Centre Stage +10

A Report on Youth Theatre in Ireland
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Written by Rhona Dunnett, Research and Development Officer, NAYD
NAYD

NAYD (National Association for Youth Drama) is the development organisation for youth drama and theatre in Ireland. Established in 1980, NAYD supports youth drama in practice and policy and supports the sustained development of youth theatres in Ireland.

NAYD advocates the inherent value and unique relationship between young people and theatre as an artform.

NAYD organises an artistic programme as well as a range of national and regional events, activities, supports and resources for youth theatres and individual youth drama practitioners.

These include:
- National Youth Theatre
- National & Regional Festival of Youth Theatres
- Stage It! – Young Writers Programme
- Playshare – scripts for young performers
- Youth Theatre Members’ Forum
- Young Critics Forum
- Commissioning of new writing for youth theatre
- Inspiring Voices – critical debates and events
- Training (workshops, courses and seminars for youth theatre directors and leaders)
- Research and development of youth drama practice
- Resources for teachers and the formal education sector

NAYD also produces a variety of publications including Youth Drama Ireland, Playshare, script and anthologies for young people, Step by Step – Introduction to Educational Drama, the Irish Youth Theatre Handbook and information materials including guidelines, research and policy documents.

Centre Stage +10 is the second extensive research project undertaken by NAYD that examines all aspects of youth theatre in Ireland from the artistic programme, funding and structures to the young people involved and the leaders who work with them.

There are currently 58 youth theatres around Ireland affiliated to NAYD.
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Foreword

It has been ten years since NAYD conducted the first Centre Stage research project and in that time we have seen many developments within the sector. Centre Stage +10 presents a snapshot of what youth theatre looks like in Ireland today, exploring the practice, the different models and structures as well as presenting the young people involved and the leaders who work with them.

This has been a major project for NAYD. It comes at a critical time when as a nation we are experiencing unprecedented reductions in our public finances. The arts are often seen as an easy target at times of economic downturn and within that context, work with young people often falls victim with funding decisions tending to protect ‘high’ end work and mainstream practice.

What we need at times like this is investment in young people and their creativity. At a time when, as an arts sector we are advocating the vital role the arts play in innovation and their contribution to our economic recovery, we need to remember that our young people are the generation that will be making this happen. They are the solution and we need to invest now in their creative engagement and their artistic development so that they are empowered to take on such challenges as artists and as innovative and creative members of society.

We need leadership at this time. We need leadership in public policy and funding. We need leadership that recognises that investing in young people is investing in Ireland’s future. We need bold decisions that prioritise young people and their artistic entitlement. And we need as a sector to position youth theatre in the centre of this decision-making.

What is revealed in Centre Stage +10, is the value that is now being placed on youth theatre practice. The professionalisation of the sector is evidenced by the dramatic rise in the different models of youth theatres around the country. We’ve seen a significant increase in investment by Local Authorities and other state agencies such as the VEC’s and The Arts Council. However, what youth theatres desperately require is sustained funding over a period of time, no matter how small the amount. As we all know, youth theatres have modest and realistic needs. Such funding would allow youth theatres to plan ahead and develop an artistic programme that clearly meets the needs of the young people they are working with.

As we publish this report, we look to the future and the next ten years. We hope that this sector will continue to grow and develop. We hope that the artistic practice continues to deepen. We hope that the young people who come to youth theatre in the next ten years will find a well of creative expression. And finally we hope that the resources are prioritised at a national level that acknowledges the value and contribution that youth theatre makes to young people, their communities and to theatre in Ireland.

I would like to personally thank Rhona Dunnett for all her hard work, commitment and dedication in both undertaking the research and writing up the report.

And in conclusion, this research would not have been possible if it wasn’t for the participation and generosity of all the young people and leaders in youth theatres around Ireland. Go raibh mile maith agaibh.

Orlaith McBride
DIRECTOR
Executive Summary

Chapter 1  Introduction

Centre Stage +10 was undertaken by NAYD to generate a detailed picture of current youth theatre activity in Ireland and to determine the key priorities for the future development of youth theatre at local, regional and national level.

The research process aimed to examine the current state of Irish youth theatre under four general headings:

• Youth theatre structures, funding and resources;
• Youth theatre practice and programming;
• Youth theatre members and leaders;
• The benefits of participation in youth theatre.

