have access to good opportunities for further education and employment is widely held amongst staff throughout the community. Employment opportunities and further education and training courses must appeal to young people and be seen to provide genuine pathways to rewarding employment. Where necessary, young people must have access to additional support and mentoring to better engage with and meet the requirements of courses, to achieve skilled employment, and to realise their career goals. Young people involved in manual labour or lower paid employment, moreover, must be afforded opportunities and supports to upskill. In fact, a greater belief in the potential benefits of education and employment among young people is considered essential to challenge the appeal of alternative forms of earning such as the endemic drug-related criminal activity.

In terms of progression in education, Irish, migrant and Roma young people require additional supports both including SEN and in relation to complex needs and behaviours. This includes English language support for young migrants, members of the Roma community, and their families. Furthermore, for those who work with young migrants and Roma, it is essential to ensure supports which help meet the costs associated with attending school are widely available. The introduction of targeted early intervention measures to prevent early school-leaving for young Roma is particularly recommended.

SUMMARY

This section highlighted barriers to engagement and presented strategies to better engage with “hard to reach” young people from the perspective of staff who work with and try to work with young people and their families in the NEIC. Key issues identified include the importance of early intervention, timely access to specialised supports, and addressing deficits and gaps in existing policies and services to better meet the complex needs of vulnerable young people at risk.

9. VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

This section presents the diverse views and experiences of young people aged 14-24 in the NEIC. Although concerned with “hard to reach” young people, the overall design and plan of the study through PAR highlighted the important distinction between young people who do not engage at all, those who do so on an infrequent or intermittent basis, and those who only engage with local support services at a time of crisis or adversity or following referral from youth justice services. To capture the full picture of youth engagement in the NEIC, the need to elicit the views and experiences of young people once considered hard to reach and now engaging in a project or service, but who remain vulnerable or at risk, was also identified.

As with adolescent development, engagement with local services and supports is in many respects a consequence of the broader environment of the NEIC. As a result, this section explores the reasons for engagement or lack of engagement, the broader experiences of young people, and their understanding and views of their local community. The study does not claim to represent the full breadth of young people’s experiences in the community. Moreover, the findings may not be generalizable to all young people from migrant/ethnic minority backgrounds with diverse and complex needs and experiences. The research proceeded on an understanding of the diversity of the experiences, identities and preferences of all young people within the NEIC, and the limitations of generalisation across different cohorts of young people. In keeping with the analysis of staff in local projects and services, interviews with all young people were analysed thematically.

9.1 COMMUNITY AND ACCOMMODATION

While conscious of its problems, many young people nonetheless express a sense of pride in their community, street, or flats, and praise the existence of a strong community spirit in the NEIC. Many communities are considered close-knit in which people know and care for each other. In this respect, trusted neighbours are an important source of help and support.

According to one young person: *“I think it is great where I live because the neighbours I have, they are great. You walk by the house and it is all ‘how are you doing?’ and all. They always talk to you. They ask me how I am getting on. It is better living in a community like the one I live, because there are flats and the avenue, and no matter if you are in the flats or avenue, I know everyone by name, and they know my name, and you can talk to them. It is important at a young age, people knowing your name and talking to you. Having that closeness rather than just, ah yeah, saying he is my neighbour, and saying ‘hello’, and walking past. Like, if you don’t have milk, you knock on their door and ask, and then they knock on your door, and ask for bread. It is just good to have good neighbours. It is better to be able to talk to them, to be able to go in next door, to go in and be able to talk to them.”*

Another explained: *“On telly and all, they treat it [NEIC] as if it is bad. I think it is good living here, because not everyone wants to leave here and move somewhere else. But if I had a kid, I would not want him to see the things that I see; walking around the corners and seeing people doing stuff, like drugs. But it is good living in Dublin 1 because every community is a tight community. Everyone knows each other, and there are certain events every couple of weeks happening. Everyone will show up, so it is great living in the area. It is just night time when things start to get bad; not in the day, just the night, really.”*

There is considerable dissatisfaction with anti-social behaviour and drug-related activity in the community, and with people “wrecking” the place.

According to one young person: *“I live in the same area but in the past years I have been feeling myself, unsafe in my area, because of the stuff that has been happening. In the past, it has been affecting me and my family, and I don’t feel safe. And when I come here [youth project], I feel safe, and it feels like a second home. I feel paranoid, like. I don’t like walking around, looking over my shoulder. Just paranoid in the area.”*

Another reflected: *“It depends where you live. Certain areas, it is worse. Like the area I am from, it is just awful. Like, the amount of drugs that does be around there, and people getting into trouble. Literally, a fight in my flats every night.”*

Parts of the NEIC are likened to a “war-zone” particularly at Halloween with many young people feeling unsafe, and citing the fear and anxiety caused by anti-social behaviour and the spectre of violence in parts of the community. Some young people admit fear during this time even in their homes as the throwing of ‘bangers’, rockets and fireworks through letter boxes, and at them directly on the street, is not uncommon.

There is widespread fear and anxiety in the aftermath of shootings and other acts of violence which constrains the physical space of some young people who consciously alter their movements and routes to avoid potentially troublesome areas. A number of areas are considered so dark and poorly-lit that travel and socialising is unsafe at night time.

Young people live not only in potentially unsafe areas, but in areas with few suitable amenities except youth services and some other recreational facilities. Young people interviewed often highlighted the lack of things to do in the area and expressed dissatisfaction with the accumulation of rubbish including drug-related paraphernalia. Many local parks and playgrounds are considered unsafe and in bad condition, and damaged recreation areas often remain unrepaired. In this context, the sports pitches of local schools are particularly important but access can be difficult. Although some youth services occasionally hire pitches to play football and other sports, young people would like more access to school pitches during the weekends and during the summer holidays.

Young people are critical of the Government decision to build third-level student accommodation in a community where there is insufficient family housing and extensive homelessness. Young migrants and minority ethnic young people express dissatisfaction with accommodation and the amenities in the surrounding environment and it is common practice for migrants and people from new communities to share small units of accommodation with too few rooms for all family members to enjoy comfort or privacy. One young minority ethnic young person reflected: *“I think some of the people who are homeless get help, and are put in hotels and hostels. It is still not good enough because getting put in there, even if in a long-term hotel, like, there is nowhere to go. You can’t cook. You can’t do anything. You are just stuck in that hotel room. A family can be stuck in a hotel room with three or four kids with no TV to watch, no friends, because you are in the middle of the city in a hotel. There is nothing done about it... Like, putting a family in a hotel for a night, that probably costs 400 or 500 euro a night for a family in a hotel. But you could actually use that money and let them stay in a house. Rents in Dublin, they are expensive, but I think it would cheaper to put people in houses instead of hotels.”*

For some young migrants, there is fear of peers finding out that their family is at risk of homelessness or living in temporary or emergency accommodation.

Life in hostels and hotels is considered problematic. Families must leave accommodation in the morning and return in the evening. For some Roma families interviewed, finding suitable and productive ways to spend this time during the day is challenging. The lack of cooking facilities is a particular source of frustration. For young people, noise and a lack of privacy and space makes home life difficult. More specifically, doing homework and sleeping is more difficult in these circumstances.

9.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH PROJECTS AND SERVICES

In terms of engaging with a project or service, having ‘something to do’ or being ‘off the streets’ is a recurring theme. As will be discussed in further detail, young people are aware of the culture of drugs and anti-social behaviour in the community and how easy it is for young people to become involved. Attending youth projects is considered an alternative to staying at home, playing computer games, being online, and general ‘boredom’. More generally, staying at home in the evenings is associated with a lack of engagement.

According to one young person: *“Before the club, I was not really doing anything. I was just sitting at home, and doing stupid stuff. But when I joined the club, you get brought along on all these trips, stuff I never thought I would be able to do - and I would never be able to do things, like go away in the summer.”*

Another explained: *“I think a lot of people here have things in common, including me, like, a very repetitive lifestyle before this, probably say, ‘ok, I went to school, I came back home...’. But now I have more of a purpose, and when we come in that day, we will do that, and join groups in the club, and it not as repetitive, and there is always something new to do during the day.”*

A number of young people in the community do not socialise or engage in many activities outside of school or further education and training. In these circumstances, spending long periods watching TV, going online, or playing computer games is not uncommon. For young people with substance abuse and mental health problems, remaining in-doors is a component of their lives.

Trips and fun outdoor activities are widely considered to be a highlight of engagement with youth services. It is clear young people remember trips fondly, whether go-karting or foreign exchanges. Trips away are often regarded as activities that would not be possible otherwise, and experiences that they are unlikely to have with their families or in school. They are also aware of how trips and residentials bring them closer to leaders and peers.

The opportunity to engage in art, to dance, play music and sing is also important. Young people who engage in youth services typically express a desire for more contact hours with youth services, particularly during school holidays and at weekends. Young people request more ‘fun’ things to do in the projects and clubs, including trips, and more activities like Go-karting, in addition to the youth ‘work’.

For some ethnic minority young people, the likelihood of engagement in a service is increased when other minority ethnic peers with similar cultural interests and similar life experiences also participate. In this respect, youth groups with sizeable numbers of other minority ethnic peers are important as they feel more comfortable in a context where they can be themselves. Having a regular space to discuss their cultural background and explore their experiences of growing up in Ireland is ideal but not always possible in more integrated, mainstream fora. This feeling comes in part from challenging experiences in school, including racist and insensitive comments from some indigenous Irish students. Some minority ethnic young people would also welcome more diversity in terms of school teachers, youth leaders and youth workers within existing services.

However, this is not universal. Many migrants and minority ethnic young people who participate in intercultural youth spaces in the NEIC express satisfaction with the ability to connect with indigenous Irish as well as people of similar ethnicities and origins. Engagement in youth clubs is an opportunity to integrate, to make friends in the local community, to speak English and develop language skills.

One young person explained: *“You get to communicate with other people, and do fun stuff, that you never got to do before. Then get along with others. You get to, if there are other people from other cultures, you get to know about other cultures.”*

Another reflected: *“Well, in school, I was getting extra English classes as well, but I did not get the chance to communicate as well with someone else, like a new person. So, when I went there first, I heard about this place, and I came with my friend, and just got to know other people, and communicate to them, and it helped me.”*

9.2.1 Peers and Friends

Attending youth services is considered a way to make friends and to build self-confidence. Having the opportunity to socialise with friends and participate in activities with them in a safe environment is important. However, in many cases, the other young people engaged in services can be a barrier to engagement. In fact, young people’s choice to go or not go to clubs often rests on ‘the people who are in them’. Furthermore, young people often explain the lack of engagement of their peers in terms of shyness or low self-confidence.

Further, attending a service from a young age is considered important to subsequent engagement into emerging adulthood.

One explained: *“I have been coming to the club since I was 10 but before that I did not know what it was. I was shy coming in and then it just grows on you, and it becomes your family, that type of thing. And you get used to it, and it becomes your routine, almost. It is Wednesday, we have the club. Do you know what I mean? Maybe people are shy, they don’t know what they are getting into but once they are in, they are in.”*

The failure of young people to engage in youth services after school it is commonly justified in terms of services being boring or because there are not enough people they like or know attending. They also express a desire for more

trips and more fun activities like go-karting. Others claim to be busy, have other things to do, or socialise in peer groups who do not attend services. In some cases, such peer groups are engaged in anti-social and risky behaviours.

As one young person explained: *“You do be hanging around corners and all, getting in trouble, and the police come and they ask you to move on, and we are all there, and we won’t move on, and we start trouble instead. And it is easy to get arrested and get charges, and go to Court and all.”*

Young people also highlight the prevalence of stigma and peer pressure and demonstrate an understanding that children look up to older young people and are influenced by the behaviour of others.

One young person reflected: *“Being honest, where I am from is a rough area. Like, growing up, there is robbed cars, robbed everything, and growing up, you are looking at that, I want to do that, be that, rob cars, rob this and rob that. They are growing up and looking at it, they are around that. Like if I was growing up in a posh area and seeing, looking at a business man or a wealthy man, I would say right, I want to be him. Instead, every night of the week it was rob cars, rob anything, and getting in trouble with the Garda and all. As a little kid I wanted to be that, and then you just cop on when you are older. There is an image you want to grow up to be, there is nothing left in the area so if it is either work or sell drugs, and I would rather work now, to be honest.”*

Peer pressure can lead to young people engaging in risky behaviours or becoming outsiders if they refuse. One young person explained: *“It would be like if I and my friends we were all taking drugs, and he came and he wanted to join our group, but couldn’t join our group, because he didn’t do drugs. So, he would feel pressure then, to do some drugs, just to fit in. If he doesn’t fit in, he would feel he was on the outside with no one... Or they say, ‘you are too afraid to that stuff.’ And you will get called every name under the sun.”*

For some, there is stigma attached to attending GYDPs due to their association with the police. This association and activities with An Garda Síochána can be a source of peer pressure and ridicule. One recalled: *“...we were mentioning we would be awarded a Garda youth award, and they were like, ‘oh, we don’t want to be involved in that...’ It is getting an award, and then all of your mates saying, ‘oh, you little faggot’ or ‘you little rat’ because you ‘work’ with the Garda.”*

This can also extend to education. For some young people, doing well in school and attending extra-curricular activities like homework clubs, leads to stigma and attracts the scorn of peers. As one explained: *“Yeah, you will get picked out straight away because you go to the club and you want to get better results. People will slag you about it. It is not that it [help] is not there, but if you do it, you will get slagged or bullied, do you know what I mean?”*

9.2.2 Disengaging and Aging Out

Young people can disengage from a youth project or education service for extended periods, particularly during the summer months when they get out of the ‘routine’ of attending. In many instances, this disengagement coincides with substance misuse, going out late at night, and engaging in various forms of anti-social and even criminal activity, such as theft. In addition, a lack of consistent engagement of young people with local services and supports is often due to mental health issues and a lack of engagement in wider pro-social activities.

