

# REPORT of PROCEEDINGS

## Garda Youth Diversion Projects Annual Conference

7th November 2018  
Knightsbrook Hotel, Trim, Co. Meath



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
agus Comhionannais  
Department of Justice  
and Equality

ciste na  
gcuntas díomhaoín  
the dormant  
accounts fund



This report of the Garda Youth Diversion Projects Annual Conference 2018, has been prepared for the Department of Justice and Equality by the conference rapporteur Dr John Bamber, Independent Consultant, November 2018.

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## Introduction to the Report

On Wednesday, 7 November 2018, the Department of Justice and Equality reinstated the Annual Garda Youth Diversion Projects National Conference, which was held in the Knightsbrook Hotel, Spa and Golf resort, Trim, Co. Meath.

The event brought together speakers from a variety of disciplines to discuss current issues affecting the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. The conference was designed to allow the attendees to have their say, and contribute to policy and future development of the GYDP service. The opening address was given by Minister of State David Stanton.

The morning programme featured two panel discussions, the first from the young people involved in the Young Persons Consultation, and the second on the Action Research Project lead by Dr. Seán Redmond. It also included the keynote speaker for the conference, Dr Sharon Lambert. Since 2014, Dr Lambert has been a member of the teaching staff in the School of Applied Psychology, University College Cork, following a number of years working in community based settings. Her research interests revolve primarily around the impact of trauma on development, its link with substance misuse and mental health and consequent considerations for service design and delivery. The scope of her work includes understanding the impact of childhood adversity on later life outcomes, the impact on staff of working in trauma laden environments, and how services can incorporate trauma research into their practice and policies.

In the afternoon, workshops led by volunteers from within the GYDP network, focused on four topics affecting Youth Justice Workers:

1. Best Practice Support for GYDP projects
2. Enhancing Communications and Relationships
3. Resources
4. Practice issues

The discussions aimed to consider and produce solutions to many of the problems faced by the projects, and the outputs were recorded for the following conference report. The report provides a summary of the morning inputs, and brings together the findings from the afternoon's group discussions. It concludes with a summary list of main points emerging from the groups.

## Minister's Opening Address

Minister of State, David Stanton, welcomed participants to the 2018 Garda Youth Diversion Projects Annual Conference, which he noted would become annual. He commended officials and project staff, and An Garda Síochána, for their dedication and skills in dealing with challenging behaviour on a regular basis. From his visits he had seen life changing/saving work. He praised projects for being embedded in communities, and for the close working relationships between youth workers and Juvenile Liaison Officers. He acknowledged that in the 26 years since the first project was established, many young people had been successfully supported from difficult beginnings through to positive outcomes. The work demonstrated the need for earlier intervention and prevention, and he announced an additional 500k in the last budget to support such measures. He accepted that there was still a need going forwards to prove scientifically that the work is effective, before making the case for funding. He noted several recent positive developments:

- A Restorative Practice Training Initiative throughout the country had been recently awarded to Ulster University
- The new IYJS website had been launched
- REPPP project (Research Evidence into Policy Programmes and Practice) had been established at the University of Limerick to advise officials and support practitioners involving:
  - Data collection (international comparison with exemplar jurisdictions)
  - Reducing the impact adult crime networks – Greentown Project
  - Identifying the key ingredients in productive relationships through systematic review of the international literature and the field
  - An Action Research Project over 2 years developing understanding of what works in terms distinctive offerings, evidencing the work, how best to work with others.

The aim and purpose of unifying practice, policy and research, including ongoing consultation with the projects, was to support the need for new directions in a forthcoming youth justice strategy, assess what has been achieved, and to build on strengths. The Minister ended by once again thanking staff and officials for their work.

## Panel discussion 1 - Consultation with Young People

Anne O'Donnell explained the background to a recent consultation with young people, conducted by the National Centre of Excellence and Coordination – Hub na nÓg. The views of young people were sought by a steering committee of key stakeholders, including representatives from youth justice projects. An advisory group of young people were set the task of coming up with a 'blue skies' approach to hearing from young people. After a pilot phase, the advisory group changed the approach in terms of methods and recruiting young people, with members of the advisory group explaining the purpose to other young people. Overall, 7 events were held involving 41 young people plus the Advisory Group.

The consultation asked for views about the best things about projects, what worked well or not so well, and sought to categorise the responses under key issues. The process was evaluated and findings presented by members of the advisory group in this conference session included:

- Young people: best seen as partners, and an important role for former participants
- Youth Justice Workers: were generally seen as friendly, open, and listening but some were not like this or properly trained
- Projects: people like meeting other young people as it helps build confidence, drop-ins were positive as somewhere to 'hang out' but it was not good to mix ages, or not to have a place of their own to meet, having only 1 meeting per week, or not being open when young people are available
- Activities/trips: motivate young people, are fun, make young people happy, and offer new opportunities, but some projects lack of trips/activities, or not enough variety; some young people may drop out because of drug problems, or being bullied in projects, and so follow-up is necessary, and/or the possibility to bring a friend
- Employment and training opportunities: seen as crucial, involving trips, and youth exchanges under Erasmus + entrepreneurship led to new perspectives, and was seen as confidence boosting
- Programmes: can help young people to make better choices, understand how to get on with people, improve communication skills, get help in after school clubs, and help young people get into YouthReach, but there not enough courses, and sometimes they are too long

- Juvenile Liaison Officers: can be positive influence but some young people feel that they are being unduly targeted.

The presentations were enthusiastically received by the audience, and several comments, points and suggestions came from the floor, including:

- How to sell being on a committee to young people and the importance of the opportunity to hear different opinions
- The need to have young people with experience involved, and the need for Gardai with appropriate attitudes and skills to encourage young people
- How to connect with young people currently being missed – an issue for future consideration
- How to help to connect young people through friends, and the need to identify leaders
- The cut off age at 18 being too early, and needs extending to 21 because it is more about stage of development than age
- The need for more male youth justice workers.

## **Panel Discussion 2 - Action Research Project**

In this session, Dr Seán Redmond from the Research Evidence into Policy Programmes and Practice (REPPP) project at the University of Limerick, explained that the Department of Children and Youth Affairs has worked with the University of Limerick to implement an Action Research Project (ARP) with 11 selected projects. The objective is to move beyond testimonial and anecdotal evidence that projects work well and provide a good service, to capture precisely what specific interventions work best, document this evidence, and roll the learning from this out across all the projects over a period of years. The actions will include:

- Examination of what makes for a successful relationship between a young participant and a Youth Justice Worker (success being understood as facilitation of real change in the young person's attitudes and life that would not otherwise happen)
- Articulating the contribution that a GYDP makes in tackling crime in a community
- Assessment of the contribution that 'up-stream agencies and interventions can make to crime reduction and making appropriate recommendations
- Enhancing the family support and preventative work of projects:

- Trialling cost-effective methods of providing the service in rural areas (those in which a stand-alone GYDP would not be feasible)
- Further developments of tools for measuring outcomes; and
- A revised model for establishment of new GYDPs (by Q3 2019).