Centre Stage +10 is the second national study of youth theatre undertaken by NAYD. Centre Stage was carried out by NAYD in 1997/1998 and was the first major study of youth theatre in Ireland. The evolving nature of the youth theatre sector necessitated a fresh study to explore and analyse the developments that have taken place in the last 10 years.

The study was undertaken by NAYD between November 2007 and May 2008 and the findings presented in this report refer specifically to that research period. NAYD structured the research process using the following methods:

• Youth Theatre Census Week;
• Research workshops with youth theatre members;
• Interviews with youth theatre leaders and stakeholders;
• Questionnaires for youth theatre members and leaders;
• Desk-based research.

Key Findings

Chapter 2  Youth Theatre Models and Structures

Since the last Centre Stage, NAYD and the youth theatre community have witnessed increased levels of diversity develop within youth theatre models and structures as evidenced by the broad range of youth theatres that have developed around Ireland.

Youth Theatre Models

Centre Stage +10 identified the following youth theatre models:

• 16 Autonomous youth theatres;
• 15 Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres and partnerships;
• 7 Professional and Amateur Theatre Company youth theatres;
• 3 Youth Services and Youth Arts Organisation youth theatres;
• 3 Other youth theatre Models (Arts Centre, Educational Institution, Theatre Venue).

Youth theatres are categorised according to the key decision maker, the ‘parent’ organisation ultimately responsible for the running of the youth theatre (such as a professional theatre company), or are classified as ‘autonomous’ (self-governing youth theatres with a voluntary board or committee). The increase in the number of youth theatres run by Local Authority Arts Offices represents the largest growth of a specific model since 1997/1998.

Youth Theatre Foundations, Structures and Location

Youth theatre founders are a diverse collection of organisations, agencies and individuals involved in the arts, youth work and community sectors. Of the 45 youth theatres included in Centre Stage +10, 31 have been founded within the last 10 years. Youth theatres are moving quickly from initial drama activities to recognisable youth theatres structures and practice, as founders explicitly aim to set up a ‘youth theatre’ from the outset.
The number of youth theatres with membership levels of 20 young people or less has risen significantly. Many of these youth theatres are experiencing difficulties in recruiting new members. This development has been balanced by the expansion of some large youth theatres to include multiple activity centres and multiple groups which continue to extend the age range served by the youth theatre.

Youth theatres have evolved wherever the resources and expertise have existed to support them and traditionally this has meant that youth theatres clustered around the key arts and youth services in towns and cities. However, the past 10 years have seen a more even distribution of youth theatres around the country and Local Authority Arts Offices have contributed significantly to the strategic development of youth theatres in rural areas.

Youth Theatre Governance and Policies

The current range of governance structures reflect the variety of youth theatre models. Boards, committees and parent organisations are facing increased responsibility as employers of youth theatre leaders and facilitators, as fundraisers and in terms of welfare and child protection.

Youth Participation structures are generally informal. Youth theatre members contribute to the running of their youth theatre by chatting with leaders and giving feedback on workshops, productions or general issues. Although there has been a drop in formal Youth Participation structures, they still exist and are most common within the autonomous youth theatre model.

All modern youth theatres have to engage with policy development. All youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage +10 had formalised child protection policies. The development of policies has been led primarily by external influences and national developments.

Landmarks in the Development of Youth Theatres

During Centre Stage +10 interviews, youth theatre leaders described the landmarks in the development of their youth theatre. Key landmarks focused on:

- Structural developments or significant increases / decreases in resources;
- Artistic achievements and creative processes;
- Group development and staffing changes.

Leaders believed that the development of a strong identity was central to a youth theatre’s growth and that all of the above landmarks were significant in this process.

Sustainability

The age range of Irish youth theatres is widening as the youth theatre sector matures. The age of Centre Stage +10 youth theatres ranged from a couple of months old (Portumna Youth Theatre) to 31 years (Dublin Youth Theatre). The number of youth theatres surviving 10 years or more has increased dramatically, indicating that youth theatres are becoming more sustainable.

Centre Stage +10 youth theatres highlighted continuity and consistency as important factors in sustainability. They mentioned:

- continuity of funding sources and levels of funding;
- consistency of youth theatre leaders, whether they are voluntary or paid;
- continuity of policy in terms of funders and parent organisations;
- consistency in terms of access to workshop, production and office space.