Older young people have less time to engage with youth services due to work and family commitments. They ‘grow out’ of it, or attendance becomes more sporadic as young people in late teens and early twenties become more preoccupied with college, employment, and in some cases, providing for their families. One young person observed: *“It is work and college, and you are out socialising with your college mates, and you are studying with them, and you are in college late, and you are so tired, and you just go home and sleep. You don’t have much time for yourself, and you don’t want to come in to the club. Or you are in work, and it is a killer, and you see the clubs going out on trips, and you think, I would like to go.”*

Disengagement is also a consequence of aging out of a service. However, for many older young people, they continue to be an important source of help and support. For young people, particularly those engaged in GYDPs, this is often a source of frustration and distress. Young people affected by aging out of a GYDP question the wisdom in spending time and resources in developing relationships with them, only to abruptly cut them off.

These young people praise staff for maintaining relationships and allowing them to use facilities on an unofficial basis, while criticising the lack of alternatives or GYDP-like projects in the area for young people who reach adulthood.

For some young people, continued engagement in services and supports including education requires persistent follow-up from staff. For example, local youth workers and leaders are in regular contact with young people to ensure they keep appointments and get up on time.

In these situations, young people often experience mental health difficulties. One young person explained: *“What I like about here is that it helps the likes of us, keeps us out of the trouble, off the street. You know, people like myself. Make sure we don’t fall off, they keep knocking on our door, they do. They make sure we stay. They don’t leave us; they just keep at us. They don’t be at us one day, then forget about us the next day, they keep on with us... they don’t leave us. Like in the house, usually that is what I would do, not go out or anything, for the entire day. But they keep on at you, they do, make sure you go over here. They don’t be with you one week, then gone the next. They are with you every day; they keep in contact with you. They just don’t leave you alone, and that is a great thing. I like that, and the same with mental health stuff, that is how mental health problems begin, you know; sitting in the house all the time. That’s been a problem for me.”*

9.2.3 Relationship with Staff and Leaders

Young people stress the importance of maintaining good relationships with leaders and youth workers. In addition to group activities and socialising with peers, young people engaged in services appreciate the opportunity of having relationships with leaders who understand and are there for them. One explained: *“Their phone is always on, and if you need to ring them, they are always there. And I have done. Like if you are frustrated, or if you are all over the place, they are always there; they will always answer the phone, and they are a call away.”*

Youth workers often serve as additional support for minority ethnic young people in circumstances where they lack roots in the community and/or an extended family of grandparents or aunts and uncles in Ireland.

Good relationships between young people and youth workers rest on building and developing trust which can take time. One young person explained: *“To build a trust with them, you have to get to know them before you can trust them. You are more comfortable talking to them then.”*

A lack of judgement and privacy is also important. Young people dealing with personal or family issues praise leaders who engage without blame or judgement. For some, staff turnover is problematic and can undermine their relationship with a service. As one stated; *“The chopping and changing can be very hard, you know, to trust someone. So, you say to yourself, ‘well, how can I trust someone who is going to be gone in two or three weeks?’ Do you know what I mean?”*

In fact, a number of young people directly attributed their disengagement in terms of the loss of a leader or staff member. In these cases, there is reluctance or unwillingness to build a relationship with another staff member.

According to one young person: *“I left my old group because it used to change nearly every week. The staff keep getting changed... our workers, and then they went off to do more important work, and then two other people filled in, and it was changing every couple of months. It is hard to get to know people, to talk to them. So, you wouldn’t really do anything or talk to people in groups...back then the only thing we really done was come in here and play the PlayStation, and we would argue for a few hours, and that was it.”*

9.2.4 Education and Employment

Despite the efforts of teachers and school staff, schools are not regarded as positive learning environments for all young people in the community. Large class sizes and the formal school environment can be difficult to cope with and to navigate.

Post-primary education is a particular issue for some young people, including the difficulty in transitioning from primary to secondary schools with multiple teachers, subjects, rules, and, at times, fewer friends. Several young

people cited a lack of connection with teachers as well as frustration with rules and discipline which can lead to suspensions, and even exclusion, from school.

“Hard to reach” young people and those engaged in GYDPs, in particular, experience disciplinary issues and frequently get into trouble with teachers. They admit they can struggle to handle the formal school environment and do not feel comfortable in large groups. They do not like large class sizes in school or the class environment. Due to disciplinary issues some young people are in a situation where, although not formally expelled, they are looking for another school to attend, or an alternative like Youthreach.

Young people are also critical of the lack of focus on skills for the ‘real world’, including key personal skills, help with employment, such as interview skills, and the lack of career guidance counselling.

They are also often frustrated with the lack of youth voice and empowerment in school.

One young person explained: *“In school, you don’t have a voice. The teachers like, teach everyone the same thing, but everyone in the class has a different need, like, so they should be teaching things differently to different students that need it. Because we are all in a class, we are being taught the same thing in the same way. It is less, like, you don’t feel like you are special; you are one person out of the whole school. That is what they think of you.”*

Growing up in certain areas and attending schools in the NEIC are considered barriers to progression both in education and employment. One explained: *“In the schools around this area, it is not as if you can even get your work done, if you don’t want to learn, it is not as if you are gonna get an A in the maths or history or something because if you don’t want to learn, you are not going learn. And if you don’t ask for help, you won’t get it either.”*

Another reflected: *“It motivates you, kind of. Do you know what I mean? Because you just want to get out of here. You can try your best but you really have to snap your own back to get out of it...it is too hard to get out of it. It is too hard.”*

For those in emerging adulthood and contemplating employment, there are perceptions of prejudice and discrimination and of being judged negatively because of their address or accent. This perception is applicable to both indigenous Irish and minority ethnic young people. Addresses in certain parts of the community are perceived as off-putting to prospective employers. Moreover, there is a general sense of frustration with the lack of opportunities and prospects in comparison with peers in other communities.

As one observed: *“We don’t get the same job opportunities, like the big huge jobs, the big colleges. You are less likely to see someone from here getting in to the likes to Trinity. Some have, but you are more likely to see people from the country. I don’t think people from here, that we are giving that chance. I am into the drama and I am studying it in college, and I don’t see myself getting in there. I wouldn’t be able to afford it anyway, but if they heard my accent, they probably wouldn’t want me in there, that is what I think.”*

However, despite many challenges, young people in the NEIC wish to progress into further education and employment, build successful careers and to support family members. Young people are also acutely aware of the experiences of older family members in education and employment, and the extent of poverty and disadvantage in the community.

One explained: *“People our ages, we aspire to be people when we are older. Even if I don’t achieve my dream, I still want to have money, and take care of my family, and not have struggles anymore. So they wouldn’t have to worry about anything, and their kids, and my kids, they would be sorted through life, and they wouldn’t have to go through what my Mam and Dad went through, and what everyone else’s Mam and Dad went through, living around here... to have a good life and start.”*

Another young person explained: *“What he was saying, is what I want to do. Just supply for my family. Like, growing up, my Mam always said, ‘stay in school, never leave school, school is number one after family’. Around this area, my Mam left school at 14 back in the 80’s and she always regretted that and she went back and did her Leaving Certificate, and she did a course, and she is looking for a job now. I don’t want to have to go down the route my Mam did. I want to finish school, go to college, have a life, become something; be known for something.”*

For young people, local youth services are often a crucial source of guidance and support in terms of education and employment. Projects provide career guidance, skill development, and practical assistance in accessing employment including interview preparation. One young person explained: *“They help us apply for jobs and they bring us out to the interviews. They get us prepared, they do. They will say, ‘they will ask you this question in the interview’, so they get you prepared for the interview, before it. So, that is very good, I think, it gets you prepared. I wouldn’t have a clue otherwise, what the job is about. But here they ask you questions before, about what will come up in the interview, like about the company and all, they do all that, make you prepared for all that...They help, like for some jobs I wouldn’t know where to go, I wouldn’t. They drive us to the places, they make sure we are on time; make sure you are prepared; they get you lunch and all. So, if you have no money or anything, they help.”*

9.2.4 Diversity, Prejudice and Racism

The growing diversity inherent in the NEIC is viewed from multiple perspectives. For some young people, it is seen as positive, an opportunity to make friends from different cultures, and to learn about the wider world.

As one remarked: *“There is a lot of international influence around here, and I think that is good. A lot of my friends around here are from different countries, and there is a real mix of people so it helps me learn different languages, and helps me diversify into a different community instead of sticking with the Irish; to do something different instead of Irish sticking to the Irish, and the foreign sticking with the foreign. Mixing is so much easier in my school, as well. I try to stretch out when it comes to my circle of friends, try to be as nice to everyone as I can.”*

Minority ethnic or migrant young people, moreover, spoke positively of life in Ireland and the opportunity to meet new people from different cultures in the community. This is often facilitated through engagement in local youth services as well as school. However, there is some tension between migrant/minority ethnic young people and indigenous Irish young people. Some indigenous Irish young people, for example, are critical of foreigners ‘getting houses’ when so many Irish people are homeless or living in unsuitable accommodation. This, it is argued, is a consequence of frustration at the lack of housing for ‘local’ people and the levels of visible homelessness in the inner city, and not necessarily in terms of animosity towards the non-indigenous population.

Discrimination, prejudice, and racism are a concern for migrant and minority ethnic young people. Young people can endure racist comments on a regular basis in primary and secondary school and elsewhere. Although, for some, it has ‘cooled down’ now compared to ten years ago, it is still a feature of their lives. This abuse often occurs in public spaces, even in front of adults in the community. While racist and culturally insensitive comments are often explained away or justified in terms of ‘banter’ or ‘joking’, this view is clearly not shared by those who are targeted or on the receiving end.

In addition, some minority ethnic young people feel they are judged based on their accent, language, appearance, and cultural background. Despite being born in Ireland or having lived here for a long time, they are made to feel that they do not truly belong; that they are ‘foreign’. They feel they are not treated the same way due to their race or ethnicity, and can be stereotyped and scapegoated. Roma young people do not always feel welcome in Dublin. There is a belief that being Roma is a barrier to employment and a source of exclusion, prejudice and racism. Traditional Roma dress, for example, reveals their ethnicity and is greeted with suspicion, judgement and sometimes hostility.

Minority ethnic young people do not always feel comfortable discussing their interests or sharing their experiences with other indigenous Irish young people who can lack intercultural understanding. For some, there is a need to balance the tensions between the two cultural identities of ‘Irishness’ and their original cultural identity and heritage. Achieving this balance this can be complicated however, and a form of segregation between Irish and minority ethnic young people in school is not uncommon.

Finally, some young indigenous Irish interviewed believe they are not treated fairly in school or elsewhere, and are stereotyped because of their address and/or their family name.

Young people are fully aware of the stigma and reputation that growing up in the NEIC can bring. According to one young person: *“Like, you could have a conversation with someone who you don’t know, and then they ask where you are from, and then they will go right off. Straight away. Because you are from here. It is the title of being from here. There is nothing you can do about it. Everyone is painted with the same brush.”*

9.2.5 Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour

Young people are fully aware of drugs and other social problems in the NEIC. As previously discussed, for some young people, engagement in a local project or service is considered an alternative to ‘the streets’ and involvement in anti-social and drug-related activity. Young people are conscious of the ‘tradition’ of involvement in this activity within some families or in some streets. One young person argued: *“In some families, it is a tradition...It is like the next generation of criminals, when the older ones they are getting too old, there are always younger ones, coming in. It is like there are new generations. It is a never ending cycle - that is what it is.”*

Another young person explained: *“Coming from experience, nearly everyone in their family on these streets have someone who is a drug-addict or a drug-dealer. There is always someone in the family.”*

There is also an understanding that is all too easy for young people in the community to become involved, and that families can be impacted by substance misuse and other drug-related activity irrespective of any tradition of association.