An external evaluation (economic appraisal) will also be commissioned during 2019, with strong links to the ongoing ARP. A structure for ongoing consultation with participants and past GYDP participants is being set up and will be supported Hub na nÓg (DCYA).

The focus of the ARP is on achieving better outcomes for the young people who participate in the work of projects, recognizing the correlation with socio-economic disadvantage and other family and community issues and circumstances, so that they can lead fruitful lives and access education and training services and employment on an equal basis with others. Consultation with participants is structured in as part of the approach. The Department's methodology is informed by Government policy and recommendations to the Department and agencies on how to drive improvement in public services, but also by the spirit of Section 42. Starting with the actual circumstances of young people at risk who come to participate in GYDPs, the focus is on ensuring that the GYDPs are mandated, resourced and organised optimally to tackle the root causes of youth offending and assist young people and their families, taking account also of the specific community context, to break that cycle.

Dr Redmond pointed out that the ARP will draw from a systematic review of relevant literature and research, with a focus on how to build on relationships to reduce young people's involvement in the Youth Justice system. He noted that GYDP projects have a 'grown up' relationship with science, in that they are now in a post-evidence phase which includes:

- Local diagnostics
- EBRA
- Use of Evidence-based interventions
- Nested logic models
- Training/capacity building
- Trial sites



Dr Redmond further explained that relationships are key to everything. Since 70% of the 13m annual budget goes on staff who work directly with young people, it is important to be explicit about what can be expected to change. Being explicit requires a clear Theory of Change explaining how small changes can contribute to fairer outcomes. Evaluation will be critical to produce evidence, which will come from a range of sources. The fundamental question will be about how to help practitioners deal with issues in practice settings, and put these put these approaches and methods in place.

Following the explanation, several participants from different ARP sites gave brief accounts of why they had chosen to be involved, what they understood about the context, what they saw as key issues to be addressed, and what they hoped to gain from involvement. The contributions included:

- There had been a notable improvement in sharing information between JLO and youth workers
- ARP can build on current approach to addressing 'wicked' problems
- Challenges around achieving truly reflective practice, and effective interagency protocols, need to be addressed
- Working with a large travelling community being away 6 months, and the pressure on services when returning
- Excitement about the opportunity to evidence practice but concerns about time required, the need to be open and willing to change, and provide constructive feedback
- The challenge of working in an unemployment black spot, where there is a high % of social housing
- Intergenerational issues regarding education, but tight knit and supportive communities
- The challenge to engage participants meaningfully while dealing with increased workloads
- The importance of highlighting relationships but concerns about how can it be captured
- Time to adjust to different way of working
- Finding a balance between a uniform response and uniqueness at local level
- Appreciation of the opportunity to learn by doing, and develop local knowledge while learning from other projects
- The challenge of staff turnover.

## Conference Keynote Address

In her keynote address, Dr Sharon Lambert from University College Cork, focused on the emotional and psychological costs to human services workers due to the high levels of investment that they often make in the welfare of their clients. She noted that there are increasing levels of difficulty being experienced by clients, which has a knock-on effect on workers. Mental health is an example, being the biggest risk to young people in our time. Overall, trauma is now widespread, taking different forms, and with inter-generational impacts. On the ACE levels of trauma scale – lower levels are good but higher levels and a greater number are destructive. In the criminal justice context, there are higher levels amongst former care leavers, with mental health and homelessness issues. Users may be medicating their own pain as they are unable to access services. Worker's exposure to trauma can result in compassion fatigue, and secondary traumatic stress, with physical and emotional exhaustion leading to burnout. Staff may not always be aware of the impact but it can result in a narrowing of focus and tendency only to see the negative. In this context, Dr Lambert has argued in her own research for trauma informed design for clients, staff, organisations, communities, education, and mental health services.

## Group Discussions

In the afternoon, conference participants divided into groups to consider one of four main topics chosen in advance.

1. Best Practice Support for GYDP projects
2. Enhancing Communications and Relationships
3. Resources
4. Practice issues

The first hour was devoted to scene setting and reflection. The second focused on conclusions and recommendations. Each group had a facilitator and a note taker. The notes were written onto flipchart paper and passed on to the conference rapporteur post event, for collation into this conference report.

## **Best Practice Support for GYDP projects**

This section of the conference was about how training and support can address the operational and developmental needs of the workforce, including building a GYDP network. One important overall consideration was about providing and ensuring access to the right kind and amount of training and support. Key issues included the role of IYJS as a training provider, what kind and of training is needed, the balance between local and national delivery, and what should be required or recommended training.

## **Project and youth justice worker training and support**

A starting point was the recognition that required skill sets are not always present in local teams. In this case, there was a need for access from beginners to advanced levels of training, covering all parts of the YJW role, as well as training in response to emerging needs. Being able to choose from a list of choices was preferred, which could only work effectively in a context where the list was available to everyone, and all staff had time to engage in continuing professional development activities. It was acknowledged that bigger organisations, such as Foróige and Crosscare, had advantages in terms of capacity to develop programmes and enabling staff to identify needs. It was suggested that the Employee Assist Programme is worth considering for staff supervision when issues are beyond what local managers can deal with.

An important issue was about whether IYJS should set a standard amount of training to be expected of staff. It was recognised that the more extensive and demanding levels of training should carry some form of ratification. The emphasis in training should be on specific skills and overall capacity building in relation to a defined set of core competencies. If defined, the competencies could provide a training map to distinguish between essential and additional elements. Training should also be aimed at and available to managers, who need to be able to provide support as a critical part of their role. The programme of training could also be opened up to JLOs (where appropriate). The content of training could be determined in response to critical incidents, suggestions from networks, or findings from young people's consultations.

Many of the comments and suggestions regarding training and support can be usefully captured under the four headings in Box 1 below: operational, developmental, specific and thematic.