During Centre Stage +10 youth theatres also highlighted variety and diversity as important factors in sustainability. They mentioned:

- a variety of youth theatre leaders so that the youth theatre isn’t dependent on one leader;
- a variety of artistic experiences for youth theatre members;
- diversity within the membership of the youth theatre and active, annual recruitment to refresh and develop the membership.
Youth theatres record extremely different levels of income and expenditure each year. The vast majority of youth theatres aspire to a larger and more secure income that would allow them to either maintain or extend their programme.

Income

Youth theatre leaders identified the following organisations and agencies as funders of youth theatre:

- The Arts Council;
- Local Authority Arts Offices;
- Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs / Department of Health and Children;
- Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and Local Youth Services;
- National Youth Council of Ireland (through funding schemes which they administrate);
- European Funding;
- Development Agencies;
- Foundations and Charities.

Youth theatres also generate their own income through membership fees, box office receipts and fundraising. The vast majority of youth theatres charge a membership fee. The average, annual membership fee is €122 but ranges from €5 to €400. All youth theatres that charge a membership fee will waive that fee if they feel a young person is unable to pay. Youth theatres with ‘parent’ organisations are generally receiving significant levels of in-kind support and the level of membership fee would reflect this.

Funding Priorities and Challenges

The majority of youth theatre leaders proposed funding priorities that acknowledged their need to support the core work of the youth theatre:

- Funding for part-time or full-time positions for both administrative and artistic roles;
- Funding for regular workshop spaces, the hire of performance venues and the improvement/refurbishment of existing youth theatre spaces;
- Funding for the annual programme, including the regular series of workshops and rehearsals as well as once-off projects and events.

The major challenge that youth theatres were facing was moving from irregular, once-off grants to more secure, regular funding. Only one of the autonomous youth theatres founded since the last Centre Stage has secured annual funding.

- There is no funding ladder to enable youth theatres to move from occasional, once-off grants to regular, annual funding;
- A large percentage of the funding opportunities available to youth theatres are project-specific, meaning that youth theatres can struggle to fund day-to-day activities;
- The criteria for available project-specific funding can dictate the content, process or outcomes of youth theatre work;
- Medium to large sized youth theatres that come to the end of an annual funding agreement find it impossible to replace the shortfall in their income;
- A lack of transparency around funding decisions frustrated many leaders;
- Youth theatre leaders reported frustration at the workload associated with fundraising;
- Stakeholders pointed to some difficulties communicating the aims, ethos and activities of youth theatre to funders.

Space

The number of youth theatres with stable homes that incorporate a combination of office space, workshop space and, in some cases, performance space has increased since Centre Stage. This stability has been produced through the support of parent organisations, consistent or increased levels of funding, long-term leases, partnerships and residencies.
Autonomous youth theatres and Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres are the least likely to have a stable ‘home’. Seven of the 12 autonomous youth theatres use a combination of short-term, rented / donated spaces and rely heavily on the resources of leaders.

Most youth theatres involved in Centre Stage +10 described a good level of access to local venues for performances. However, youth theatre leaders report that theatre venues and arts centres are often charging full commercial rates, making local performance spaces either expensive or inaccessible.

Chapter 4  Youth Theatre Practice and Programming

The youth theatre movement has grown to encompass a wide variety of youth theatre practice and programming.

Youth Theatre Practice

Youth theatres are united by common practice and principles that link the sector and define its ethos. Youth theatre leaders, members and stakeholders described a number of fundamental values that combine to create an ethos specific to the sector. Youth theatre:

• values the unique, artistic relationship between young people and theatre;
• contributes to the personal, social and artistic development of its members and balances the value systems of quality theatre and quality youth work;
• adopts an ensemble approach as a fundamental principle of practice;
• starts from the particular personalities, interests and needs of the young people who are involved;
• provides opportunities for young people to take part in workshops and performances;
• aspires to the highest artistic standards and production values that resources will allow;
• occurs in informal settings where young people participate on a voluntary basis;
• involves high expectations of young people and what they can achieve;
• provides members with opportunities for progression;
• welcomes all young people, regardless of ability or background;
• involves young people in decision-making;
• builds collaborative relationships between members and leaders that are based on respect.