According to one young person: *“Because I see my little brother, and I can see how easy it is to get dragged in to something to do to drugs, or whatever. I am always telling him to watch what his mates are doing, who his mates are talking to, and if that person is trying to talk to you and tries to ask you to do something, tell them no. And he kind of realises, do you know what I mean? He is still only 11. He only went 11, and he is kind of only copping on to what is happening around him now, and I am always telling him, ‘it can be me, it can be you.’”*

In certain areas, where the drug trade is a feature of public space and the physical environment, drugs inevitably impinge upon the everyday life of young people. Open drug-dealing and drug-use in front of young people, and parents buying drugs in close proximity to their children, is a source of dissatisfaction and alarm.

There is also an awareness of the prevalence of crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour in other communities in Dublin and throughout Ireland. In other parts of Dublin even middle-class or wealthy communities consume drugs. It is not only people from their community or their neighbourhood who are involved in or contribute to the market for drugs in Ireland. As one explained: *“We are not all from here. We are all from different areas, but, yes, drugs. It is everywhere, even, like...you are more likely to see on the streets around East Wall, Ballybough, and Sheriff, and all, but it is everywhere. Grass and all. But you go out to Blackrock and it is all secret. Like, there are more likely more people doing drugs out there... We are just more open about it, and because the Guards don’t really care about it, they wouldn’t clamp down on it here.”*

Involvement in drug-related activity is commonly considered a consequence of substance misuse and the desire to earn money, to buy nice clothes, to pay for drugs, and of having nothing to do. One young person argued: *“You see, teenagers nowadays, you need money. We can’t say, ‘what are we going to do today, boys? Oh, we will go to the pictures’. We need money for pictures. Bowling? You need money for everything, and we can’t just do ‘something’, because there isn’t a lot out there to do without having money. And it is the same with clothes. If we see all these young people with a proper pair of shoes, nice jackets, and all and everyone else, you are trying to get in with that.”*

Some young people interviewed emphasised the extensive use of cocaine among teenagers in the area in the recent years. The use of cocaine and other drugs can lead to sizeable debts to drug dealers and conflict with parents. Drugs like cocaine are often sold to young people on credit, sometimes on ‘a night out’. Substance abuse therefore can lead to other criminal activity. To pay for drugs, young people are liable to engage in drug-related criminal activity including theft, selling, and holding. According to one young person: *“You start robbing to pay for it...It is either that or you get it on the tick. If you don’t have the money, like, they say. ‘I will give it to you’. Then they say, ‘when will you have it?’, and you say, ‘next week’. But the more things you get on the tick, the more bills you will end up owing out.”*

Another interviewee acknowledged this cycle: *“You end up having to take it out on a lend, and you have to pay it back. And that is how people start to sell drugs...And if you don’t start to pay it back you get pressured for the money... I think they are trying to act tough, looking at others doing it, and saying I will do that. And I think it is for the money or if they smoke weed. They sell it to pay for it...so for the money as well.”*

Involvement in this activity is also considered a consequence of peer or even family pressure. Young people are asked to hold or mind things for friends or other family members. Substance misuse puts a strain on families, undermining relationships. Parents and siblings are concerned by substance misuse and seek to help their children and loved ones. According to one young person: *“It pulls you apart from people, it does. For instance, when I was on drugs, the tablets, I did stuff I would never do. Like you would not remember anything you done... On drugs you are someone you are not, and then your family don’t like you for you are like, and then some people start robbing their family and stuff like that. At the end of the day, it was my sister who got me off tablets, so family is a big help also. They can get fed up, sick of telling you what to do, and to not take this and that, and you keep doing it, and they give up, then come back, and try to help.”*

For young people actively engaged in youth services, and not involved in the drug-related criminal activity, there is a strong belief that involvement in drug-related activity is the ‘easy’ or the ‘lazy’ route to prosperity. It is clear that many young people in the NEIC wish to progress in education and employment and provide for their families through more legitimate and safer means.

9.2.6 Mental Health

Mental health issues are a key cause of concern for young people interviewed during the course of this research. Young people who participated highlighted a range of mental health issues including anxiety, panic attacks, and depression. For young people with substance misuse problems, paranoia is also problematic and troubling. Substance misuse and mental health problems are associated with staying indoors for extended periods and lack of engagement in pro-social activities and positive routines.

Some young people pinpointed the lack of mental health supports or understanding around mental health issues and how they impact upon their lives. This is an awareness of stigma in seeking help and being seen to attend counselling and other supports. One young person reflected: *“When I used to think about mental health, I used to think you are off your head. I am going to counselling now because I was a person who was staying in all the time. Remember, I was telling you? I didn’t know that was to do with your mental health. I didn’t know so much about mental health. That is why they got me into counselling. It has been such a help, it has. Like, I did not know about mental health before that. I have nothing wrong with me but it was something that I didn’t talk about, you know? Like staying in all the time, and what your mental health actually does. No one would talk about it growing up.”*

Local projects are often a key conduit for access to mental health services for young people. Youth workers are important to increasing awareness around mental health issues and reducing the stigma attached to seeking help and support. One recalled: *“Remember I came in a few weeks ago, and I was looking for counselling, and the first thing I asked them was to help me, and now they help with it. I have been doing good, so stuff like that is a good example. I came in here and asked for something serious, and they got it for me, and they will try their best, and if they can’t, you know, they know they tried, because they ring this person and that person. It is not as if you ask them, and they say, ‘yeah, I will do it for you’, and just blank you. They work and try their best, as good as they can.”*

Young people are afraid of peers discovering they attend counselling services or are experiencing mental health difficulties. One young person stated: *“People think it is a really bad thing if you are going to counselling. It would take a lot of courage to say ‘I go to counselling for school or medical reasons’. If they did go, they would try to hide it.”*

According to another: *“It is nothing to be ashamed of but they think, they will be thought of differently; people will be treading on eggshells with them; that they wouldn’t be able to say anything to them. And I thought that at the start. When I got help, like, if I spoke about what happened to me, they would say, ‘oh, I can’t say anything or talk to her in case she does this, this, this or this’. That is what everyone thinks. But I thought it would be good to get it out, to let people know it is okay not to feel okay; that it’s perfectly normal to seek help. We are human, and we all go through tough stages like that.”*

Some young people refuse speak up and inform adults since they contend ‘there is no help’. Help is not just finding a good service but finding a way to really talk about and express what is going on. Some young people interviewed feel they are not believed, and that their behaviour is considered ‘just a phase’, or ‘acting out’. On the other hand,

many parents and other adults do not know how best to respond, or how to deal with the situation when young people express anxieties and difficulties. In these cases, young people acknowledge they need to feel safe and comfortable enough to open up with trusted adults.

SUMMARY

This section presented the views and experiences of young people in the NEIC with respect to engagement with local youth services and supports, education and employment, and other key issues in their lives and communities. It is clear that local services and supports are often a crucial source of guidance and support for young people in the NEIC in terms of education, employment and mental health. Young people place considerable importance on relationships with youth leaders and youth workers more generally. Engagement with services is often considered an alternative to involvement in drug related activity, anti-social behaviour in the community, and boredom.

PART E

CONCLUSIONS, PRIORITY ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

10. CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to identify and analyse the needs of “hard to reach” 14-24 year olds in the North East Inner City, and to identify gaps and blocks to their engagement with local services and supports. Despite local and national progress, social exclusion, low educational attainment, and unemployment persists in the parts of the NEIC community, while the intergenerational legacy of drugs and substance misuse continues to have a profound impact on the lives of many young people and their families. The NEIC is also resident to a growing heterogeneous migrant and minority ethnic population with diverse needs and experiences.

Local and statutory organisations in the NEIC provide a range of services and supports for young people including youth services, youth justice services, substance misuse treatment, family support, further education and training, and counselling and mental health support. However, many young people in the community are not currently accessing the services and supports aimed at enhancing their education and employment opportunities, which may not have the capacity or resources to fully meet the needs of many of the most vulnerable young people.

For many young people in the community, engagement with local services and supports comes at a time of adversity, crisis, or following referral from the youth justice system. Despite the sporadic and infrequent engagement of some, it is clear that many local services and supports in the NEIC serve as crucial protective factors, or conditions or attributes which lower the probability of bad outcomes for young people and assist them to develop and progress to adulthood (Forrest-Bank *et al.*, 2015). In the context of intergenerational socio-economic problems, engagement with services can also be understood as part of broader strategies for ‘getting by; in which young people exercise agency, resilience, and become adept at seeking out resources within the limited options available to them (Munford and Sanders, 2017).

This concluding section is divided into two main parts. The first analyses the key issues impacting the lives of young people in the NEIC and explores factors in their engagement with the range of local services and supports, while the second explores ways to boost the engagement and development of all young people in the community with reference to both local and international evidence.

10.1 NEIC AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people’s development and progression encompass the intersecting influences of family, school and community, which influence opportunities to participate in school and in society, their knowledge about education and employment, their aspirations, and capacity to develop key skills. Communities as local environments provide a key set of risk and protective factors while well-functioning communities provide a range of resources which promote individual resilience, enhance psychological well-being and overall quality of life.

The NEIC is a diverse and dynamic community characterised by a growing heterogeneous, international population and marked disparities in socio-economic outcomes. Disadvantage and poverty in the NEIC has persisted in many areas despite economic growth, redevelopment, and urban renewal in the inner city as a whole. The available socio-economic evidence illustrates the persistent intergenerational challenges facing young people in many parts of the community.

For example, as discussed in section 3, in reference to the latest CSO and Pobal small area data, 22 per cent of the population live in small areas deemed ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘very disadvantaged’.

For 14-24 year olds, this figure is 26 per cent. In younger cohorts there is an even higher concentration with 38 per cent of the 15-18 and 45 per cent of the 10-14 population residing in disadvantaged or very disadvantaged small areas.

There is also evidence of continued disparity in outcomes including education and employment. Despite advancements, many local residents in the NEIC do not complete school or progress to third level education. The proportion of residents with third level education in very disadvantaged (5 per cent) and disadvantaged (13 per cent) small areas remained stagnant between 2006 and 2016. In addition, there is evidence of alienation from and criticism of the

formal education system amongst both old and young members of the local population. Although lower than 2011, employment remains high in very disadvantaged and disadvantaged small areas.

The available evidence suggests that despite improvements, inequality, and disadvantage persists in many parts of the community which poses particular challenges for young people and their development.

Socio-economic inequality and disadvantage is further compounded by the prevalence of substance misuse, drug-related criminal activity, and also associated with mental health problems. Such issues impact the nature of the interaction of young people with their physical environment. Many young people feel unsafe and suffer anxiety and fear due to anti-social behaviour, drug-related criminal activity, and the spectre of violence. This can constrain their use of physical space, with young people consciously avoiding areas and amending their routes to school or youth services, even close to home. The lack of safe, usable outdoor community recreation facilities is a further cause of frustration for young people. Despite these issues, many young people are clearly proud of their local communities and emphasise the support of good neighbours and the benefits of close-knit communities.

10.2 YOUNG PEOPLE NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES

As young people in the NEIC experience a wide range of complex needs and vulnerabilities, it is imperative not to overgeneralise across age, gender, or ethnicity. However, echoing recent publications and existing research, this study has identified a number of shared issues of concern for the lives of young people in the NEIC including substance misuse, mental health, dual diagnosis, safety, intimidation, education, poverty, accommodation and risk of homelessness, self-esteem, and identity. These issues are often interconnected and lead to complicated and problematic transitions between adolescence and adulthood. Moreover, it is evident that the needs of many at risk or hard to reach young people are not being fully met either in school, at home, or more widely in society.

Many of the issues impacting the lives of young people are interlinked. As has been demonstrated internationally, mental health issues, socio-economic disadvantage and youth vulnerabilities are strongly connected with vulnerable young people who develop drug dependence, more likely to report anxiety and depressive disorders, psychotic symptoms and disorders, and suicidal ideation and attempts. They are also more likely to be early school-leavers and struggle to secure employment. These experiences are often intergenerational, with older siblings and other family members facing similar challenges and life experiences (EMCDDA, 2017).

For some young people in the NEIC, the issues impacting the lives of their parents including addiction, illness, or bereavement, directly affect their development and progression to adulthood. Difficulties experienced by parents can lead to poor relationships, family breakdown, and young people assuming a caring role, looking after siblings, and even financially supporting families.

10.2.1 Substance Misuse and Drug Related Activity

In addition to education and employment issues, substance misuse and involvement in drug-related activity continues to be a significant problem for many young people in the NEIC and their families. The impact of alcohol and drugs is wide-ranging, with implications for individual and family health and well-being as well as for the wider community. Polydrug use in the NEIC and the diversity of substances young people misuse is also indicative of wider patterns of substance use internationally (Murphy *et al.*, 2013; EMCDDA, 2017; Wall, Lambert and Horan, 2018).