Box 1: Operational and Developmental types of training and support

Operational	Developmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 day induction pack needed including training for new recruits on what JDP or GYDP is, record keeping, report writing, YLS sections.</li> <li>• YLS online that could be more efficient</li> <li>• APR training.</li> <li>• Standard quality training (accreditation).</li> <li>• Less paper work, more efficient information collation for reports.</li> <li>• IYJS to do a staff audit of skills, training and qualifications and make available on a database.</li> <li>• IYJS database to include training/interventions.</li> <li>• Resource portal for training- updated and available on IYJS website.</li> <li>• Central info HUB with updates/discussion.</li> <li>• Gardaí analysis data to be available – offence day and time.</li> <li>• Trouble shooting ‘toolbox’ to record specific needs.</li> <li>• Management supervision tools for GYDP.</li> <li>• Support and development inserted into operational guidelines.</li> <li>• Access to EAP.</li> <li>• Forum to allow YJWs to vent or discuss the local and relevant issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A central training hub to share ideas and experiences, what works, what doesn’t.</li> <li>• Supports – on site mentoring.</li> <li>• Network of support</li> <li>• Communities of Practice, establish mandatory regional network meetings every 3 months with a set agenda, look at needs at these meetings and correlate skills based on needs.</li> <li>• Train staff regionally to train staff in their area.</li> <li>• Workshops can broaden knowledge base and motivate staff if they are specific structured e.g. trauma discussion can provide a different lens for work.</li> <li>• Workshops for what works, for YJW, JLOs, Regional management</li> <li>• Can use of other services help to improve practice, i.e. gain knowledge of things not on the radar.</li> <li>• Have workshops at the annual conference.</li> <li>• Need for critical reflective practice.</li> <li>• CPD – allocated time to attend workshops on relevant topics.</li> <li>• More investment in management and support of projects needed (particularly independents).</li> <li>• Additional support (EAP) but this is timed, a opposed to ongoing supervision.</li> <li>• Good supervision should involve self-care. Workers need to exercise themselves to demand the self-care.</li> <li>• Group supervision – may be a possibility with support from IYJS.</li> <li>• Supervision should be standardised (a certain level of support).</li> <li>• Needs to be a culture of supervision, some organisations have it, some don’t.</li> <li>• Organisations should acknowledge that if best practice is required, staff need to be supported with supervision and training, particularly in smaller organisations.</li> <li>• Feedback given at annual conference.</li> <li>• Managers network.</li> </ul>

## Box 2: Specific and thematic types of training and support

Specific	Thematic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivational interviewing level 2 and advanced.</li> <li>• Restorative practice and justice, accredited training should be provided online to make it accessible.</li> <li>• MAPH (must be targeted at night staff).</li> <li>• Core training to include Meitheal, mental health, first aid.</li> <li>• Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.</li> <li>• M.A.P.H.</li> <li>• Parenting programme support training – on site family support programme facilitator.</li> <li>• There are manuals available: Life of Choices, CHART, REAL U</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parenting support (practical training) – parents will/will not engage with other services/services don't support GYDPs.</li> <li>• Family work – what is it, what is it not, how to refer or input?</li> <li>• Employability skills.</li> <li>• Anger management and motivation.</li> <li>• Drugs and alcohol information.</li> <li>• Drug initiation influence of criminal gangs.</li> <li>• Trauma/crises/ICI training.</li> <li>• Training for crisis times e.g. deaths of parents.</li> <li>• Critical Incident Response Training.</li> <li>• Social media training.</li> <li>• Missing from IYJS training in effective change in society to record outcomes, equality, social awareness, and identifying change in communities.</li> <li>• Critical thinking training for social change.</li> <li>• Self-efficacy training for groups to help protect and develop young people.</li> <li>• Mindfulness/self-care techniques.</li> <li>• Trauma and Crisis training (Dr Sharon).</li> <li>• Inter-agency training, awareness, communication.</li> <li>• Anger management facilitation.</li> <li>• Mental health.</li> <li>• Sexual Health.</li> <li>• ADHD diagnosis becoming significant.</li> </ul>

### Recording practice and reporting

It was noted that smaller organisations often lack the resources to support practice and reporting. The issue in this case was whether and how reporting should or could be standardised by IYJS, with concomitant requirements for levels of support. More specific questions related to how to manage information when young people move from a project or area. There was reference to gaps in information when staff leave, and a need for better systems so that new staff can find information for queries.

It was noted by some that there is no auditing of general recordings, only ESF and YLS. The ESF was said to be difficult to interpret and not user friendly, with a lack of clear feedback once completed. APR needs to be more streamlined, and acknowledgment was required for the background work in recording APR, and there were concerns about how to incorporate real-life stories. Participants highlighted the problem of capturing qualitative data, for example when it is hard to record a conversation without taping it or using a video, or when young people do not give permission.

In general, a clear steer is required about what needs to be recorded to keep adequate records. At the same time, feedback is required on reports submitted. There are also questions about who gets the information and what is done with it. Often completion of APRs and annual plans is experienced as burdensome and anxiety provoking. Feedback was needed from data created, for instance about how many young people are not referred after cautions, and any data collected must be of use to the projects collecting it. It was suggested that it would be better to do less reporting but to do it well. Further suggestions included:

- Pilot an online YLS document
- Online, standardised system for forms, APR/Annual Planning
- Centralised, cloud-based, user-friendly, electronic recording system to ease access
- Purpose and background to APR given in an information session, and recording information and APR 'as we go' throughout the year
- Clarity who is responsible for what area of work in IYJS i.e. APR, Plans
- Re-establish feedback on annual plans
- Sharing recordings and information between organisations e.g. Gardaí, YJW, Schools, IYJS
- Recordings needed about community changes e.g. foreign nationals, drug gangs, births
- A tool box to record specific issues
- Peer review of plans/reports
- Should be standardised session plan/ session evaluation for GYDPs (like Foroige), and an example of a well- maintained young person's file available for new staff
- Consider multi-annual plans, supported by annual progress reports
- Look at the calendar year and conflicting demands e.g. annual plan deadline Nov 9<sup>th</sup>.

Communication needs to be more precise - often IYJS emails contain a great deal of information which can lead to the important information being missed.

### **Learning from the Action Research Project**

This part of the conference considered how best to capture and disseminate learning from the trial sites in the Action Research Project. Community of practice sessions were suggested in which YJWs could talk about their own successes, what has been achieved, and what is challenging. There should be opportunities to feed into the ARP process and give feedback, for example, through regional events at which progress can be discussed. Sharing knowledge and experience was thought to be a good way

to bring people along, as was having an equal input from all services e.g. community Gardaí, YJW, management committee and young people.

Participants raised several questions about the ARP including what will be the approach to looking at relationships, and what makes a relationship work? There was hope that ARP would be able to identify best practice in terms of what is working or not for projects, how to do the work well, and the resources that are needed.

Participants also wondered about how learning would be captured and disseminated, what information was needed, and how qualitative data might best be recorded. It was suggested that it would be better to report and disseminate as it goes along. ARP could visit other projects, ensuring a balance between rural and urban areas.

## **Enhancing Communications and Relationships**

### **Effective relationships with young participants**

Developing effective relationships with young people takes time, and means starting from where the young people are as opposed to where they might ideally be. It often involves knowing families in communities, although this can be difficult when there is no history or existing relationship with youth workers especially in new areas. Relationships provide the basis to achieving goals, so the environment needs to be welcoming and familiar so that young people feel comfortable. Ultimately, however, it depends on the response and the agency of the young person.

Relationship building involves attending to young people's interests as well as their needs, but once built it is crucial to make progress in support of their needs or the relationship may be ineffective. It can be helpful to 'get out there' and be visible within the community before young people are referred, but working with only primary referrals makes this difficult. In building relationships trust is important, which means not making promises that cannot be kept, being consistent and dependable, understanding that young people respond well to routine, and that the project has to be the stable part of the routine. Clear boundaries are needed from the outset, without losing the informal touch. Qualities of 'softness' and caring are essential but also being clear about being a critical rather than a passive friend. Relationships can fail and fall down where the right skills and communication are not in place.