During Centre Stage +10 interviews, youth theatre leaders and stakeholders were asked to identify the indicators of quality in youth theatre practice. They were also asked to describe the ingredients of a quality youth theatre programme. The report collates their responses and includes specific recommendations under the following headings:

• A quality workshop programme;
• Quality staff;
• Quality productions and theatre experiences;
• Quality opportunities and a variety of experiences.

Programming

The youth theatre year varies in length and structure but a typical youth theatre year starts in September and runs until May, taking breaks according to school holidays. The most popular day for youth theatre workshops and rehearsals is Saturday but youth theatres are scheduling an increased number of activities on weeknights.

Youth theatres are involved in high levels of activity. The 14-18 age category has the highest number of members and also the highest participation rate. During Census Week, the 39 participating youth theatres registered 607 hours of activity including:

• 243 youth theatre activities overall;
• 129 activities involving youth theatre members;
• 114 activities involving youth theatre leaders only;
• An average of 6.2 activities per youth theatre;
• A maximum of 19 activities per youth theatre.

Youth theatres are involved in a greater level of strategic planning than ever before. Youth theatre leaders are
also increasingly likely to organise activities involving young people more than one month in advance and to plan the content of each individual workshop and rehearsal.

Youth Theatre Activities

Census Week data demonstrates that youth theatres are busy, productive organisations that provide a multitude of different drama and theatre related activities for the young people in their area. Youth theatre leaders and members identified key types of artistic activity within their youth theatre year:

- Drama workshops;
- Rehearsals, production work and performances;
- Attending professional theatre and youth theatre performances;
- Festivals and exchanges.

Youth theatre members are also involved in a wide variety of non-artistic youth theatre activities such as social activities, administration, fundraising activities, meetings, training activities or theatre production tasks. Every youth theatre offers a different combination of experiences to their membership. However, there is considerably less variety in the programme for the under-12 age category.

Workshops lie at the heart of the youth theatre programme. A workshop is a series of planned activities which engage young people in an active exploration of drama. All Centre Stage +10 youth theatres ran workshops involving a mix of:

- Skills development;
- Group development;
- Issue-based and process drama;
- Specialist skills and theatre techniques;
- Technical theatre workshops;
- Dance and other art forms.

Youth theatres are involved in a huge variety of productions each year. The artistic interests and tastes of both leaders and members can direct youth theatres to scripted or devised performances, work written for their own age range or beyond, theatre based or site-specific work, multi-disciplinary performances or a more traditional actor-focused theatre.

The majority of youth theatre leaders state that their members see a professional theatre production at least once a year, however, questionnaires indicated that less than half of all youth theatre members are attending professional theatre together on an annual basis. The cost of theatre tickets, a lack of time and a lack of quality work available locally can make professional theatre difficult to access. Youth theatres are likely to travel to see other youth theatre productions at least once a year. Urban youth theatres were least likely to attend other youth theatre performances. A few youth theatre leaders were negative about the standards of youth theatre productions and prioritised engagement with local professional theatre instead.

Youth theatres value their participation in festivals, exchanges and events which form a highpoint but an irregular part of the youth theatre programme. Youth theatres have participated in NAYD festivals and projects, New Connections festivals, local arts, community and youth theatre festivals, national theatre and arts festivals as well as international festivals and exchanges.

Other Elements of Practice

The youth theatre programme of activities is delivered by youth theatre leaders with the occasional support of freelance facilitators and directors. In general, leaders feel they have achieved good levels of core youth theatre skills and bring in freelance facilitators, writers, artists, directors and designers to complement the expertise that already exists within the youth theatre. Youth theatre leaders prioritise artistic training over training in administration and welfare.

Youth theatres are involved in varying levels of evaluation and documentation. Youth theatre leaders keep records of workshop plans and scripts as well as photographs and films of productions or events. Youth theatre leaders are usually involved in very informal styles of evaluation that revolve around discussion and feedback sessions with members.
The most common type of recruitment strategy is passive in nature. Leaders rely on word of mouth to recruit new members. The most common active recruitment strategies involves running ‘taster’ workshops in local schools and advertising in local newspapers and brochures.