Moreover, in keeping with consumption more widely, the prevalence of substance misuse is perceived as an escape from the difficulties in the lives of people, and a response to emotional issues, stress, grief, and trauma. Although often described as “cultural” or “acceptable”, substance misuse in the NEIC is not merely a consequence of bad parenting or individual moral failings. In fact, addiction is increasingly considered a self-medicating response to trauma and/or mental health (Killeen, Back and Brady, 2015) while research into drug-use among young people in Ireland confirmed that the two main triggers reported in using BZDs were avoiding negative emotions and coping with various daily stressors (K. Murphy *et al.*, 2018).⁸¹

⁸¹ Conflict in the lives of young people is a key motivating factor with drug use serving as a key coping strategy in the absence of the ability to integrate and regulate their emotions.

Young people who participated in this study discussed the harmful impact of excessive substance misuse on their lives including a lack of engagement in school and other activities. Excessive substance misuse and dual diagnosis is associated with a lack of positive routines including regular sleep patterns and engaging in everyday activities. In addition to misuse, “gangland” and drug-related criminal activity and violence are prevalent in the community. Consequently, many children and young people do not feel safe or protected. This also increases the likelihood of drug-debts and drug-related intimidation, along with contact with the justice system. Excessive misuse and addiction leads some young people to engage in theft and other drug-related criminal activity to pay for drugs, thereby blurring the distinction between drug-dealer and user.

Drug-related intimidation is a ‘wicked’ problem for young people and their families. Drug debts do not cease with the young person but stay with the family, leading to a vicious cycle. This places an enormous strain on familial relationships, which can culminate in family breakdown and the exit of young people from the home. DRI can also lead to a dilemma for local services and supports who seek to protect young people and keep them safe. While addressing DRI is complicated and there is little international literature indicating effective direct responses, there are a number of potential approaches to designing and delivering interventions. Comprehensive solutions should be based on the best available information, and on what works within in the areas of prevention, intervention, and suppression (Murphy, 2017). Moreover, it requires stakeholder partnership and effective coordination among social services, schools, police, probation and parole, the Courts system, and community representatives. As with substance misuse, the local community also has a role to play in problem identification, intervention design, and delivery.

Extensive community engagement, data-sharing, and partnership-building between young people, families, schools, communities, and public services can contribute to identifying local risk and protective factors, finding those in greatest need, and supporting gang and violence prevention efforts (L. Murphy *et al.*, 2018).

Further, as expressed by The North Inner City Drugs Task Force, a comprehensive response to drugs in the community requires a wide-ranging, joined-up response which extends beyond policing to focus on education, employment, housing, and the development of normal life patterns for young people in the community (McGee, 2016b).

10.2.2 Migrants and Ethnic Minority Young People

The NEIC is home to a growing heterogeneous international population. The presence of a diverse migrant and minority ethnic population gives rise to a wide variety of needs of young people and challenges for public services and policy. While migration is associated with higher socio-economic outcomes including employment and education in the NEIC, according to recent CSO data, the experiences of young people and their families can vary according to status, country of origin, level of English, and length of time in Ireland, as well as the quality of social interaction with peers and teachers (Darmody and Smyth, 2018). Consequently, it is very difficult to generalise for the “migrant” or “minority ethnic” population. Certain cohorts of migrants and ethnic minorities also face additional barriers to engagement and progression locally and nationally, including low education and language skills, and prejudice and discrimination (McGuinness, O’Shaughnessy and Pouliakas, 2017). For example, the situation of many young Roma is particularly perilous with young Roma women exceptionally vulnerable to social exclusion due to the multiple and intersectional levels of discrimination they encounter on the basis of race, gender and age, both within and outside the Roma community (Marian, 2015; Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality, 2018).

Despite this diversity, there are common vulnerabilities and needs. Without question, accommodation and housing is a key issue of concern. The migrant population tends to live in private rented accommodation in the west of the NEIC (LYCS, 2018). However, the North Inner City has the highest concentration of small homes, one-bedroom apartments, and studio flats and bedsits in the country (Kelly, 2015). Accommodation is often inadequate and unsuitable with entire families living in a small number of rooms. Migrants and minority ethnic groups face heavy competition for rented accommodation, discrimination, and a lack of security of tenure, with many families at risk of homelessness. The experience of families in the NEIC aligns with national research from the ESRI which has found migrants from outside the EU are more likely to live in over-crowded accommodation compared to Irish nationals (controlling for age, family status/household composition and disability) and to face discrimination (Grotti *et al.*, 2018).⁸²

⁸² This difference is partly accounted for by their greater concentration in Dublin and other urban settings, but even within these broad locations non-EU nationals are 3.2 times more likely to be over-crowded. Even within the same income brackets, non-EU migrants are 2.5 times more likely than Irish nationals to live in over-crowded conditions (*ibid*).

The inability to secure adequate housing and the risk of homelessness impacts upon the lives of young people. Families reside in small flats, hotels and B&B's with too few rooms. Inadequate and insecure accommodation has negative impacts on mental health, family relationships, and even performance in school. Lifestyles associated with living in emergency/temporary accommodation can impact motivation and willingness to engage, while the institutionalisation brought about by years living in these forms of accommodation produces lethargy and is not conducive to building and maintaining regular routines. Depression, feelings of isolation, and associated mental health issues are also significant challenges to progression and engagement.

It is also apparent that many in minority ethnic/migrant communities are unaware or lack information of the key public services available to them.

More widely, a lack of services and supports tailored specifically to new community and migrants in the NEIC has been highlighted (Centre for Effective Services, 2018; LYCS, 2018). A number of both old and young people in new communities require additional English language supports to progress in education and employment.

As with the indigenous population, migrants and minority ethnic young people express fear and anxiety about crime, drugs and violence in parts of the community. Racism, prejudice and discrimination are also a feature of everyday life for some young people. Racist and culturally insensitive comments are often explained away or justified in terms of 'banter' or 'joking'. Despite being born in Ireland or having lived here for nearly all their life, affected young people are made to feel that they are 'foreign' and do not fully belong. For young Roma, discrimination and prejudice means they often attempt to hide their ethnicity in public, particularly when attempting to secure employment.

Some minority ethnic young people must also manage the tensions between the cultural identities and heritages of 'Irishness' and their original minority identity. This balance is a component of migration and integration which involves acts of social-bonding and bridging. Strong social connections are central to the process of integration with social bonds with like-ethnics and social bridges with native populations' key components of young migrants' lives. Maintaining social and emotional connections with family and friends in their home countries and continuing with cultural traditions while also developing connections with new people and places in migration destinations is considered an effective strategy for young people (Moskal and Tyrrell, 2016). However, meeting these competing expectations and balancing multiple identities and cultures can be complicated and place emotional and mental strain on young people.

10.3 BOOSTING ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In light of local and international evidence, this part of the conclusion explores ways to boost the engagement and development of young people at risk in the NEIC. General approaches to policy and interventions, the importance of individual and structural responses, and the formal education system, along with the role of local services and supports in boosting engagement, are discussed.

10.4 APPROACH TO POLICY AND INTERVENTION

Growing international evidence illustrates how standardized, 'one-size-fits-all' policy solutions fail to address the diverse needs and prerequisites of many social groups, including ethnic minorities and those experiencing multiple disadvantages (Eriksson, 2019). Increased community participation and more bespoke tailored policies are considered a more effective means to address the "wicked problems" of inequality and social exclusion. Addressing 'wicked' issues requires the support of committed citizens, communities, and those affected, as well as changes within public institutions (Vanleene, Voets and Verschuere, 2018).

However, to achieve this, and to better target disadvantaged groups in society, it is necessary to integrate the wider social context of communities into public administration and public agencies to a greater extent than is currently evident (Eriksson, 2019).

In this regard, effective interventions for young people at risk require more knowledge of their experiences and how they understand them. For public service providers, the best possible service for disadvantaged groups including young people can be achieved through the further involvement of those affected in designing and delivering a service

more likely to meet the needs and expectations of themselves and others (Eriksson, 2019). Moreover, there is a growing awareness that promoting engagement and participation among marginalised youth requires more diverse and flexible strategies (Chaskin, McGregor and Brady, 2018a).

Within this, the nature of policy responses from government and public officials is important. To adequately address the issues experienced by young people and their families, there is a need to focus on individual and structural level factors. The issues experienced by young people in the NEIC are often a consequence of the wider long-standing, persistent and stubborn ‘wicked’ problems within the community and society. These are not just a reflection of the conduct and characteristics of families and individuals. While it is important to focus on the individual needs and difficulties faced by young people at risk and their families, young people in the NEIC are embedded within particular social and environmental contexts. Furthermore, it is now widely understood that a young person’s development is influenced by their wider environment, including family, school and community, with the development of their abilities dependent on the learning contexts to which they are exposed during childhood and adolescence (OECD, 2015a). In this regard, effective interventions for young people at risk require more knowledge of their lives and needs and how they mediate their experiences. To achieve this, and to better target disadvantaged groups in society and meet their needs, it is necessary to integrate the wider social context of communities into public administration and public agencies to a greater extent than is usual (Eriksson, 2019). A key objective of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform’s *Public Sector Reform Plan 2014-2016* was to design and deliver better and more cost effective public services using innovative alternative delivery models in partnership with the voluntary, community and private sectors (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2014).⁸³

This approach requires more sustained interactions between policy-makers and local communities and the increased input of young people in the process of designing and delivering policies on the issues which affect them. As previously highlighted, the importance of having a voice within local services and supports for young people in the community is clear. In light of this, closer engagement with young people on issues that directly affect their lives, including minority ethnic and migrant groups in the community, is recommended. The *Mulvey Report* identified the importance of community involvement to future regeneration and development and proposed the creation of a consultative forum with open-to-all ‘Town Hall’ style meetings (Mulvey, 2017). As with the importance of outreach and detached forms of youth work, and in light of the under-representation of certain cohorts of the population in traditional democratic arenas, consultation with vulnerable and at risk young people and residents from migrant/minority ethnic communities, may require additional strategies.

The NEIC Initiative affords an opportunity for the greater engagement of policy-makers and service deliverers with young people in the community in this process. Wider social context, it is claimed, impacts the possibilities for people’s actions and interactions differently (Eriksson, 2019) and the wider environment in which young people develop involves the interface between intra- and interpersonal factors and structural conditions. These myriad factors can provide a secure base for young people as well as a sense of security and belonging which is crucial to the smooth and successful development and progression to adulthood (Munford and Sanders, 2015). This ecological approach to the development and well-being of children and young people includes both proximal and distal factors in the child’s environment, including family history, family and broader factors related to the local community and environment, and the economy (Dex and Sabates, 2013). Policy and interventions in the case of adolescent development therefore require both individual and structural responses.

Structural measures can address either the socio-economic aspects or the institutional set-up of youth development, such as, for example, the conditions under which young people develop human capital (including school or health) or the conditions under which they enter employment and further education. Individual measures, in contrast, address the individual, by improving young peoples’ capabilities or primarily filling individual skill and motivation gaps (Mascherini, Ludwinek and Ledermaier, 2015). Individual measures can also address the capabilities of local staff and practitioners to better engage and meet the needs of young people including such matters as intercultural awareness and training, trauma informed approaches, and restorative practices. However, structural or wider environmental factors including poverty, up-bringing in marginalised communities, poorly functioning schools, and early exposure to community violence and crime, are both difficult to alter and are highly significant to development and outcomes (Foster *et al.*, 2017).

⁸³ However, according to the OECD, while many of the more technical elements of the proposed reform plan were completed, alternative delivery has not emerged as a ‘systematically viable’ option for public service provision in Ireland (OECD, 2017).

Furthermore, in terms of engaging with and supporting “hard to reach” young people, it is noted that local organisations who work with young people and their families in the NEIC operate within wider policy and funding environments which impact the character and calibre of their engagement and the type of services on offer. Without question, the reduction of funding in the community prior to the commencement of the NEIC Initiative was significant to the capacity of local organisations to meet the needs of young people and their families, and to engage in collaboration and cooperation (Mulvey, 2017). Moreover, gaps in wider social policy, for example, the current lack of suitable accommodation in the inner city and much publicised issues in mental health services in Ireland, create further difficulties in the lives of young people and complicate the ability of local services and supports to meet the needs of young people and their families. As has been highlighted nationally, for example, the lack of a 24/7 crisis intervention mental health services for children and young people is considered a significant deficit in responding to the needs of vulnerable young people (Mental Health Reform, 2018).

In terms of bespoke policy responses, in light of gang activity, violence and drug-related intimidation, the introduction of trauma-informed approaches to public service provision within the NEIC, including in the formal education system, is worthy of consideration. A trauma-informed policy and service climate is designed to address local events which adversely affect children and families (NHS Education for Scotland, 2017). This is of particular relevance to the NEIC due not only to the ongoing situation with drugs and violence, but also the large number of migrants who may experience trauma.

In summary, the introduction of participatory, community-led bespoke policy approaches which include both individual and structural policy measures are important in the NEIC due to the disparity in socio-economic outcomes, the persistent intergenerational nature of problems, the growing diversity of the population, and the existence of strong community networks like ICON and YPAR who have garnered extensive experience in community advocacy, engagement, and coordination.