Some noted that signing up and consenting to the YLS can be a blockage to relationship development with secondary referrals. To enhance relationships it is necessary to remove administrative barriers. On the other hand, YLS focusing practice to meet needs through 1-1 meetings can be key to relationship building, if the young person is encouraged to express themselves free of judgement from peers. 1-1 meetings can provide a safe space to discuss issues such as, substance mis-use, family dynamics, fears, and worries. These meetings can be held in schools to support young people, and in doing so enhance relationships with schools. Young people can start their engagement in groups and progress to 1-1 sessions as the relationships with the YJW develops.

There can be times when young people can be extra challenging but it is the approach that is key, with the work still requiring the same level of effort, respect, empathy, patience, and perseverance. Continuous building of the relationship and maintenance is needed through ups and downs over the long term. If there are issues with, for example, a clash in personality, it is necessary to draw on support from colleagues and supervisors. There can be a fear that challenging behaviours could potentially cause damage to relationships, and it is important to feel safe in flagging such issues. There is a need for tools, and a robust infrastructure to assure supports. Indicators that the relationship is working include young people meeting the YJW, having regular contact, and knowing that the door is open.

It was suggested that working alongside general youth work programmes is good for making relationships. The relationship between JLOs and young people is also important for engaging young people in projects. The way that JLOs sell the GYDP to young people or families is critical. It is helpful to have a youth/family friendly leaflet when making house calls to new referrals with understandable information for the project. If JLOs have the same leaflet, JLOs and youth justice workers are using the same language when speaking about the project to families.

In the end, much depends on personalities, and the ability to make relationships. There is no formula to follow as good relationship development will always rely to a degree on intuition. A key skill is the ability to distinguish between the behaviour and the person. It is important to ensure that staff are supported by organisations to remain in the job because when the YJW leaves the relationship goes with them.



Young people should be fully aware of reasons for engagement, which means being transparent from the start as young people may have pre-conceived ideas of the project. There is a need for clarity with young people about the purpose of the work and the role of the worker. In this case, is there a need to redefine what the Gardaí management expect from justice projects? Clarification of roles and expectations between Gardaí and projects is needed. The role of Gardaí in establishing relationships is currently dependent on areas, and local Gardaí resources. Sometimes there are unhelpful myths about well-known JLOs that have been there for a while.

It was suggested that there is a need for a cultural shift in Gardaí talking to people. As people do not always understand other people's jobs, project staff need to meet with Gardaí to establish roles and oversight, and to clarify expectations of Gardaí from projects and vice versa. While communication between services is important, not every area has services. A communication and support network for YJWs is needed, which could be achieved through a hub promoting a community of practice. Staff highlighted the benefits of meeting for informal conversations around what works/what doesn't, which does not have to incur huge costs.

In general, the emphasis should be on more effective communications rather than extra administration or paperwork. The level of paper work, especially permission forms was said to be a huge barrier for families with literacy issues, involved in criminality, and those not familiar with the project. It needs to be clearly explained to families what it means when they tick yes/no to questions on forms. The risk assessment tool can sometimes problematise a young person, causing workers to focus on coerced behaviour change and then be ineffective. There is a need for a national working group between the Gardaí and youth workers to condense the content and level of forms.

#### **Linkages locally and supports to provide a 'wraparound' service**

Areas often lack wraparound services although many make strenuous efforts to link constructively with other services. While young people are accessing multiple services, the lack of communication with other services about how to make the links, can lead to repetitive work and overlaps which is creating barriers for young people. The basic principle is that multi-agency work needs to be young person centred. Staff changes in projects, or in other services with high turnover, can make linkages difficult but can also be a positive in changing approach. The Meitheal structure helps to get to know other services, but it is not always clear where responsibility lies to support coordination and create a wraparound service. The amount of time required can be missed in annual plans as working with other agencies takes significant time and planning.

One question was about how projects meant to access private residential care centres? The protocols needed to develop linkages with residential care, or mental health services, depends on communication between IYJS, Tusla, and HSE. On the ground each GYDP needs to link with an agency that could give guidance on how to open up communication. It could operate in a similar way to drug projects, in which there is one case plan per young person that moves with them and allows appropriate information to be shared.

Services are different depending on geographical area. Some have gaps in voluntary/statutory support and communication with private agencies is difficult in regard to sharing information. The advent of GDPR has created a barrier and stopped informal sharing of information between agencies with regards to young people and families. Direction is needed from IYJS regarding sharing of information for other agencies working with GYDP, and communication from IYJS to statutory agencies about the role of GYDP.

Networking on the ground is through community and committees, essentially through links with stakeholders. Committees are more agency based than community and include key contacts in the area. While it is often committed and passionate people who really drive the work, overall, there is a benefit to steering committees as they can build the profile of the project, support the work, and enable crossover with other organisations. Some GYDPs benefit from the support of advisory committees, and it would be helpful to have new guidelines with clear information about the role of members of the committee, and local area training to enhance the committee. It is often about making committees work for the project, making sure that the right people are at the table. Safety Forums in areas are also a resource. It takes time to engage in committees and meetings, however, which equates to time out of direct work. One suggestion was to have a key person in IYJS link to each project as the link, and/or to act as the contact person in IYJS for project area, or district.

Communication between Gardaí Headquarters and local Gardaí needs to be strengthened. How are new developments communicated from IYJS to the Gardaí? Often local Gardaí are not aware of changes and communication about these is coming from project staff. Gardaí have different practices on the ground around referrals of young people, and a different understanding of a wraparound service. It is helpful when the JLO understands the work and the young people, and really positive when the JLO asks the project what they want from them. It would be a good time to reconsider the fact that there is no formal relationship between JLOs and YJWs. Perhaps the JLO could be involved

completing the YLS 2 for the best interests of the young person, and/or to have increased JLO involvement in day to day participation in activities, or on project committees?

It should be recognised that other services work in different ways, and that GYDPs enjoy greater flexibility compared to other services, especially statutory services, which can be problematic for a wraparound service. This is due to the fluidity of youth work in striking a balance between programme-based work and 'open ended' relationship building. Also, specialist services are very difficult to access. Leadership from the top needs to filter down, and cross-departmental support will be required to ensure delivery. Cross departmental meetings should be held to identify and agree various roles and responsibilities from all agencies. All would then be clearer as to their individual roles, which might assuage the fears of those who think that what is already being done is under appreciated, and that the service would become too diluted due to a loss of focus on the current role.

Relationships between Tusla and projects have improved and can be built on, and the Department of Education can support school/project inter-agency work by obliging schools to liaise with project staff. All departments need to identify the GYDP role within wraparound services, and all need to have a conversation regarding expectations. YJWs need to become versed in the language that other agencies working with young people use, for example, Le Chéile.

