

# Opportunities for Youth: An Action Plan for Youth Services

## Respondent Profile

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Organisation/Body (if applicable)	Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre
Role (if applicable)	Social Worker

Are you making this submission on behalf of the organisation or body named above or as an individual?

Organisation/Body  Individual

What is your experience of youth services, if any? (200 words max - bullet points can be used if preferable)

*In your answer, you may wish to include:*

- *which type of service you are familiar with*
- *if you are a past or current participant, a parent, a youth worker or volunteer, someone working in a different sector etc.*

I am a social worker, currently practicing at Nasc, the Migrant & Refugee Rights Centre.

I work with children, young people and families from migrant, asylum seeking and refugee backgrounds.

My work specifically supports people who are in the process of family reunification, and people who are transitioning from Direct Provision into community life.

Nasc's social work projects involve interagency work with several youth services, predominantly within Cork and the surrounding areas.

The majority of Nasc's engagement and co working relationship is with the YMCA in Cork City, which was established in 1886 to provide support services and programmes to young people.

## Consultation Questions

### 1. What are your views on access to youth services? (600 words max – bullet points can be used if preferable)

*In your response, you may wish to consider:*

- *any barriers that exist to equality of access either for all young people or for particular cohorts of young people, including geographical barriers*
- *any measures you propose to enhance access and the inclusion of all young people*

The geographical location of some Direct Provision Centres is a significant barrier to accessing services. Some of the centres which accommodate the largest number of children, young people and families, are located in areas which do not facilitate access to in-person youth services.

Transport services are vital for asylum-seeking and refugee children, young people and families who are residing within Direct Provision Centres. The cost of public transport is a barrier to accessing youth services, particularly given the limitations of the Daily Expenses Allowance.

It is imperative that youth services are produced and delivered with cultural sensitivity and cultural appropriateness. To ensure increased access to services, exclusive gender-specific groups need to be facilitated. Youth leaders need to be matched with groups of the same gender i.e. female youth leaders for female youth groups, and male youth leaders for male youth groups.

Mixed-gender grouping is a barrier to engagement with services, because it fails to name, identify, and recognise the importance of children and young people's culture and faith, in their integration needs.

### 2. What are your views on quality in youth services? (600 words max – bullet points can be used if preferable)

*In your response, you may wish to include:*

- *what you consider to be the indicators of high quality services*
- *what are the factors that support high quality services*
- *any proposed measures to enhance quality in youth services*

One indicator of high-quality services is the integration of a holistic perspective on accessibility. When children and young people's basic needs are not met – as is often the case with asylum-seeking and refugee children and young people – an attempt to carry out meaningful psychosocial work is can be unhelpful, inappropriate and sometimes harmful.

Client-led and focused youth services are another important aspect of delivering high-quality services. This approach facilitates the required time and space for young people to identify their own needs, and to identify the barriers that they face to full participation in youth services. The incorporation of this approach in to the practice of youth services is crucial to high-quality services for asylum-seeking and refugee children and young people.

It is essential that asylum-seeking and refugee children and young people are supported by youth workers who are culturally competent and culturally sensitive.

Diversity in youth services - including representation of ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities – can be a strong indicator of high-quality services.

The facilitation of trauma-informed spaces, and trauma-informed youth workers, is an important contributor to high-quality services for asylum-seeking children and young people. Many of these children and young people have fled persistent and consistent armed conflict and war, often for the entirety of their lives.

It is vital that appropriate referral pathways are accessible to youth workers, and that meaningful interagency work can take place.

**3. What are your views on collaboration and co-operation within the youth sector and between the youth sector and other sectors? (600 words max – bullet points can be used if preferable)**

*In your response, you may wish to consider:*

- *any benefits you see for young people from collaboration*
- *any good practice examples*
- *any barriers that exist*
- *relationships with and between different funding bodies*
- *any proposed measures to enhance collaboration and co-operation.*

Collaboration, co-operation and efficient referral pathways between the youth sector and the immigration sector facilitate a holistic response to the needs of children and young people.

Collaboration can foster full inclusion and participation of asylum-seeking and refugee children and young people in Irish society. Nasc and YMCA Cork have forged a successful partnership which supports service users in a meaningful way. Cross-referral pathways between organisations allow for needs to be met effectively, with regards to education, integration, social inclusion and sense of belonging. These pathways also support the navigation of a service user's immigration status and the many ways that this can impact and/or act as a barrier to the fulfilment of the child or young person's needs.

In turn, referral pathways within Nasc's social work team and advocacy team facilitate the provision of wrap-around and targeted support in every sphere of a child or young person's life.

A significant barrier to collaboration and co-operation is the lack of training and capacity-building for youth services, regarding migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee youth issues. The immigration and asylum aspect of a child or young person's life can be a major barrier to accessing services. It can lead to heightened vulnerability, particularly when it intersects with other common practice issues: homelessness, poverty, trauma, loss and mental health distress.

**4. How can we strengthen the role of youth services in supporting young people's rights? (600 words max – bullet points can be used if preferable)**

*In your response, you may wish to consider among other things:*

- *young people's rights to safety and development, to be heard, to be treated without discrimination, to have equal access to services and to leisure, play and recreation*
- *the youth sector's role in promoting human rights and equality*

An important contributor to the realisation of young people's rights is the increased awareness, and recognition, of the specific barriers faced by asylum-seeking and refugee youths when accessing their rights and entitlements. This includes barriers to accessing social welfare payments, housing, and education.

It is also necessary to increase awareness of the issues affecting migrant youths' participation in youth services. These issues include homelessness, poverty, discrimination, marginalisation, trauma, and mental health problems.

More awareness is needed among service providers of the international protection process, the various immigration permissions and statuses, and how these impact service users' rights and entitlements.

By prioritising migrant youths' empowerment as a core aspect of the service, the young peoples' rights can be better supported.

**5. What measures are needed to ensure that we have sustainable and effective youth services into the future? (600 words max – bullet points can be used if preferable)**

*In your response, you may wish to consider the broader structures that support youth service delivery including issues of funding, recruitment and training, access to premises, availability of data and research, and innovation and responses to emerging issues.*

It is crucial that interagency work continues to be supported, developed and deepened. This is particularly important for services impacting asylum-seeking and refugee youths, given their increased vulnerability living in Ireland as a country of resettlement.

Increased training opportunities for youth workers in the areas of immigration are crucial to the future of effective youth services. Such training should include pre-migration, in-migration and post-migration experiences, trauma-informed care, poverty-aware and anti-discriminatory practice, cultural competency, access to rights and entitlements and the ways in which these rights are impacted by the migration permissions held by migrant youths and their families.

Increased funding for access to transport is crucial to the engagement of migrant youths with youth services, while residing in rural Direct Provision centres.