10.5 PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

The discussion of overall approaches to policy and intervention highlights the distinction between preventive and compensatory measures. Compensatory policies are those which react to the specific articulations of disadvantage in terms of ‘repairing’ problematic transitions for young people, while preventive approaches are aimed at preventing the development of disadvantage by addressing key background factors in a general perspective (Walther and Pohl, 2006). In terms of young people at risk, much of the available evidence supports the importance of preventing young people from becoming “hard to reach”.

Across Europe and internationally, much of the provision for at-risk youth focuses on compensatory measures or interventions which address the needs of young people who have already dropped out of mainstream education or are engaged in risky behaviours. However, international research also demonstrates that early intervention is more effective in terms of both impact and costs (Smyth *et al.*, 2015), and in fact, such early intervention and prevention has been the focus of recent youth and family policy in Ireland (Tusla, no date; Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a).

The increased emphasis on prevention is based on evidence which confirms the link between development at a young age and future outcomes. For example, if a child has not developed early emotional, social, and cognitive skills by the age of seven years, it is both difficult and costly to address these developmental gaps thereafter. While each child is unique, the basic patterns or principles of growth and development are considered universal and stable (European Commission, 2014). The importance of early intervention is clearly evident in terms of mental health and substance misuse. The median age of the onset of mental disorders is 14 in OECD countries with anxiety and personality disorders beginning at age 11. Approximately one in four young adults suffer from mild to moderate to severe mental health disorders (OECD, 2015c). Early intervention in the case of mental health issues amongst young people is effective both in terms of reduced costs to public expenditure, but also in improving the lives of those who struggle daily with emotional pain, high anxiety, and addiction (Schaffalitzky *et al.* 2015).⁸⁴

⁸⁴ According to the EMCDDA, moreover, selective and indicated prevention interventions can be used to intervene early to prevent vulnerable young people initiating use and progressing to regular and problematic drug use (EMCDDA, 2017).

More locally, professionals across the broad range of services and supports in the NEIC are fully conscious of the importance of early intervention and prevention. Prevention is considered important in stopping young people from becoming “hard to reach”, in identifying potential problems and needs in young people and families, and in developing a tradition of engagement with services and supports. The need to build a rapport and a positive relationship with parents and families of young people from a young age, before they require more specific interventions such as Meitheal, become involved in the youth justice system, or are in need of crisis or emergency supports, is also understood. This early relationship-building is also a means to establish trust, correct misconceptions of services, and to mitigate the fear and stigma associated with help, support, and involvement of outside agencies.

Prevention and early intervention, however, requires not only resources but formal coordination and communication between a range of actors, including schools, social services and local services and supports, as well as the timely availability of specialist services from a young age.

10.6 HOLISTIC AND INTEGRATED SERVICES

International evidence demonstrates how holistic interventions and multiagency approaches are more effective responses to address the range of complex, interconnected needs of young people including substance use, mental health, and other problems. International organisations including the OECD have highlighted the potential benefits of “integrated services”, or social services for the benefit of service-users which improve efficiency in delivery by providers for vulnerable people with multiple disadvantages.

Integrated service delivery can potentially address the multiple underlying issues of vulnerable people simultaneously, decrease cost burden by eliminating duplication, improve access to services, facilitate information and knowledge-sharing between professionals, and increase collaboration between agencies and service providers (OECD, 2015c). The increased focus on more holistic and integrated approaches is based on the understanding that the interventions provided by multiple individual agencies may lack co-ordination and cohesion in certain circumstances. Effective coordination and cooperation between services is therefore deemed essential to meeting the complex health and social needs of many young people at risk (EMCDDA, 2017).

Young people at risk frequently engage with multiple agencies which do not take a holistic view of their problems. Indeed, there is a belief that young people at risk in the NEIC who are in the social-care system interact with staff from too many agencies. Dealing with multiple agencies can be overwhelming for some young people producing frustration and a sense of service “fatigue”. Closer collaboration, coordination, and integration can also address also deficits in existing statutory services, including transitions between youth and adulthood. According to the WHO, for example, integrated services can redress a “major design flaw” of existing statutory services, wherein the discontinuity at the age of 18 years between child and adolescent services and adult services, may result in many young people falling through gaps (Hetrick *et al.*, 2017).

With the establishment of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, there is now much greater local emphasis on ensuring the co-ordination of policy and services for children and youth and an expectation for all organisations who work with young people to facilitate access to integrated services and supports. As in mainland Europe, for example, cross-sectoral youth work is increasingly required of youth services in receipt of statutory funding in Ireland (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017). In alignment with wider policy developments therefore, interagency working and collaboration has been a clear focus of the NEIC Initiative (Centre for Effective Services, 2018).

In the case of the most hard to engage and those most at risk, staff in local organisations are fully aware of the possible benefits of closer collaboration and cooperation between services including identifying and engaging young people at risk and the retention of those who may be susceptible to disengagement. Collaboration has the potential to reduce the duplication of programmes within the youth work sector, by enabling projects to pool or share resources and/or to organise more dynamic and exciting activities for young people on a more regular basis. Furthermore, practitioners in local services have also expressed the desire to learn how best to engage with “hard to reach” young people from their peers and to share the most effective strategies.

However, more in-depth collaboration and cooperation is resource-intensive and local organisations must have the requisite resources to engage in this practice on a consistent basis.

Discussion of collaboration must be considered in the context of the existing NEIC culture of strong cooperation, coordination and integration of services for the welfare of young people and their families led by organisations including ICON and YPAR. YPAR has facilitated local projects and services to work more cohesively and collaboratively, raised awareness of the supports available to young people at risk within local and statutory services, and improved referral pathways for young people. Moreover, the CDETB has outlined a commitment to develop and support integrated delivery structures for the full range of CDETB funded services, projects and providers including establishing a network of CDETB funded youth projects/services (Farrelly, 2017).⁸⁵

Nonetheless, in many cases, local organisations in the NEIC have struggled with gaps in services for young people between adolescence and adulthood brought about by rigid age limits and blunt transitions. Often a consequence of national guidelines and policy, this will be discussed in detail in the following section. Furthermore, collaboration and cohesion is important not only for local and community services and supports but also for statutory agencies and the formal education system. For example, collaboration and dialogue between local and statutory organisations requires the sharing of information which has been a source of frustration for staff working in the community.

As has been previously highlighted, a joint information-sharing protocol is necessary for all children and young people's services working in the area to support integrated service delivery and joined-up working between all organisations (Centre for Effective Services, 2018).

10.7 BLUNT TRANSITIONS AND AGING OUT

A key priority of current government policy is ensure young people at risk have access “to an integrated range of supports and services to help them achieve their best possible outcomes” and to “ensure that no young person falls through the cracks because of fragmented services”(Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014a). The stated aim of the National Youth Strategy, moreover, is “to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood”(Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015).⁸⁶ Within this, national policy recognises that vulnerable groups of young people can be placed at further risk during times of transition and that specific groups of children and young people may be particularly at risk and need additional support and protection.

However, there is evidence of gaps within existing services and supports including blunt transitions for vulnerable young people as they reach adulthood. While youth policy in Ireland links adolescence and emerging adulthood by continuing up to and including the age of 24, depending on the type of service or support on offer, some cease engagement with young people at 18 while others remain available afterwards. Strict age limits can lead to the discontinuation of a trusted service on which young people are reliant.

Practitioners in the social care-field, for example, highlight the difficulty in ensuring that young people from the age 18-24 who have been in care or emergency accommodation can transition effectively and securely to independent living. The shift to adult services, however, can be a difficult adjustment for young people as within such services, young people are often expected to more self-sufficient and independent.

In addition to vulnerabilities, blunt transitions do not take full account of adolescent development in which maturity is delayed for young people at risk. Since vulnerable and young people at risk with complex needs do not neatly fit into particular age categories, there is a need for flexibility around age requirements within formalised remits from services and support funders which ensure young people who “age out” can maintain links with services and supports where necessary.

⁸⁵ As recommended in the report “From Patchwork to Network”, the CDETB has established a number of Networks in the area designed to foster greater collaboration and service delivery for CDETB funded services including “The Youth Projects and Services Network” comprising 10 projects/services which deliver youth work services to young people (ibid).

⁸⁶ Further, a report published by the Department of Health in 2017 recommended amongst other things, community supports for mental health and accessibility and the alignment of mental health services for young people. According to the report, “there is a need for a clear joined-up approach for the provision of mental health care for young people when and where it is needed. There should be improved access to the appropriate level of mental health care in timely manner and clear referral pathways across and between services for the 0-25 years age range. The importance of inter-agency coordination cannot be over-emphasised” (National Youth Mental Health Task Force, 2017).

This is of particular relevance to GYDPs. While the upper age limit for GYDPs formally ends relationships between young people and youth justice workers at 18, young people who “age out” may require additional support in desistance from crime and transitioning to employment and further education. To this end, GYDPs continue to maintain “off the books” relationships with young people, often in response to requests for support and assistance at times of adversity and crisis. Aging out is a clear source of frustration for affected young people who participated in this study who continue to rely upon a range of supports, including the use of facilities.

The formal end of involvement in a GYDP when reaching legal majority represents a policy disconnect in the sense that youth policy extends to the age of 24 but youth justice policy does not. This places Ireland out of step with practice with many European counterparts, including Germany and the Netherlands. More widely in youth justice policy there is a shift toward extending the age of which juvenile sanctions are applied, which has led to greater diversity among youth justice systems. This is rooted in the diversity of perspectives on childhood, youth, and adolescence, increased recognition of the importance of transitions in emerging adulthood, and on international criminological research which has found that there is little evidence to justify why the same regulations, procedures and legislation applied to young adults (18-24) may not be applied to those under 18 (Pruin and Dünkel, 2015; Matthews, Schiraldi and Chester, 2018).

Maintaining engagement with GYDPs is also significant in the context of a growing evidence-base which confirms that recovery pathways and desistance from young offending are initiated and enhanced by positive social networks and underlying changes in personal and social identity. Securing employment, engaging in new hobbies, and being exposed to new experiences can help young people in ‘moving on’ and building a new life (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016; Best *et al.*, 2017). GYDPs assist and support young people in this process.

Finally, “aging out” is also important in the context of the difficulty many young people at risk have in building trusting relationships with adults more widely. As previously discussed, some young people who participated in this research rationalised their disengagement from a service in the context of staff turnover and retention which can be problematic with young people reluctant to develop relationships with new staff.

10.8 EXTENDING THE AVAILABILITY AND SCOPE OF SERVICES

In terms of engaging with “hard to reach” young people, there is a widespread local, national, and international understanding of the need to extend the range and scope of services on offer. Staff in local projects and services emphasise the need for greater flexibility in hours and the types of services on offer. From the perspective of local staff, the current offering of projects and services may be too restrictive and insufficiently flexible to be able to engage young people who are most “hard to reach” and those at risk who present with complex needs. As discussed, the lack of a 24/7 professional social-care service which includes crisis response to emergency situations is considered a huge deficit to the community, and in engaging and meeting the needs of “hard to reach” young people more generally.

A need for expanding hours of social-work provision in the NEIC and wider afield in Dublin is advocated. In this respect, seven day services and greater availability of services during ‘anti-social’ hours are recommended. In addition to opening hours and access, organisations in the NEIC have also observed the benefits of providing more varied forms of services including drop-ins, residentials, outreach, detached youth work, one-to-one mentoring, along with group activities and conventional forms of youth work. There is also awareness of the need for local organisations to adapt and evolve according to the changing needs and wants of young people and to ensure the organisational culture and resources can facilitate this.

Flexibility and more specialised supports are also relevant to the further education and training sector. In Europe, disadvantaged young people have access to a growing range of supports in different forms of vocational training and school-to-work transitions, including youth work based mentoring (Boockmann and Nielen, 2016). A greater emphasis on the development of personal and social skills of young people within further education and training in tandem with certification is considered important by staff in the sector and the lack of a remit and resources to work on these skills therefore considered a deficit. The inability of young people to meet the demands of further education and training is often a significant barrier to progression but the structure of the education course and its focus on attainment and certification is too narrow and restrictive for some young people.

10.8.1 Outreach, Detached Youth Work

In terms of extending the range of services on offer, detached and street-based youth work are key instruments of engagement. It is clear from international evidence and recent local practice in the NEIC that detached and street-based forms of youth work are effective in engaging “hard to reach” young people. International evidence, for example, demonstrates how outreach or approaching target groups at home or on the street is more likely to be successful in engaging with vulnerable young people than the “come” approaches, whereby young people are expected to present at services (EMCDDA, 2017). Through outreach, workers can establish rapport with vulnerable and excluded young people, and gain acceptance as trusted and knowledgeable sources of information and advice (Sand, 2011). Moreover, outreach is regarded as an effective in early intervention reaching young people in an early stage of their drug-use, thereby potentially providing an effective strategy to recognize or prevent marginalisation, criminality, and problematic drug-use among young people (EMCDDA, 2017).