Consultation is also needed with community based organisations and services including Gardaí, Youth coaches, Family Resource Centres, Mental Health Services, Tusla, and Community Substance Mis-use Teams, on understanding and advancement of a wraparound service. Some stated that in the absence of clear direction, workers and CBOs may feel pressured to engage in Meitheal despite not having the capacity. There should be consultation with CBOs about wrap around services and the very real possibility that they will be stretched to participate. IYJS needs to clarify their concept and ingredients of a wraparound service. If it is to be a priority there should be a standardised approach. Some participants warned that they felt like a 'dumping ground' for other services, so care must be taken not to fall into this trap.

Suggestions to support wraparound services included:

- Youth network agencies to organise meetings to share information
- Statutory/non-statutory to look at issues/strategy for area
- Coordination at national level around developing a 'wraparound service' protocol, and guidance
- A role for ETB Youth Officer in leading on this
- Regional GYDP network meetings to happen a number of times a year.
- Stakeholders meeting quarterly to ensure YP do not fall through gaps
- Services and projects to be available for young people up to 24 years old with support to provide this service.

The overall aim should be that for every young person to be able to benefit from GYDPs, they should also be able to access additional services even if statistically they are not from a disadvantaged area or background. IYJS should advocate for young people to be able to gain entry into preventative services. There needs to be some deliberations about who is the 'lead' agency in a young person's life.

### **Restorative justice**

Not all people have had access to restorative practice, and there are technical and procedural challenges to overcome, requiring direction as well as agency and CBO buy-in. Restorative practice and justice are separate but technically should work in tandem, and be embedded in the work culture rather than one tool. Many staff have not had access to training, and have found it difficult to implement on the ground. To be successful it takes time, funding and resources. Examples of success including one instance of putting a face to a victim was effective for the young person and a shop owner, another in which projects were working with local shops managers, families and young people on a re-admittance policy to a Shopping Centre, and another in which a restorative circle was used to solve disputes in projects. It was noted more generally that restorative practice can be useful especially with family issues, help people to look with fresh eyes and offer new solutions, and helping young people to be more empathetic with victims. Restorative practice can be of benefit to Gardaí on the street who have dealings with young people, as it has the capacity to change the dynamics of those sometimes-charged interactions. Restorative practice can be subtle, chipping away at the problems in search of resolution. In terms of effectiveness, participants have welcomed the approach and it should be considered for national roll out to all projects.

While restorative practice is squarely in line with the principles of the GYDPs, naming it in practice can be difficult although projects use it daily in processing events with young people and working through issues. Project staff need to be provided with more support to use and recognise restorative practices which are already in use in projects. It is important that everyone is using the same language in this regard. It involves talking about the action not the person and changing the way in which projects work. It was suggested that there needs to be joint training for JLOs and YJWs, and a wider network of support, as working in this way should be core to the work.

## **Resources**

### **Funding of GYDPs**

It was pointed out that providing GYDPs in areas that are not currently served will require additional workers. Often these areas are rural, and it is time consuming to provide a service in these areas. Typically, it can take an hour or more to get to locations, and then young people may not turn up or are late. As developing new areas requires two workers, there is concern that covering new areas will mean a diminished service in current areas. It can be anticipated, therefore, that extra resources and additional workers are needed to cover larger geographical areas.

Kerry have dismantled the old model of service delivery and the new version involves lower numbers, with a focus on hyper risk cases. While the model has changed, meaning there are still six projects with reduced costs, the whole is costlier as travel has increased. There are some areas in Limerick that are new, with challenging issues and a need to respond to emerging needs. Limerick obtained another worker through Dormant Accounts Funding, but they have a specific area in which to work. However, even with the additional resource the project cannot meet all of the emerging needs and new areas of work. In Cork, there are two workers but they are based in two different centres. In reality it is two, 1 worker projects. Crosscare have an outdoor programme that could accommodate young people in a work to learn programme with accreditation. However, the Crosscare programme is not allowed under the GDYP because it is not located in a community.

Guidelines are needed to cover YJWs working in isolation. It is known that lone working presents difficulties, and means carrying an alert/alarm. There are duty of care issues when workers work alone, and put at risk. Workers will not do home visits on traveller sites when they are on their own. This impacts on the ability to develop a relationship with the family. Until YJWs get a relationship with the young people it is important to have 2 workers.

It might be valuable to revisit original allocations, as some projects are much better funded than others and cannot spend all their money. Resources are stretched when rent for premises comes out of GYDP programme funding, taking away from money for activities with young people such as outings. Funding needs to be sufficient to provide for an independent space in which to meet and work with young people, as 'ownership' is vital to the success of the work.

Use of Garda buses or community buses is important as some participants do not have access to a car and cannot be brought to projects. Some projects do not allow YJWs to carry young people in their cars, which means that they may not be able to attend, or staff cannot take them to Youthreach or other provision. Flexibus is useful in allowing staff to be trained in self-drive 8 seater buses, and buses can be rented for hire. Rural bus link is available and also useful in terms of reducing travel costs in rural areas. There is a need for national guidelines on this transport issue.

While IYJS provides funding for salaries and non-salary costs, projects often depend on co-location, i.e. shared premises or buses, to get through the year. Having to fundraise to supplement or even support core funding can use up valuable time and staff resources. Partnerships with groups such as Lions Clubs, and An Garda Síochána can be a source of significant additional funding. Some GYDPs have access to corporate and other funding in their community.

At 70% salaries is the biggest portion of the GYDP budget. Some projects have 35 hour working weeks, and others 39. Is there a need to standardise hours? Is there a common scale that should be implemented across all CBOs? There were questions about whether IYJS should include staff pensions in their budget, along with standard wages, and a common approach to increments. Rising prices and staff moving to the country means more recruitment, more training and less availability of staff for projects in urban areas.

Questions were raised about whether it is time to go back to multi-annual funding rather than accrual funding, and whether there could be more flexibility in moving pay to non-pay costs? The ESF projects budget previously available for employability work (c.€5500) was very beneficial, and some wondered if this could be brought back?

## **CAMHs and Mental Health**

A wealth of resources in the community can be brought into play to enable a wraparound service, which would enable young people to access different services such as addiction services, (under 18s, SASSI, CSMT, local drugs task force), mental health, and on-site counselling. However, while young people can be referred to CAMHs, in reality they often just go onto a list. Occasionally, there are other services YJWs can refer young people to but these may have quality issues. It is important that the GYDP does not by default become a fix all for all young people. Often in the absence of other services, YJWs will try to support groups in need.

## **Mentoring**

The efficacy and effectiveness of mentoring and the Big Brother Big Sister programme is widely seen as proven. Resources for mentoring allows young offenders to access additional one to one support, which frees up time from YJWs and complements the wider work of the GYDP. The model also allows young people in existing GYDPs, as well as young people at risk but not yet cautioned, to access support. It was noted that there are also benefits for the whole family when parents access mentoring. While all mentors are trained in Parents Plus, the provision is limited to one to one meetings. It was stated that there is a need to access mentoring for parents and young people from other sources such as Le Chéile. Psychological and educational assessments for young people are much in need but costly.