There is great disparity between the membership levels of youth theatres around the country. Leaders indicate a variety of factors that may contribute to this situation including ineffective or non-existent recruitment strategies, problems ‘communicating’ youth theatre to young people and changes in youth culture in relation to academic pressure and work.

Chapter 5  Youth Theatre Members

Youth Theatre Member Profile

The average age for a youth theatre member is 15.5. The youngest member who returned a Centre Stage +10 questionnaire was five and the oldest member was 23. The largest percentage of youth theatre members (46.88%) fall into the 14 to 18 age range. The most significant change in the age range has been the decline in numbers of 17 and 18 year olds in youth theatres. The youth work sector in general has registered declining numbers of young people from this age group participating in local youth work services and projects.

Nearly two-thirds of all members who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 were female. Youth theatres generally have an inclusive recruitment policy that welcomes young people from all backgrounds, nationalities and abilities. Data from Centre Stage +10 shows that boys are the most underrepresented group of young people in youth theatre and that gender should be added to the inclusion debate.

The vast majority of youth theatre members (85.65%) are of Irish nationality. However, overall the levels of diversity in terms of nationality and ethnicity are reflective of the national average. Youth theatres in rural areas and smaller urban centres tended to have better levels of diversity than those in the larger urban areas such as Dublin, Cork or Galway.

Almost all youth theatre members are in formal education at either primary, secondary or third level. Youth theatre members want to achieve high levels of academic qualifications with 71.10% of members aspiring to degree level. Nearly half of the youth theatre members aged 12 and over were in education and were not working. Youth theatre leaders from rural and urban areas noted an increase in the number of youth theatre members with part-time work, particularly at the weekend. Youth theatre members were primarily interested in work within the world of theatre and the arts but showed a strong interest in other sectors as well.

Youth theatre can be seen as a highly effective way of engaging young people in the arts for the first time. Centre Stage +10 questionnaires indicate that 43.5% of youth theatre members are the first in their family to show an active interest in the arts.

Youth theatre members generally come from Socio-Economic Groups A (Employers and Managers) to D (Non-manual). The increase in members from rural areas has not brought about an inclusion of members from a farming and agricultural background. It appears that young people from the E (Manual skilled), F (Semi-Skilled), G (Unskilled) and H (Own account workers) are under-represented in youth theatre membership. The inclusion of young people from these groups remains an issue for Irish youth theatre.

Participation in Youth Theatre - Members

Young people are members of their youth theatre for an average of 2.3 years, according to the members questionnaires.

Young people join youth theatre to act. Nearly half of the youth theatre members (46.29%) expressed an interest in being an actor and 61.14% recorded a desire to be in plays as a major reason for joining. However, youth theatre members explained that they stay in youth theatre because of the people who are there, the atmosphere they create together and how it makes them feel.

Of members who completed questionnaires, 38% experienced some barriers to participation in youth theatre. The single biggest factor was school work and exams, with 71.27% of these members selecting this category. More than half of youth theatre members aged 12 and over (54%) rely on family members to take them to youth
theatre activities by car, indicating that family support is often vital to enable young people to participate in youth theatre.

**Senior Members**

Senior Members are active in 25 of the 45 youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage +10. They are experienced youth theatre members who take on extra leadership, facilitation, administration or production responsibilities within their youth theatre. The cycle of senior members becoming the next generation of leaders is an established tradition for some older youth theatres and an emerging trend for some younger ones.

The training of senior members is generally informal. Their training may include elements of participation, observation, discussion, co-facilitation and co-direction. A few youth theatres offer progression for senior members through FETAC accredited courses.

**Chapter 6 Youth Theatre Leaders**

**Youth Theatre Leader Profile**

The average age of a youth theatre leader is 35. The oldest youth theatre leader who returned a questionnaire was 67, while the youngest was 18. Nearly two-thirds of the leaders who returned questionnaires were female. The ratio between male and female leaders is almost identical to that between male and female youth theatre members.

Youth theatre leaders come from a variety of backgrounds and the skills they have developed have come from a combination of professional experiences and involvement in voluntary and amateur work. There has been a rise in the number of youth theatre leaders who have acquired qualifications in areas directly related to youth theatre such as Drama and Theatre, Youth Work and Youth Arts. Leaders value the skills they have built through participation in amateur theatre and other types of theatre experiences, including their membership of a youth theatre when they were younger.