In the NEIC, detached and street-based youth workers as well as staff in drug-services have identified young persons considered at risk and “hard to reach”, established contact, initiated engagement, and linked them with other services where necessary. Moreover, this form of youth work consists of persistent follow-up from local project workers which helps to ensure that young people do not disengage from a service for any sustained period, perhaps during a time of adversity and/or crisis. Following-up with young people who disengage is also a means to build trust and confirm interest and concern.

Furthermore, due to issues including substance misuse or mental health difficulties, some young people find it difficult to maintain positive routines and consistent engagement with staff in local projects, with services often serving as a key source of support and help in this regard.

The development and use of outreach services is also relevant to migrant-specific supports and services. Similar to other marginalised or potentially vulnerable groups, migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, are not always in a position to travel to services and access supports. Moreover, the lack of information about available supports within migrant and new communities has been highlighted (LYCS, 2018). Greater use of outreach services can more effectively engage with and inform migrants and minority ethnic young people and their families of available services and supports.

10.9 THE ROLE OF SCHOOL AND FORMAL EDUCATION

The emphasis on non-formal education activities including youth work is rooted in the understanding that young people spend only part of their time in school, and that youth services and other cultural and social activities can serve as opportunities for important social interaction and belonging. School-based activities therefore should be complemented by additional initiatives for increased academic, social, and emotional support and participation (Darmody and Smyth, 2017a). Involvement in formal and non-formal education is also mutually reinforcing, with children’s involvement in structured social and cultural activities enhancing their academic development (Darmody, McGinnity and Kingston, 2016).

For young people in the NEIC and elsewhere, formal education and school is an important social environment and a key engine of development and progression (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018). Along with local services and supports, school and the formal education system is unquestionably a key component of supporting and engaging “hard to reach” young people in the community. In respect to migrant and minority ethnic young people, education is understood as a key factor in the integration process for both adults and children, and plays a significant role both in improving economic and social outcomes and in serving as an important social environment (Kenny *et al.*, 2017).

This research has demonstrated how many young people and their families in the NEIC may require additional supports to further progress in education. In this context, there is a need to focus on the individual capabilities of individuals and the capacity and structure of the formal education system. Schools act as important institutional environments which influence young people’s educational dispositions and decisions (Tarabini *et al.*, 2018).

In addition to young people and their families, a growing body of research demonstrates the importance of the capacity and disposition of schools to student outcomes in addition to community and family influences. Schools operating within a broader formal education system are not neutral spaces then, but dynamic settings that shape and constrain opportunities for student achievement (O’Gorman, Salmon and Murphy, 2016). The nature of the school climate, that is, day-to-day interactions between teachers and students, significantly influences a range of student outcomes, including early school-leaving, academic achievement, self-image, stress levels, and intended and actual post-school pathways (O’Gorman, Salmon and Murphy, 2016). Further, as recently highlighted in the *Growing Up in Ireland* study, social differentiation in school pupil profiles may have significant consequences for later educational outcomes due to the potential impact of peer effects, school provision of subjects and subject levels, and teacher expectations (Williams *et al.*, 2018).

As young people spend considerable amounts of time in formal schooling, education systems should take better account of the diversity of cognitive, social and emotional skills which drive children’s progression (OECD, 2016b). However, for many vulnerable young people at risk of early school-leaving, the issue can be intensified by a host of school-related needs that may be unavailable or not guaranteed. From this perspective, key causes of early school-leaving are contained within the school system itself, with early school-leaving not only tied to the characteristics of young people and their families, but also to structural and contextual flaws in educational systems (Smyth, 2005; McGregor *et al.*, 2015).

It is clear from the available evidence, including the perspectives of young people themselves and practitioners in local youth services, that many young people considered “hard to reach” or at risk in the NEIC do not have positive or successful experiences in the formal education system. Despite advancements in education more widely within the NEIC and the best efforts of educators and school staff, the particular developmental, learning and emotional needs of some young people are not being met through formal education.

Many young people in the community continue to struggle and are early-leavers with low educational attainment. They may also lack the requisite school readiness skills and resilience to progress in secondary and third level education, including lower literacy and numeracy than their peers. Young people, who contributed to this study, also cited the difficulty of the formal environment of school including large class sizes and adhering to rules, often leaving school early due to disciplinary issues. Moreover, there is frustration with the lack of education on more practical life-skills, including assistance with employment and personal development. In terms of young migrants and minority ethnic young people, there are occasionally issues in relation to language support as well as the capacity of schools to communicate with parents who may not be fluent in English.

The transition between primary and secondary education is widely considered to be a key time for young people in the NEIC. This period, considered a big adjustment, is crucial to ensuring young people at risk continue in formal education and develop key skills. A formal and systematic approach to managing this transition within all schools would benefit many young people. This can be done in partnership between schools and local community-based services and supports.

The difficulty in transitioning between primary and secondary education has been highlighted nationally. The *Growing Up in Ireland ‘The Lives of 13 Year Olds’* study found that, nationally, perceived transition difficulties are higher among young people from less advantaged families, migrant families, and markedly higher among those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Williams *et al.*, 2018).⁸⁷

10.9.1 School Curriculum and Choice

In terms of progression to third level and employment and the persistent nature of low educational outcomes in parts of the NEIC, greater consideration of the curriculum young people take in secondary education, and the relationship between this and future prospects, is also worthy of attention. Subject choice has important consequences for future academic and employment outcomes, impacting the qualifications which young people can pursue in post-compulsory education (Moulton *et al.*, 2018). In addition to personal, family, and even community influences, these choices can

⁸⁷ The study also found that the perceived ease of transition is related to primary school experiences with not liking school at age 9 associated with not liking school at age 13. Further, low cognitive test scores (Drumcondra Maths and Reading scores) at age 9 is associated with higher transition difficulties at age 13. Finally, the research demonstrates how transition difficulties are reduced where 13-year-olds attended a school open day and where they made the transition alongside some of their primary school peers.

be shaped by schools who may not offer certain subjects or guide students towards particular paths (Anders *et al.*, 2018). Schools with a concentration of working-class students are more likely to use streaming; a rigid form of ability grouping, which assigns students to ‘higher’ or ‘lower’ groups across all subjects. These streaming practices, which are more prevalent in schools serving socio-economically disadvantaged communities, constrain the degree of choice young people have over their subject levels, with those in lower stream classes usually allocated to Ordinary Level in Ireland. In working-class schools, moreover, there are sharp declines in the proportion taking Higher Level subjects as they approach the national exam taken at the end of lower secondary education (Smyth *et al.*, 2015).

The greater use of streaming in working-class schools, along with the greater likelihood of working-class students within these schools being allocated to the lower stream, serves to increase social inequality in experiences and outcomes within and between schools (Smyth, 2018). This is significant as early educational difficulties and previous educational experience at lower secondary level are important determinants of track location within upper secondary education.

A growing body of research over the past several decades demonstrates that young people from middle and upper socio-economic backgrounds are over-represented in academic or college-bound tracks, while those of lower social standing are disproportionately found in the general and vocational tracks (Banks *et al.*, 2014). Vocational secondary education has been criticised for channelling working-class young people into the vocational track, thereby excluding them from third level (Dæhlen, 2017). As socially disadvantaged students are over-represented in vocational education, this can serve to reinforce the inequalities present in society (Iannelli and Duta, 2018). Streaming and tracking can therefore constrain young peoples’ chances of continuing into higher education and accessing more rewarding employment opportunities.

These issues are relevant to the NEIC in the context of decisions made for the senior cycle including the uptake of Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). While the secondary system in Ireland is largely undifferentiated, the introduction of the prevocational programme the LCA has brought an element of tracking into upper secondary education.⁸⁸ The LCA programme, not unlike vocational programmes in other countries, may have the unintended consequence of social exclusion by segregating students and guiding young people towards a particular path of entry to higher education (Byrne and McCoy, 2017).⁸⁹ Through the link between home environment, expectations, school structures, and student choice, the selection of LCA can therefore mirror wider family and community stratification (Banks *et al.*, 2014).

In the past, both parents and young people in the community have expressed a lack of familiarity with and/or understanding of the education system and the implications of particular routes from second to third level, such as LCA (McCarthy, 2013), while local schools who only offer an LCA senior cycle option at post-primary level in the community have also been subject to criticism (Centre for Effective Services, 2018). These issues have considerable implications for young people and their transition to employment and third level education in the NEIC.

10.9.2 Broader Role of Schools in Community

The importance of the formal education system to adolescent progression also highlights the wider role of schools in the community and as part of a network of integrated services and supports, including interventions. A growing body of evidence demonstrates the potential of school-based interventions to address issues of drugs, mental health, and young offending, often in partnership with the community. For example, international evidence demonstrates that schools and youth organisations working in isolation fail to produce effective transdisciplinary approaches to complex problems like substance misuse (Sigfusdottir *et al.*, 2010). In light of this, Iceland’s approach (*The Icelandic Model*) to adolescent substance misuse is now based on community-based primary prevention, which focuses on adolescent health education and promotion both in schools and broader community-wide settings.

The underlying ethos of this approach to addressing substance misuse is rooted in the perspective that adolescents spend their lives predominantly within the domains of parents and family, school, peer groups, and in leisure

⁸⁸ The LCA offers a prevocational type curriculum and is targeted at preparation for the labour market and participation in post-school education, the further education sector but does not offer direct access to higher education.

⁸⁹ LCA students are typically at high risk of early school leaving and have learning difficulties. They also differ from other students in the LCE/LCVP programmes in that they are more likely to have lower reading scores on entry to secondary education, have received learning support, and been allocated to a lower stream class at lower secondary level.

activities, as well as within the larger social milieu of their communities. Since it is within these social circumstances that adolescent substance misuse occurs, it follows that it can be addressed in a collective community-led way (Sigfusdottir *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, effective interventions aimed at targeting early school-leaving adopt a preventative approach through a partnership, involving schools, parents and communities. The adoption of holistic interventions to promoting child well-being can have an impact not just school retention, but on a range of behaviours (Smyth *et al.*, 2015).

Further, in the case of school-based mental health support, and in line with international best practice, there is an important role for the formal education system to address the mental health needs of young people.⁹⁰ While school-based programmes which cover all of a given age group (e.g. all school children, primary children, or a particular class or curriculum stage) are commonly reported across OECD countries, interventions targeted at at-risk children and young people are less common (McDaid *et al.*, 2017).⁹¹

In addition to the potential health benefits, school-based interventions may improve school attachment (or the sense of belonging that children have about the school that they attend), reduce risky behaviours, and promote the development of assets, including better resilience and cognitive skills (McDaid *et al.*, 2017). In the pre-budget submission for Budget 2019, *Mental Health Reform*, recommended allocation of funding for mental health advisors and the necessary resources to implement a nationwide schools programme on mental health promotion and well-being in Ireland (Mental Health Reform, 2018).⁹² In addition to interventions, schools are a vital resource to communities. Schools can play a vibrant role in community life including the greater use of school facilities outside of school hours.

The current relationship between schools in the NEIC and local services and supports could be more consistent, formal and strategic. Under the current education system, there is often a lack of flexibility, time, and resources to link in with local projects and supports. Despite the commitment and engagement of individual school staff, many of whom go above and beyond their ordinary professional obligations and jobs as educators, the lack of formal engagement between schools and local communities at a more strategic policy-level is a deficit.

The collaboration between schools and projects including the link with YPAR could be further developed and receive more formal backing at a policy level from the Department of Education and Skills. This process can include increased communication and coordination between Home School Community Liaison, School Completion Coordinators and Education Welfare Officers, and local services and supports. Further, practitioners in local services and organisations are eager to assist schools in cases where young people are experiencing difficulties or engaging in challenging behaviour, and to assist in reducing disciplinary problems and prevention of early school-leaving. Local drug-treatment services in the NEIC are equally keen to engage with schools to assist in providing education prevention programmes around drug and substance misuse.

The recent establishment of a ‘Local Principals Network’, which seeks to “examine scope for a collaborative approach together with other local services to “community-wide” education initiatives and teaching/service resources to support the development of a North Central City community of schools, children, young people and families and to map and manage transitions between primary and post-primary education in the area” is a positive development in this regard (NEIC Programme Office, 2018).

In terms of further developing the relationship between the formal education system and the local community, one model for consideration is the “Community of Schools” approach which originated in Flanders, Belgium.

The approach is based on the assumption that academic programmes, social skills, sport, arts and culture, and practical experience are core components of adolescent development, both inside and after school hours. The origin of community schools in Ghent formed community-based responses to issues within disadvantaged neighbourhoods comparable to the NEIC. Primary schools and local community groups and services initially began to collaborate

90 Schools can act as an early identification and referral point for mental health difficulties. Early identification of problems is an important factor in successful treatment. Poor early identification and referral in schools can further disadvantage children with mental health difficulties.

91 Moreover, in many OECD countries school programmes are still limited and little beyond online information and resources may be available (McDaid *et al.*, 2017).