YLS was thought to be useful in looking at all elements of the young person, and ensures that needed services are sourced. It also provides a means to justify the work, especially regarding YLS secondary referrals. The Best Practice Unit train staff to complete the YLS as if the young person is present. The tool is optimal with small numbers but much harder when the numbers are high. Notwithstanding the Strengths Box, there is a view that the tool emphasises the negative in young people at the expense of the more positive aspects, which should also be acknowledged. There is some uncertainty, however, about where YJWs stand in relation to Data Protection.

## **Practice Issues**

### **Hearing the voice of young people**

Hearing the voice of young people means actively listening to the young person by engaging them in conversation. It was noted that it can be done in 1-1 sessions requiring open questions using therapeutic, crisis intervention techniques (social care). It can also occur in group settings, for example through involving young people in planning, in committees to make decisions, or in panels to seek their views. Other specific ideas included:

- An online forum
- A complaints box
- Using creative methodologies to obtain opinions and ideas
- Engagement in the development of premises, their space
- Including young people in evaluations at end of programmes.

Youth advisory committees can involve past participants and offer advice. Young people can also sit on interview panels. There are some others who may not pass Gardaí vetting who may still have useful advice to offer.

It was stated that it was important not to force young people to talk, or to stick rigidly to a session plan. Often there is a need to change the plan to fit immediate or emerging needs which cumulatively can affect the annual plan. The point was made that listening must be followed through by actions. Feedback should be given to young people on work completed with them. Young people need to see barriers coming down and see evidence that their voices are being heard.

It is a youth centred approach, which means being there for the young person, and finding ways of letting the young person know it is ok to feel low. The point was made that it is important to value the non-verbal as well as verbal communication by paying attention to body language. It was noted that the genuine voice of young people is needed as opposed to 'perceived right answers'. There is, therefore, a need for workers to be able to ask open questions, and in a language that accessible to the young people. A slow, indirect approach was often required in finding the voice of the child, as they might not be ready or willing to talk 'yet'. Training is needed in active listening, communication skills, and positive regard.

It is not a tokenistic exercise, or about giving false expectations, or only hearing the loudest voices. It means being careful about not always going to the usual ones for advice and suggestions. It is important to be aware of the influences of power relationships in lowering the voice of the child. It was stated that it is about providing time and space, to increase the capacity of young people over time through group discussions, and in small steps. It requires capturing marginalised voices, which means facilitating more access to opportunities to hear young people's voices. The need is to educate young people to know that they have a voice and rights, which cannot be done without also empowering the voice of YJWs, who should also be listened to, and valued as advocates. It was



suggested that there should be a section in the annual plan and annual report for comments from young people.

Hearing the voice of the young person is an essential part of relationship building with workers, but building relationships between young people themselves is just as critical. There were questions about how or even whether this could be quantified, when the voice of the young person is likely to change over time as they develop.

In summary, hearing the voice of the child is understood as a significant aspect of the work, and something to which all YJWs should subscribe. It was noted that it can be difficult when other agencies have their own policies and procedures that come ahead of advocating for young people. GYDPs and YJWs are very good at interpreting the voice of the child, even when sometimes young people can be aggressive/violent/chaotic in conveying their views. Young people feel safe to speak when they think that they are not being judged.

### **Working with younger children**

This discussion considered the merits and challenges of early intervention and prevention work with 8-11 year olds, while acknowledging that it is not officially in the brief for Garda projects. Preventative work was thought to be about promoting prosocial behaviours, and relationship building. Promoting pro-social behaviours was seen to be important in a context where much interaction with adults often focuses on bad behaviour. It is important that YJWs understand that something is going on for the young person, and look beyond the behaviour without patronising them.

There appears to be a sound logic to the idea of providing programmes early to head off young people getting into trouble. It was suggested that prevention programmes could be run in primary schools or later. It was noted that the work can be done through activities such as football and other clubs, working in schools, giving talks in schools, through specific programmes such as 6th to 1st year, running after school classes, home school liaison, homework club, engaging with other agencies. Age appropriate materials would be required at all stages.

It was also noted that engaging with Gardaí earlier on justice programmes could lead to a more positive perception of Gardaí from a younger age. The benefit is that they would get to know workers and projects, so that the relationship is already built. This is important because sometimes young

people have gone too far, and it is too late by the time they get to GYDPs. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that not all projects are allowed to work in schools.

Some participants reported that the younger the engagement, the better the outcome, and the likelihood of more buy-in to projects when young people gain early respect for the work. One reported that through early intervention in a primary school, and getting to know young people earlier, referrals were more successful with 80% engagement for an on-going primary referral. It can be positively compared to late intervention, which is often about putting out fires. The justification would be that it potentially reduces crime as young people link in better to services. On the other hand, group work is challenging for younger age groups and care must be taken to not mix younger and older cohorts. It was noted that it can be problematic having 8-year-old and 17/18-year olds in same buildings, potentially exposing the younger ones to bigger issues/offending patterns.

It may also be more difficult to engage younger people who at that age are more likely to be attached to their families, and less independent than 12-17-year olds. There may also be an issue about undermining voluntary participation – does an 8-10-year-old have a ‘real’ choice? In effect, would working with under 12s change the current purpose and function of the service? At any rate, it should be recognised that work with under 12s requires a different skill set, and specialist training is required to upskill YJW. On a practical level, there may be related governance issues associated with working with this age group, and different insurance requirements. There would also be resource implications in terms of staffing, funding, materials, and locations. Is there a danger of overstressing limited staff time and energy?

### **Working with families**

In terms of working with families, some participants questioned the legitimacy of the role on the grounds that the service cannot be everything to everyone. Others wondered if such work would blur the boundaries of work with young people. Alternatively, the need for GYDPs not to be siloed was noted, and family buy-in is known to have a positive impact on the work. In short, when parents are positive about services, it helps young people. It was stated that work with families on specific issues, therefore, can help to reduce offending and set useful boundaries for the young people. Others suggested that it might simply involve knowing what other services are available and offering, and linking in with all them to support families.

Some suggested that structured work with families is needed to deal with home life issues such as drugs and crime, which can contribute to a lack of motivation on the part of young people to engage. It was acknowledged that it was a welfare issue as well as a youth justice issue. Nevertheless, it is necessary at times to provide support in the home of the young person. Pressure can sometimes come from parents, however, for YJWs to deal with the young person by 'laying down the law' and being the authority who 'gives out' to their children. This can stem from families having low expectations of themselves. Sometimes it is a case of fighting against the family values, rather than being able to gain support in the family.

Some pointed to the dangers of families becoming overly dependent on workers, and noted that families can be overloaded with services. Meitheal can help to share the workload in a planned way, but there is a need to keep an eye on what is agreed and done. Some parents enjoy engaging with YJWs while others do not. It is important to set boundaries, and work well with young person first, without falling into the trap of becoming an outlet for the parents who might not want to deal with the child. Working with families can also be problematic in cases where YJWs have to report concerns to child protection, and the engagement of young people is subject to the consent of parents.