Leaders who responded to the questionnaire were motivated to work in youth theatre by a strong commitment to young people and a keen interest in their artistic, personal and social development.

**Participation in Youth Theatre – Leaders**

The vast majority of youth theatre leaders work with one youth theatre at a time and often one youth theatre throughout their life. However, leader questionnaires indicate that nearly one in five youth theatre leaders are working on a regular basis with more than one youth theatre. The employment history of this section of leaders is indicative of the professionalisation of youth theatre and the youth drama facilitator.

Youth theatre leaders show considerable commitment to their youth theatres and remain working with groups for a very long period of time. Leader questionnaires show the maximum time a leader spent working with a youth theatre was 27 years.

42.86% of leaders who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 were previously a member of a youth theatre. This percentage jumped to 73.33% of leaders when the sample was limited to youth theatre leaders aged under 35. These statistics illustrate the significance of the cycle of youth theatre members becoming youth theatre leaders.

Youth theatre leaders have developed a wider and more sophisticated vocabulary to describe their roles in the last 10 years. The development of these titles is an indication of the professionalisation of the world of youth theatre and the world of arts education and youth arts in general.

The past 10 years has seen a large increase in the number of paid positions within youth theatre. However, the professionalisation of the sector has not eliminated the voluntary contribution of youth theatre leaders. There are elements of volunteer activity within 24 of the 45 youth theatres included in this survey. Nineteen leaders who completed questionnaires worked on a completely voluntary basis for their youth theatre.

The recency of this trend towards paid employment has meant that the development of contracts, job descriptions
and standard rates of pay is still an ongoing process for employers within youth theatre. The vast majority of youth theatre leaders are paid according to weekly, workshop or hourly rates which may or may not also include administration, planning and other responsibilities.

Chapter 7 The Benefits of Participation in Youth Theatre

Participation in youth theatre can lead to a multitude of different personal, social and artistic outcomes. The diversity of outcomes is influenced by the variety and quality of existing youth theatre programmes and by the fact that outcomes are often determined by the needs and interests of each individual youth theatre member.

The common principles and practices that link the youth theatre sector and define its ethos make it possible to distinguish some common benefits of participation. Youth theatre members, leaders and stakeholders identified the following benefits of participation:

- Improved theatre skills;
- Increased appreciation of theatre and the arts;
- Increased creativity;
- Improved workshop skills;
- Progression to third-level drama and theatre training and professional theatre;
- Training in facilitation and direction for senior members and FETAC qualifications;
- Increased levels of confidence and self-esteem;
- Increased numbers of friends and an increased ability to make friends;
- A more developed sense of personal and group identity;
- A sense of belonging;
- Increased self-discipline and commitment;
- Improved abilities to articulate and express feelings and opinions;
- A sense of happiness, fun and well-being;
- Increased levels of activity;
- A sense of personal and group achievement;
- Increased understanding and knowledge of relevant issues;
- Increased ability to take risks and be spontaneous within a safe environment;
- A sense of empowerment;
- A sense of escape and relaxation.

The young people who participated in the Centre Stage +10 research were also asked to express what they valued most about their youth theatre experience. The majority of members valued the group experience and friendship above any other aspect of the youth theatre experience. Being with other young people, being part of a group and working together towards a common goal was central to their enjoyment of youth theatre.
Chapter 1: Introduction
1.1 Aim and Scope of the Study

NAYD promotes critical thinking and research in the area of youth drama and theatre. As such, NAYD has a remit to conduct research that investigates youth theatre practice and explores its impact on the artistic, social and personal development of the young person. NAYD also appreciates the importance of having a strong evidence base pertaining to youth theatre in Ireland and, to this end, undertakes an ongoing programme of research.

Centre Stage +10 was undertaken by NAYD to generate a detailed picture of current youth theatre activity in Ireland and to determine the key priorities for the future development of youth theatre at local, regional and national level.

The research process aimed to examine the state of current Irish youth theatre under 4 general headings:

- Youth theatre structures, funding and resources;
- Youth theatre practice and programming;
- Youth theatre participants;
- The impact of youth theatre on participants.