92 This programme should incorporate a whole school approach in both primary and post primary schools. In particular, mental health and wellbeing should be included in a revised SPHE curriculum at primary and senior cycle. This, however, will require adequate resourcing, including training and ongoing professional development for teachers, principals and other staff members (*ibid*).

in response to perceived needs including addressing literacy, health, lack of child participation, and improving communication between parents, schools and the community (Blaton and Van Avermaet, 2016). In addition to local aims and goals, 5 pillars underpin the development and operation of community schools in Belgium:

- 1) the interaction between school, home and community
- 2) social cohesion and community improvement
- 3) the broad development of the child
- 4) parental involvement
- 5) the best use of local facilities

To achieve these aims, a broad formal network is established between local organisations and state agencies which shape and support children and young people. There is also a role for parents as stakeholders (ibid).

10.9.3 Transitions from Education to Employment

The *Mulvey Report* highlighted the importance of improving access to employment for young people in the community and the need to enhance career guidance and support for those aged 15 or over (Mulvey, 2017). It is widely accepted that all young people in the NEIC need to believe in their future prospects, have access to good opportunities for further education and employment, and receive the requisite support to achieve, succeed, and to maximise their opportunities. This is of particular importance in the NEIC where the potential rewards of drug-related criminal activity are widely considered a viable alternative to education and employment. Employment opportunities and further education and training courses must therefore appeal to young people and provide genuine pathways to rewarding employment. In the same way, young people involved in manual labour or lower paid employment must also be afforded the opportunities and supports to upskill.

The focus on employment and further education in the NEIC can be situated in the ongoing focus in public policy throughout Europe on the “social inclusion” of young people, particularly those who are “not in education, employment or training” (NEET) (Mascherini, Ludwinek and Ledermaier, 2015). The transition from secondary to higher education and employment is an important milestone for young people in their transition to adulthood and independence (Denny, 2014). Success or discontinuities in these school-to-work transitions strongly affect occupational careers and behaviour later in life (Holtmann, Menze and Solga, 2017). However, from a developmental perspective, accessing meaningful employment and making the transition to employment are influenced both by young people’s active efforts to shape their lives and the structured set of opportunities and limitations which define pathways into adulthood. This echoes the distinction between individual and structural measures as discussed earlier.

Efforts to improve the prospects of disadvantaged groups centred on young people’s agency alone will have limited success since young peoples’ agency cannot create new jobs or change the character of jobs available. In large part, young people are bound to opportunity structures built from above by others (Roberts, 2018). It is now widely acknowledged, including within the EU Youth Employment strategy, that part time, low-paid and insecure employment opportunities are not positive for young people (Mascherini, Ludwinek and Ledermaier, 2015).

Furthermore, recent evidence in Europe indicates there are no ‘quick fixes’ to solve the problem of youth unemployment and young people not in education, employment, or training. The most effective policy tools require forward-looking structural reforms as well as a macro-economic environment which boosts labour demand (Eichhorst and Rinne, 2018). The quality of transitions into the labour market, especially for young people without tertiary education, can heavily depend on the particular type and quality of the prevalent vocational education and training (VET) system (Dingeldey, Assmann and Steinberg, 2017). According to the OECD, a well-developed system for workplace-based training, preferably in the form of apprenticeships, can facilitate a smoother school-to-work transition for young people (OECD, 2016a). However, improvements in vocational training and greater access to employment can improve the lives of young people only if employers need or are willing and able to use the skills of young people (Roberts, 2018).

In addressing the transition to employment, there is a need to design tailored interventions for young people based on their needs and preferences. According to the OECD, standard employment policies are unlikely to work for disadvantaged youth. Skill upgrading and supports should therefore be tailored to the personal profile of the young

person (González Pandiella, 2013). Furthermore, activating an overall enabling approach to integrating young people at risk and young people not in education, training or employment into these areas requires coordination between different policy-fields, services and administrative organisations (Dingeldey, Assmann and Steinberg, 2017).

Necessary support may also extend to childcare. Evidence indicates that wider labour market policy and investment in childcare services can have a significant positive impact in facilitating the return of young parents to education and employment. This investment can allow young parents not in education, employment or training to reconcile work or education-related responsibilities and family-related priorities, thereby helping to overcome barriers (Tamesberger, Leitgöb and Bacher, 2014). In Europe, support for young people in employment and in further education is increasingly provided through youth-mentoring. The growth in formal youth-mentoring programmes in recent decades is a response to the perception that young people facing adversity do not always have access to supportive relationships with adults and positive role models in their communities. Mentors and other adult role models are considered important in the lives of young people, particularly during transitions, including from formal education to employment (Brady, Dolan and Canavan, 2017).

Despite individual difficulties and barriers to progression, as well as perceptions of “dependency” on social welfare and supports, it is clear that young people in the NEIC wish to become independent, to gain meaningful and secure employment, and to develop successful careers. Many young people who participated in this research are critical of engaging in the criminal economy and wish to provide for their families in more legitimate and safe ways. Where necessary, young people must have access to additional support and mentoring to better engage with and meet the requirements of courses, to achieve skilled employment, and to realise their career goals. The availability of effective mentoring, tutoring, and personal skills development can better support vulnerable young people in the NEIC to progress and meet the demands of employment and further education and training. This is also of relevance to young migrants and minority ethnic young people in the NEIC, including Roma young people. Employment is a key instrument of integration, leading to financial independence and reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Employment enables immigrants to contribute to the economy and confirms social standing in the host society (McGinnity, Fahey, *et al.*, 2018).

SUMMARY

This section analysed the key needs and vulnerabilities of young people at risk in the community, barriers to engagement and development, and strategies to improve outcomes and engagement for “hard to reach” young people in the NEIC. The final section will set out a series of recommendations, priority actions and key components of an ‘ideal’ service for “hard to reach” young people.

11. PRIORITY ACTIONS

The specific actions listed below have been derived from the substantive content of the report and are made in light of local, national and international evidence, and best practice. In keeping with the study as a whole, the actions are identified in the understanding that the lives of all young people in the NEIC are influenced by community, family, school, wider society, and government policy.

1. Long-term Government commitment to investment in services for “hard to reach” young people in the NEIC including the restoration of funding for youth services to former levels.
2. The development of an alternative funding model for services which work with “hard to reach” young people in the NEIC. As argued in a recent review of commissioning by the Centre of Effective Services, “the funders of services have a responsibility to ensure that resources are used to optimise benefits and outcomes for the users of services and that current and future needs are met in a planned way” (Colgan, Sheehan and Burke, 2015). Therefore, as part of this model:
 - Funding of services is based on a Commissioning model reflective of the best features of those identified in the Centre for Effective Services’ *Rapid Evidence Review*. These include citizen centred perspectives, collaboration and partnership (co-production), data-based planning, transparency and the primacy of service-user needs (Colgan, Sheehan and Burke, 2015).
 - Funding is young person needs led and meets the full economic cost of delivery, encompassing staffing (including wider terms and conditions, specialised training, and upskilling), administration, activities, premises and equipment, and the resources to engage in inter agency collaboration and networking, as well as integrated service delivery.
 - Funders measure ‘soft’ (qualitative) outcomes of delivery and practice in evaluating local services.
 - Funding of local services moves from annual to multi-annual funding cycles (2-5 years as appropriate). Moving to a multi-annual arrangement could afford the opportunity to develop more substantial, outcome-based reporting mechanisms, including qualitative outcomes on more complex issues in the lives of young people (McInerney, 2018).
3. Increased availability of services ‘out of hours’ or at times of crisis or acute need.
4. The increased availability of community-based family specialist services from a young age:
 - The Nordic ‘Family Centre’ model is a potential template and could form part of the proposed “specialist hub” for vulnerable families referenced in the *Mulvey Report*.
 - Such a model can facilitate the introduction of a ‘one stop shop’ for adolescent health services in the community, by offering a range of services including primary-care, mental health and substance-use counselling, social supports (e.g. vocational and housing services), and family support.
5. The availability of a 24/7 crisis intervention mental health service for children and young people:
 - As advocated by *Mental Health Reform*, the access point to mental health services for young people should operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year, and cover the spectrum of mental health needs, from mild to moderate and severe, in line with *A Vision for Change*.
 - Furthermore, mental health services should employ a range of engagement strategies and demonstrate variety in types of practice rather than strict adherence to appointment-based provision in order to better engage and respond to a young person’s specific situation.
 - As advocated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), services should not be limited to traditional healthcare settings or methods. In the area of mental health, for example, creativity about where mental health support is located and provided is important for young people at risk (WHO, 2010).
6. The development of a more systematic role for the formal education system as part of integrated community based approaches in the NEIC. This could encompass:
 - The increased availability and use of school facilities outside of school hours.
 - More formal engagement with interagency structures such as YPAR.
 - Active participation in the implementation of the ‘Icelandic Model’ in the NEIC through a community-based primary intervention health promotion approach which addresses substance misuse among young people by forging partnerships between key stakeholders including schools and parents.

- Enhanced engagement with youth services and other relevant agencies for young people who are at risk of or on the brink of early school-leaving.
 - Facilitation of education on drugs and drug-related intimidation in all schools in partnership with YPAR and education workers in local drug projects and services throughout the community.
 - An enhanced role in addressing the mental health needs of young people including trauma, through the increased availability of school-based mental health supports.
7. The development and introduction of a formal programme to manage the transition from primary to secondary school for all schools in the NEIC:
 - This could involve a wider implementation and roll-out of programmes already in place, such as the ‘Check and Connect’ programme.
 8. The introduction of Trauma Informed Approaches (TIA) within all public agencies operating in the NEIC, including the formal education system and An Garda Síochána:
 - A trauma-informed policy and service climate is designed to address local events which adversely affect children and families.
 - This approach could follow the model introduced to the public sector in Scotland (NHS Education for Scotland, 2017).
 9. Flexibility for local projects and services with age limits to prevent blunt transitions and/or maintain trusting relationships between young people and local practitioners:
 - More specifically, the extension of the availability of GYDPs in the community from the present cut-off point of 18. This is of particular importance for young people who engage with GYDPs and have built trusting relationships with youth justice workers.
 - Also, continued availability of youth-friendly drug, mental health, and aftercare and accommodation services as required.
 10. The development and implementation of a joint information-sharing procedure to support integrated service delivery and communication between all services and supports in the NEIC, encompassing both the voluntary and statutory sectors. The data sharing agreement launched by YPAR in 2010 serves as a potential template:
 - Such a protocol can facilitate an interagency system to identify young people at risk.
 - Moreover, it can facilitate interagency data sharing in respect to the numbers of young people and families undergoing difficulties including data on the number of young people out of school, on reduced timetables, completing LCA, seeking educational psychological assessments, CAMHS waiting lists, and the numbers of young people in juvenile detention and in prison.
 11. The provision of specific resources to ensure local services can actively participate in interagency work and engage with structures to foster and strengthen cooperation between local services and supports and statutory organisations:
 - This requires resources and support for front-line staff to engage in networking and to communicate with fellow practitioners on a regular basis.
 12. The development of a dedicated mentoring service to assist with the search for employment, apprenticeships, and further education for 16-24 year olds in the community:
 - Mentoring can augment the recently introduced CDETB Young Adult Outreach Guidance Service in the community.
 13. Continuing consultation with “hard to reach” young people to ensure their voices are heard and services are responsive to their needs:
 - This process should involve consistent efforts to engage migrant/ethnic minority young people and raise awareness of relevant services amongst families in minority ethnic communities, including the Roma Community.
 14. Support for families impacted by drug-related intimidation and engagement and partnership between young people, families, schools, communities, and public services in collectively addressing drug-related intimidation in the NEIC:
 - In light of the current lack of evidence on effective responses to drug-related intimidation, the

formal evaluation of current local responses to DRI in the community is also important (Murphy, 2017; Murphy *et al.*, 2018).

15. The further development of two-way dialogue and restorative practices between young people and An Gardaí Síochána in the community with the aim of developing mutual understanding and more positive relationships.
16. Commitment to ensuring the specific needs and contributions of young people from all minority ethnic backgrounds in the NEIC are fully considered in the development of organisational strategies, work plans, and actions of all local services and supports:
 - The ‘8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work’ toolkit published by the National Youth Council of Ireland provides a potential guide for this process (National Youth Council Ireland, 2016).
17. Increased availability of community facilities for migrants/ethnic minority young people to socialise in the inner city through the development of a community hub:
 - Such a hub can also include a dedicated space for the self-organising of geographically diverse culturally-specific youth projects.
18. The introduction of a minority ethnic-specific youth leadership training programme to incentivise and increase the numbers involved and employed in youth and community work in the NEIC:
 - This is based on a growing awareness of the need to enhance opportunities for young people and adults from minority ethnic backgrounds to engage in mentoring and leadership roles within youth services.

12. COMPONENTS OF 'IDEAL' SERVICE

The following components of an 'ideal' service for "hard to reach" young people are derived from the evidence gathered throughout the research, including international best practice and the views of both local practitioners and young people in the NEIC.

As resources and a commitment to long-term funding are necessary to deliver services, to build capacity, and to further embed good practices within local organisations in the NEIC, the following components are identified with the importance of adequate resources in mind.