Some people and families are very private and suspicious of GYDP services. It was recognised that people moving to Ireland from different backgrounds and cultures, can lead to mistrust of services or simply fear of the unknown. Some families are against their children engaging and it can take weeks before engagement is possible. Some families view this engagement as shameful and do not want to engage, which means that YJWs need to be attuned to cultural issues.

Some people have mental health issues for which they are not getting support, while others have negative experiences of state services, all of which makes engagement difficult. For those who don't feel comfortable, YJWs need to make extra efforts to engage them. Addressing community issues can be achieved through creating safe spaces, for example through supported community forums. These forums can consider many issues for adults including drugs, employment, and social housing.

One suggestion was for a separate family support worker in GYDPs. The model would be for a justice family support worker and justice worker to allow workers to focus on their own work and collaborate with others on outcomes for families and young people. Longford are piloting a family support worker for the GYDP, at 1.5 days per week for 6 months. The post is to engage with 2-3 families over a period of time, and the project will be evaluated by NUIG.

There is currently an element of family support in justice work. Some take the view that it is core to practice, and others have detected an increase in need for a family support 'wraparound' service. Others warn of the danger of getting too involved in family issues, and being drawn into a 'buffer' role between other services and families. There is a high threshold to receive Tusla services, which can trigger a need for more support (family) from non-statutory services. Projects may be asked to fill in when there is a lack of other local services. Even accepting that there is clearly a need for family support, there are questions about whether youth services are properly resourced to do this task. There are often difficulties getting families to engage even when the service is offered. It is necessary to be clear about role and professional judgement is required regarding when to refer to other services. In this case, it is important to remember that the YJW is the young person's worker, which suggests being proactive in referring families to relevant services.

### **Working with difficult to engage young people**

If a project is not located in the community, it is necessary to meet young people 1:1 in their homes, but this cannot always be accommodated. Project opening hours might need to reflect busy times requiring a working pattern of Saturday, Sunday, and late nights some evenings per week. In rural areas it makes sense to meet immediately after school, as parents don't want to bring young people back later, and young people won't attend if they leave school and go straight home. Some participants were worried about disempowering parents by offering activities at weekends. Others have noticed that the response to weekend activity has been mixed – when some projects trialled opening at these times the young people failed to show up. While frequent contact is optimal, resilience, persistence, and patience with the whole process is required. It is about knowing the area and what will work for specific GYDPs, as there are distinctive urban/rural challenges for engagement.

Responses to non-attendance vary. One project has a policy of trying 3 times with non-attenders before asking the JLO to call to the house to get them back. JLOs can use supervision orders to encourage young people to attend instead of constantly supervising them. In the first place, however, the YLS risk assessment and referral assessment committee need to determine appropriate referrals to GYDPs. Young people can still refuse to engage even after all avenues have been exhausted. There is still a stigma to attending GYDP, especially amongst middle classes, while other agencies engaging with young people might not be making appropriate referrals.

Other solutions put forward to deal with non-attendance included street work, and detached projects meeting young people where they gather. There is a particular challenge in engaging, re-engaging and providing suitable spaces for older young people. In this regard, some worried that expanding the age of inclusion upwards could potentially reduce levels of interventions to under 18s. The response requires having more 'adult' spaces for these young people, and an emphasis on voluntary engagement. Youth committees composed of 16-24 year olds can advise on difficult to reach young people and associated issues in the community. WhatsApp groups could be useful, utilising the power of peer groups.

How the project is promoted, perceived and valued is critical. Better marketing is often needed with an emphasis on participation. Clear information about the project is needed to assist referrals from other agencies (e.g. drugs worker). Young people's committees can advise on how to reach hard to reach groups. The gender balance of workers is also crucial issue in terms of response from young people.

While getting the agency known in areas is important, trust and consistency is vital in engaging with hard to reach young people. Turnover of staff impacts on trying to get into hard to reach families, and delays in replacement of JLOs also inhibits work progress. There is also a challenge in time lines when there is a long gap between offence and caution, but JLOs can refer young people before cautions are processed by community Gardaí.

It can be effective and efficient to engage with young people in places where they are attending, for example schools and Youthreach, youth clubs, boxing, soccer, and use these engagements to build relationships for future work. Education supports can be used as incentives, as can the possibility of pathways to employment and earning money. It is important to consider the influence of the peer group, be persistent in calling to the house, and build relations with the family. Support from the JLO is critical to encourage GYDP engagement, but there has to be a line drawn at some point, and move on if young people refuse to engage. Voluntary participation is key, and decisions need to be respected.

It was suggested that a steer is required from IYJS about the need for innovation and creativity in working with hard to reach young people. Dynamic practice and adjusting programmes to the changing voice at the young person is required throughout the course of their engagement. An open door policy should always be an option for young people who do not want to engage all the time. How

projects are promoted initially is critical – there needs to be a stress on creative activities/projects/art/music. Information needs to be conveyed further up the chain to managers, so they understand the alternative approach with this group.

Training in cultural norms and practices, and allowing time to build community and cultural relationships, was said to be needed for staff in dealing with this difficult group. Upskilling will be required, for example in active listening, motivational interviewing, Meitheal refresher training, or regarding the dangers connected to social media. Poor self-care can affect the ability to listen to young people effectively. Access to supervision, self-care, over the long term will help to keep good and experienced staff. Peer learning can encourage sharing of effective YJW practices, and consideration should be given to online resources concerning practices that are working.

### **Working with members of hard to reach groups**

With some traveller groups it was noted that there is difficulty engaging females because of cultural issues and differing value systems. Parents may not be willing to allow young people to engage. There is a particular need to build trust with male leaders in families so that they give consent for young people to attend. Female travellers are not allowed to go and meet male workers, so the balance of male/female workers in projects is important. Black Irish young people can present other challenges, as their parents not being Irish can mean little or no understanding of youth work, and youth justice work is limited, which tends to inhibit young people's involvement. Interacting with the wider community can help to develop trust.

As some traveller sites can be hard to access due to cultural barriers, with engaging females dependent on parental permission being a particular problem, it was noted that some areas have specific traveller action projects and services, which makes contact easier. Some migrant communities can be more responsive, although migrant communities tend to sort issues 'in house' themselves. Workers need to access resources, for example through Pavee Point, to assist with understanding norms and cultural values.

Because of language barriers, translation of information for parents with little or no English is a key issue. The challenge of literacy for many adults for consent and understanding is not helped by a lack of bi-lingual forms, leaflets and posters in different languages, and the forms in English being hard to understand. Support with parents around the initial engagement forms is often needed. Condensing consent forms could make them less intimidating, and could assist engagement. Access to translators

is needed but this could be costly. Teaching English as a Foreign Language has been used with groups in some programmes. Generally, migrant groups are under referred, undetected, and project participation often under representative of the area.

## Conclusion

The conference discussions were wide ranging, and the observations, suggestions and recommendations made reflected different views, experiences and preferences. While the points below may not do justice to every contribution, they give a sense of the main concerns emerging in the groups.