Centre Stage +10 is the second national study of youth theatre undertaken by NAYD. Centre Stage was carried out in 1997/1998 and was the first major study of youth theatre in Ireland. The evolving nature of the youth theatre sector necessitated a fresh study to explore and analyse the developments that have taken place in the last 10 years. A key criterion in drawing up the questionnaires, interview templates and census week forms was to allow comparison with the findings of the 1997/98 study. While retaining a core of similar questions and methodologies, Centre Stage +10 has evolved to contain new questions relating to recent developments in structure and practice as well as changes in the profile and participation of leaders and members.

Centre Stage +10 provides a snapshot of youth theatre between November 2007 and May 2008. As youth theatre is constantly evolving and developing, the circumstances of many individual youth theatres have changed since this research was carried out. The findings presented by this report refer specifically to the research period.

1.2 Approach to the Study

The study was undertaken by NAYD between November 2007 and May 2008.

The initial stage of the research was a consultation process with NAYD staff, board members and youth theatre stakeholders to agree the scope of the study and the principal areas of investigation.

NAYD structured the research process using the following methods:

- **Youth Theatre Census Week**
  A youth theatre Census Week took place from Saturday 24th – Friday 30th November, 2007 in which all youth theatres were asked to audit their activities. This involved logging the type and number of activities that took place and details regarding leaders, members and venues. The date of the Census Week was chosen to match the initial Centre Stage census of 1997.

- **Research workshops with Youth Theatre members**
  Youth theatre members were consulted through workshops that were designed to stimulate discussion and debate concerning the key research areas. The workshop was designed by NAYD staff to allow for group exploration of key issues through games, activities and group discussion. Eight Member Workshops took place around the country:

  - Cavan;
  - Cork;
  - Dublin (x2 workshops);
  - Portlaoise;
  - Roscommon;
• Sligo;
• Waterford.

• Interviews with Youth Theatre leaders
Face-to-face interviews were carried out with leaders from each youth theatre to provide an opportunity for in-depth discussion. The interviews were structured around a questionnaire developed by NAYD staff and were designed to draw out the personal impressions and opinions of the leaders as well as detailed information about the day-to-day running and history of their youth theatre.

• Interviews with Youth Theatre stakeholders, NAYD staff and board members
Interviews were carried out with NAYD staff and board members to take into account their understanding and experience of current youth theatre activity in Ireland. A small number of key youth theatre stakeholders (those with a strong connection to youth theatre but who are not involved in the day-to-day running of a youth theatre) were also interviewed. These interviews were structured around a questionnaire designed by NAYD to stimulate discussion on some of the key questions within each research field.

• Questionnaires for Youth Theatre members and leaders
Questionnaires for leaders and members were disseminated to each youth theatre to gather information regarding the profile and experiences of youth theatre members and leaders. Separate questionnaires were designed for youth theatre members aged 12 or over and youth theatre members aged under 12.

• Desk-based research
A review was undertaken of contemporary, related reports and studies to contextualise the research and its findings.

• Participation Levels
50 youth theatres were invited to participate in Centre Stage +10. The majority of these youth theatres were affiliated to NAYD but some youth theatres that were not members at that time or had never been affiliated were also invited to participate. The five who did not participate were generally running more irregular youth drama activities or drama classes and did not feel that their situation was pertinent to the report.

Two youth theatres from Northern Ireland were included in Centre Stage. Northern Irish youth theatres were not included in the main sampling of youth theatres for Centre Stage +10 because differences in structures and funding made comparison with youth theatres in the south of Ireland problematic. Instead, stakeholder interviews were carried out with The Rainbow Factory, a Belfast based youth theatre run by local youth services, and also with the Ulster Association for Youth Drama.
Table 1.1 Provides information about the participation levels for each area of the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.1 Participation levels for Centre Stage +10</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Centre Stage +10</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage +10</td>
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<td>No. of counties represented in Centre Stage +10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Census Week</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of youth theatres represented</td>
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<td>No. of counties represented</td>
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<td><strong>Member Workshops</strong></td>
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<td>No. of members who participated</td>
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<td>No. of youth theatres represented</td>
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<td><strong>Members Questionnaires ‘12 and over’</strong></td>
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<td>No. of questionnaires</td>
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<td>No. of youth theatres represented</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Member Questionnaires ‘Under 12’</strong></td>
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<td>No. of questionnaires</td>
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<td>No. of youth theatres represented</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leader Questionnaires</strong></td>
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<td>No. of questionnaires</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of youth theatres represented</td>
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<td><strong>Leader Interviews</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of youth theatre leader interviews</td>
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<td>No. of youth theatres represented</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder Interviews</strong></td>
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<td>No. of interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of NAYD staff and board</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Local Authority Arts Officers interviewed</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Arts Council staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. from the youth work sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. from Northern Ireland</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Kerry, Meath, Westmeath, Offaly, Monaghan did not have youth theatres that were affiliated to NAYD at the beginning of Centre Stage +10.
2. 14 youth theatres in 9 counties have members within this age range.
3. Local Authority Arts Officers were interviewed from Roscommon, Laois, Carlow, Wexford, Leitrim, Clare, Sligo, Mayo, Cavan and Co. Limerick.
1.3 Structure of the Report