1. Staff are highly competent to respond to and meet the diverse needs of all young people in the community:
 - According to the Council of Europe, for example, competence in youth work encompasses knowledge, skills, attitudes and values and represents the "head, hands and heart" of youth work practice.
 - Key youth work competences identified are: building positive, non-judgemental relationships with young people; understanding the social context of young people's lives; using suitable participatory methods to involve young people in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of youth work; relating to young people as equals; and demonstrating openness in discussing young people's personal and emotional issues when raised in the youth work context (Council of Europe, 2015a).
2. The service is engaged in values-based work which both underpin and are clearly evident in practice:
 - Key values underpinning youth mental health services include: equal partnership; empowerment; whole-system approaches; a valued workforce; leadership; and building long-term relationships with young people (Values-Based Child and Adolescent Mental Health System Commission, 2016).
 - The core values of youth work are, amongst others, positive, participative, and anti-oppressive. In terms of participation, there is a commitment to involve young people in the decisions which directly affect them and to empower them to identify and address their own needs and problems (European Commission, 2015b).
3. Wherever appropriate, services and projects should be young person led and nurture the participation of young people and their families in design and delivery.
4. Staff and volunteers include people from the local community, including migrant and minority ethnic young people:
 - Irrespective of origin, staff are mindful, respectful, and actively responsive to young people's wider community and cultural identities in the NEIC.
5. The service is engaged in outreach as a means to follow-up with young people who may have disengaged or be at particular risk, to identify 'hidden populations', and to build awareness and trust with all communities in the NEIC:
 - Intrinsic to this is a culture of engaging young people who are more challenging to engage or harder to find, through outreach, street work and/or developing networks with families.
6. The service (and funder) tracks 'soft' outcomes (qualitative) in tandem with 'hard' (quantitative) indicators of success:
 - According to the European Commission, in the realm of youth work, "qualitative effects are what actually happens to young people, how they develop, as a result of their taking part in youth work."
 - Moreover, "being defined as qualitative effects does not mean that they cannot be measured and assessed"(European Commission, 2015b).
7. There is a commitment to continuous professional development and learning, a culture of staff seeking out new information and training, and diverse and inclusive perspectives on practice.
8. Staff in local services demonstrate expertise in key specialist areas (such as restorative practices, trauma awareness, and non-violent resistance training) which are embedded and used widely within local services:
 - *Note:* this may require capacity-building and additional support/resources.

9. There is a culture of monitoring and evaluating practice, self-reflection, and accepting responsibility. As part of this culture:
 - Projects and services engage in regular organisational reviews to examine and evaluate practices and performance.
 - The service develops processes to engage in reflective practice, and where appropriate, to share this practice with colleagues in other organisations across the community.
 - Evaluation is young people focused and undertaken through an inclusive, equality, and diversity lens, with particular focus on migrant/minority ethnic young people and young people at risk in the community.
10. The space, building, or physical infrastructure of the service is accommodating, suitable, and welcoming for all, does not present barriers to the engagement of young people, and is conducive to good practice and service delivery.
11. The service employs a range of engagement strategies and demonstrates variety in the type of practice rather than strict appointment-based provision:
 - Services are sufficiently flexible to engage and respond to the young person's specific situation.
 - Services may include outreach, street work, drop-in services, group activities, residentials, and one-to-one mentoring.
 - This is also applicable to youth health services. As advocated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), services should not be limited to traditional healthcare settings or methods. In the area of mental health, for example, creativity regarding where mental health support is located and provided is important for young people at risk (WHO, 2010).
12. The service is committed to a greater availability of services 'out of hours' and during times of crisis as needed:
 - *Note:* the service must have the remit and sufficient resources to deliver this.
13. A policy of "No Wrong Door" ensures the local service is an active participant in interagency networks and engages in collaborative partnerships between local services including schools:
 - *Note:* schools are held as equal and formal participants in this process.
 - As previously discussed, this practice may require additional resources and support for front-line workers both to carry out their duties and to engage in more active collaboration with other practitioners.
14. The service is aware of the importance of consistency, recognises the gradual nature of relationship-building, and demonstrates patience in developing relationships with young people:
 - Within this, the service is mindful of the impact of staff turnover on relationships with young people, and thus provides additional support for new staff to build relationships with young people and their families where necessary.
15. The service seeks to identify the diverse needs of all young people in the community, is committed to building on the strengths and capabilities of young people, and to enhancing their protective factors:
 - This includes commitment to support "hard to reach" young people to reconcile and strengthen family and community relations as appropriate.
 - Finally, the service has the flexibility to explore and access sustainable and positive progression pathways for "hard to reach" young people by harnessing the support of the extended community, including the formal education system and employers.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to priority actions and components of an ‘ideal’ service, the final section sets out a number of general recommendations. The recommendations derived from the substantive content of the report are made in light of local, national, and international evidence and best practice. As services and supports that work in the community operate within broader policy and operational environments, and often on behalf of public and statutory agencies, some recommendations in relation to relevant national policies are included.

13.1 MENTAL HEALTH

The introduction of a ‘one stop shop’ model for adolescent mental health services in the community: This can offer a range of services including primary-care, mental health and substance-use counselling, social supports (e.g. vocational and housing services) as well as family support, and form part of the proposed ‘specialist hub’ for vulnerable families referenced in *The Mulvey Report*.

A ‘one stop shop’ can lead to more integrated mental health services: For example ensuring there is one person/agency with responsibility for directing a young person to an appropriate mental health service instead of a fragmented approach in which GPs make referrals to CAMHS while youth-workers direct a young person to Jigsaw.

In line with international best practice, a more developed role for the formal education system in addressing the mental health needs for young people including trauma. The implementation of a formal schools programme on mental health promotion and well-being incorporating a whole-school approach in both primary and post-primary schools is recommended. Schools can act as an early identification and referral point for mental health difficulties as identification of problems is an important factor in successful treatment (Mental Health Reform, 2018).

13.2 EXTENDING THE SCOPE OF SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Following on from the recent introduction of detached and street youth work, a long-term commitment to resourcing and its further development: In line with international best practice in substance misuse, there is potential for the team to link with local drug treatment services.

Greater flexibility in age limits for young people engaging with existing services to prevent blunt transitions between adolescent and adult services. As outlined, in general, youth policy extends to 24 years of age. This is of particular importance for young people who engage with GYDPs and have built important relationships with youth justice workers. One possible model for the NEIC to replicate is the Solas Project in the Liberties, Dublin. However, the extension of GYDPs to young adults could proceed within existing projects and does not necessarily require the creation of a specific GYDP for over 18 year olds.

Availability of additional youth based services and facilities for young people under 10, in particular those who are more ‘at risk’.

Consideration to developing relationships between youth services and young people under the age 10 through once off events, or through occasional activities/events held in local services or schools.

13.3 MINORITY ETHNIC/MIGRANT YOUNG PEOPLE

It is recommended that all youth services in the community make consistent formal efforts to engage migrant/ethnic minority young people and raise awareness of youth services amongst families in migrant/minority ethnic communities.

Where necessary, youth programmes and services should be developed in a culturally inclusive and appropriate manner. This process may necessitate additional training and upskilling for staff and further consultation with the migrant/minority ethnic community on the demand for culturally specific youth projects.

The development of a Roma specific youth group in the inner city. Once established, this group can link in and engage with existing youth projects under the YPAR umbrella.

Make existing youth work centres and community facilities available to self-organising minority-ethnic youth groups including young Roma for free or at minimum cost. Migrant young people are often self-organising, focused on specific issues, and have social networks across and beyond specific geographic areas such as the NEIC.

Support and increase the capacity of migrant/ethnic minority specific services in the community to engage in outreach, and to bring services and supports directly to the migrant and minority ethnic community.

13.4 SUBSTANCE MISUSE AND DRUG RELATED INTIMIDATION

Further use of the ‘Icelandic Model’, a community based primary intervention health promotion approach, in the NEIC to address substance misuse among young people including a formal role for schools and parents as stakeholders.

Enhance education on drugs and drug related intimidation in all schools in partnership with YPAR and education workers in local drug projects and services in the community.

13.5 ENGAGING “HARD TO REACH” YOUNG PEOPLE

The Mulvey Report identified the importance of community involvement to future regeneration and development and proposed the creation of a consultative forum with open to all ‘Town Hall’ style meetings (Mulvey, 2017): Similar to the importance of outreach and detached forms of youth work, and the under-representation of certain cohorts of the population in traditional democratic arenas, consultation with vulnerable and at risk young people and residents from minority ethnic communities may require additional strategies.

In light of this, proactive and on-going engagement with “hard to reach” young people from all public agencies and services operating in the community through detached youth work and outreach to identify needs and increase their influence on policies and services that affect and impact them is recommended.

One possible approach to assist with engagement with “hard to reach” young people in the NEIC is ‘The Young People as Researchers’ model which empowers young people in the community to consult with young people and conduct research: This model has the potential to assist in the development of more consistent and continuous collection of data in respect to the lives of young people in the NEIC. This programme can be utilised by young leaders in youth services and older students in secondary schools.

Where appropriate, the formal inclusion of young people who are engaged with youth services when publicising and promoting youth services in the community: For example, young leaders can accompany youth workers when visiting schools.

Increased formal cooperation between statutory services (CAMHS and schools), detached youth workers, youth services, and community and family services engaged with vulnerable or at risk young people.

13.6 STAFF IN LOCAL PROJECTS AND SERVICES

Provide cost effective opportunities for continuing professional development and access to training in specialised areas such as Trauma, Restorative Practices, and non-violent resistance training.

In the context of maintaining relationships with young people at risk, greater attention to the transition between old and new staff in youth services including support for new staff in building relationships with young people and their families.

In the context of engaging “hard to reach” young people, provide additional opportunities for frontline workers to engage in networking and to communicate on a regular basis: This can include communication and information-sharing between local practitioners and detached youth work staff who are in direct contact with “hard to reach” young people in the community.

13.7 SCHOOLS AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A formal and strategic engagement of all schools within the formal education system with local organisations in the NEIC through interagency structures like YPAR, and an increased role for schools in the NEIC outside of school hours including the use of school facilities.

As outlined, one model for consideration is the “Community of Schools” approach developed in Flanders, Belgium: The approach is based on the mind-set that academic programmes, social skills, sport, arts and culture, and practical experience are core components of adolescent development and progression, both inside of school hours and after school hours (Blaton and Van Avermaet, 2016). To achieve this, a broad formal network is established between local organisations and state agencies that jointly shape and support children and young people. There is also a role for parents as stakeholders.

In line with the Brighter Future Initiative and best practice in European Restorative Justice, more systematic use of restorative practices throughout all organisations working with young people in the NEIC, including schools.

Consideration to the use of Meitheal or other forms of interagency support as standard practice for young people on the brink of expulsion from school: This process would work towards maintaining the participation of the young person in education.

Building on the new ‘Schools Principals Network’ established under the NEIC initiative, increased coordination between HSCL, School Completion Coordinators, Education Welfare Officers and interagency structures such as YPAR.

In terms of further education and training, additional resources to develop the ‘soft’ cognitive, social and emotional skills of young people in addition to the focus on certification and training. As recommended by the OECD, education systems should better account for the diverse sets of cognitive, social and emotional skills which drive children’s progression (OECD, 2016b).

Consideration of the development of additional apprenticeships, designed through broad-based partnerships in collaboration with young people; For example, between ETBs, local businesses, local employment services, the community/ voluntary sector and third level institutions.

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APPENDIX 1 LIST OF CSO SMALL AREAS

The following is a list of the 85 CSO small areas included in the socio-demographic profile of the NEIC in section 3 of the report. It is noted that the selected areas, corresponding to Dublin City Council's North East Inner City map, is somewhat larger than the RAPID area boundary identified in *The Mulvey Report* which consists of 74 small areas.

268109001; 268009011; 268109002; 268104015; 268105013; 268009006; 268138004; 268009009; 268109005
 268009012; 268104011; 268138017; 268104016; 268109017; 268104010; 268109003; 268109015
 268009008; 268009010; 268109004; 268104007; 268104002; 268010015; 268106019; 268009005
 268009007; 268009013; 268104004/268104005; 268010006; 268109016; 268010007
 268009004; 268105002; 268009001; 268138001; 268010004; 268105011; 268009016; 268104003
 268009003; 268104009; 268104017; 268138006; 268105009; 268010014; 268009002; 268105015
 268105005; 268104008; 268105012; 268010010; 268106017; 268010001; 268138003
 268009014/268009015; 268105007; 268105001; 268138007; 268138002; 268010005
 268105004; 268105016; 268109007; 268106018; 268105006; 268009017; 268109006
 268138016; 268109012; 268138014; 268104014; 268105010; 268104013; 268105003
 268105014; 268138012; 268105008; 268138013; 268104012; 268104001; 268138015
 268109009/268109018; 268109011; 268109010; 268104006



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