### 1. Best Practice Support for GYDP projects

Project and youth justice worker training and support needs – building a GYDP network:

- Required skill sets are not always present in local teams and there is a need for access to varied levels of training, covering all parts of the YJW role, as well as training in response to emerging needs
- There are operational, developmental, specific and thematic training and support needs
- IYJS should consider setting a standard amount of training to be expected of staff, including time to participate in CPD
- A defined set of core competencies could provide a training map to distinguish between essential and additional elements
- A mandatory regional network meeting could be held every 3 months with a set agenda, to support communities of practice.

Recording practices and reporting to DJE – administrative burden and gaps in data collection:

- Completion of APRs and annual plans is often experienced as burdensome and anxiety provoking
- There is a problem of capturing qualitative data
- A clear steer is required from IYJS about what needs to be recorded to keep adequate records
- Feedback is required on reports submitted
- Any data collected must be of use to the projects collecting it
- It would be better to do less reporting but to do it well.

Learning from the Action Research Project – how best to capture and disseminate:

- Community of practice sessions could enable YJWs to talk about their own successes, what has been achieved, and what is challenging.
- There should be opportunities to feed into the ARP process and give feedback, for example, through regional events at which progress can be discussed.
- It was suggested that it would be better to report and disseminate as ARP goes along.

## **2. Enhancing Communications and Relationships**

Effective relationships with young participants:

- Relationship building involves attending to young people's interests as well as their needs, but once built it is crucial to make progress in support of their needs or the relationship may be ineffective
- The YLS focusing practice to meet needs through 1-1 meetings can be key to relationship building, if the young person is encouraged to express themselves free of judgement from peers
- There is no formula to follow as good relationship development will always rely to a degree on intuition
- There is a need for clarity with young people about the purpose of the work and the role of the worker
- The way that JLOs sell the GYDP to young people or families is critical
- As people do not always understand other people's jobs, project staff need to meet with Gardaí to establish roles and oversight, and to clarify expectations of Gardaí from projects and vice versa.

Restorative justice:

- Restorative practice and justice are separate but technically should work in tandem, and be embedded in the work culture rather than be seen as a single tool
- To be successful it takes time, funding and resources
- Participants have welcomed the approach and it should be considered for national roll out to all projects
- Project staff need to be provided with more support to use and recognise restorative practices which are already in use in projects.



Linkages locally and supports to provide a 'wraparound' service:

- The basic principle is that multi-agency work needs to be young person centred
- Protocols are needed to develop linkages with residential care, or mental health services
- Some GYDPs benefit from the support of advisory committees, and it would be helpful to have new guidelines with clear information about the role of members of the committee, and local area training to enhance the committees
- Gardaí have different practices on the ground around referrals of young people, and a different understanding of a wraparound service
- GYDPs enjoy greater flexibility compared to other services, especially statutory services, which can be problematic for a wraparound service
- All departments need to identify the GYDP role within wraparound services, and all need to have a conversation regarding expectations
- For every young person to be able to benefit from GYDPs, they should also be able to access additional services.

### **3. Resources**

Funding of GYDPs:

- Providing GYDPs in areas that are not currently served will require additional workers, and there is concern that covering new areas will mean a diminished service in current areas.
- It is known that lone working presents challenges and guidelines are needed to cover YJWs working in isolation.
- Funding needs to be sufficient to provide for an independent space in which to meet and work with young people, as 'ownership' is vital to the success of the work.
- Many projects do not allow YJWs to carry young people in their cars, which means that they may not be able to attend, and there is a need for national guidelines on this transport issue.
- Partnerships with groups such as Lions Clubs, and An Garda Síochána can be a source of significant additional funding.
- Is there a need to standardise hours? Is there a common scale that should be implemented across all CBOs?

Access to CAMHS and addiction services:

- In the absence of other services, and the tendency of YJWs to support groups in need, GYDPs should not by default become a fix all for all young people.

Mentoring:

- Resources for mentoring allows young offenders to access additional one to one support, which frees up time from YJWs and complements the wider work of the GYDP
- There is a need to access mentoring for parents and young people from other sources such as Le Chéile.

#### **4. Practice issues**

Hearing the voice of the child:

- Hearing the voice of the child is understood as a significant aspect of the work, and something to which all YJWs should subscribe
- It means actively listening to the young person by engaging them in purposeful conversation
- The genuine voice of young people is needed as opposed to 'perceived right answers'
- It is not a tokenistic exercise, or about giving false expectations, or only hearing the loudest voices
- It is an essential part of relationship building with workers, but building relationships between young people themselves is just as critical.

Working with younger children, families, difficult-to-engage young people and hard-to-reach groups:

- Notwithstanding significant reservations and challenges, there are strong arguments in favour of working with younger groups, families and hard to reach young people
- There is a danger of getting too involved in family issues, and being drawn into a 'buffer' role between other services and families
- Working with younger (or older) groups, and families, means expanding the current role of the service which has significant resource implications if current work is to be protected
- Being more proactive in making referrals requires knowledge of other services to inform professional judgement, and time to network
- Expanded work also means a different skill set with consequences for training, staff care and development, and a need for age/client appropriate materials

- Clear guidelines and boundaries are needed from IYJS regarding the role of the GYDP, confirming what GYDPs can and cannot do.

## Appendix 1: Conference agenda

Garda Youth Diversion Projects Annual Conference 7 <sup>th</sup> November 2018 Conference Agenda	
9.30am	Arrivals/Tea and coffee
10.00am	Introduction by MoS Stanton
10.30am	Panel discussion 1- Young Persons Consultation (moderator tbc).
11.15am	Coffee
11.45am	Panel discussion 2 – Action Research Project (Moderator Seán Redmond)
12.30pm	Key Note Address
1.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Group Discussion (1 topic chosen in advance with first hour devoted to scene setting and reflection)
3.00pm	Coffee break
3.15pm	Group discussions continued (focus on conclusions and recommendations)
4.15pm	Conference Close

## Appendix 2: Small group discussion topics

Small Group Discussions (choose one)
<p>1. Best Practice Support for GYDP projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project and youth justice worker training and support needs – building a GYDP network</li><li>• Recording practices and reporting to DJE – administrative burden and gaps in data collection</li><li>• Learning from the Action Research Project – how best to capture and disseminate</li></ul>
<p>2. Enhancing Communications and Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective relationships with young participants</li><li>• Restorative justice</li><li>• Linkages locally and supports to provide a ‘wrap around’ service</li></ul>
<p>3. Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funding of GYDPs</li><li>• Access to CAMHS and addiction services</li><li>• Mentoring – how to make a range of mentoring options available in all projects</li></ul>
<p>4. Practice issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hearing the voice of the child</li><li>• Working with younger children</li><li>• Working with families</li><li>• Working with difficult-to-engage YPs – development of effective strategies</li><li>• Working with members of hard-to-reach groups – e.g. Travellers and migrants</li></ul>