Chapters 2 to 7 have been organised to allow for the clear presentation of the basic data gathered and analysed under the main research areas:

- Youth theatre models and structures;
- Youth theatre funding and resources;
- Youth theatre practice and programming;
- Youth theatre members;
- Youth theatre leaders;
- The benefits of participation.

A number of comparisons are made throughout these chapters with the results of the 1997/1998 study. Quotes from youth theatre members, leaders and stakeholders taken from Member Workshops and interviews are used throughout the report. Case studies are also used to examine the contemporary, real-life situations of youth theatres relating to the specific topics that each chapter addresses.

Having presented the study findings and made comparisons with the 1997/98 study, Chapter 8 identifies specific recommendations arising out of the research for NAYD and the youth theatre sector in Ireland.

The report has two appendices. Appendix 1 provides further statistical information and Appendix 2 contains the questionnaires, Census Week forms and interview templates that were used in Centre Stage +10.
Chapter 2: Youth Theatre Models and Structures
Introduction

NAYD and the youth theatre community have witnessed increased levels of diversity develop within youth theatre models and structures since the last *Centre Stage*. This chapter explores youth theatre models and structures under the following headings:

- 2.1 Youth theatre models
- 2.2 Youth theatre foundations, structures and locations
- 2.3 Youth theatre governance and policies
- 2.4 Local, national and international relationships
- 2.5 Landmarks in the development of youth theatres
- 2.6 Sustainability

*Centre Stage +10* provides a snapshot of youth theatre between November 2007 and May 2008. As youth theatre is constantly evolving, the circumstances of many individual youth theatres have already changed since this research was carried out. Some youth theatres will have seen increases or decreases in their membership numbers while others such as Co. Carlow Youth Theatre have added another group to their youth theatre. Like all arts organisations and youth work services, youth theatres have experienced reductions in available funding in 2008/9.

Youth theatre in Ireland has witnessed significant developments since the research was conducted:

- Local Youth Services have founded two new youth theatres, Boolabus Youth Theatre was created by Dun Laoghaire Youth Service and Adrenaline Youth Theatre was founded by Sphere 17 Youth Service in Darndale, Dublin;
- The Local Authority Arts Office in North Tipperary has founded two youth theatres, Nenagh Youth Theatre and Fracture Youth Theatre;
- The Local Authority Arts Office in Laois has founded a fifth youth theatre, Portarlington Youth Theatre;
- New youth theatres have been founded in Meath and Kerry. Trim Youth Theatre in Meath was an initiative of the Local Authority Arts Office and Free Range Youth Theatre has been established in Tralee as a result of the collaboration between Siamsa Tíre and other individuals who work locally in theatre;
- Buí Bolg, a professional street theatre company in Wexford, has founded a youth theatre;
- Trap Door Youth Theatre has been founded in Fermoy as a result of a community initiative supported by the Avondhu Development Group.

Some youth theatres have experienced very significant disruptions:

- Cavan Youth Drama has suspended all activities as of 1 Jan 2009. Research is being carried out into the best future structure for Cavan Youth Drama and it is hoped that activities will resume as quickly as possible thereafter;
- Co. Mayo Youth Theatre – Castlebar ceased activities in Autumn 2008. The Ballina branch is still working strongly with young people from that area;
- Na Crosáin Youth Theatre has suspended activities in its Galway city branch while they are experiencing staff changes and venue refurbishment but continues to work with the Connemara group;
- The residency of Kildare Youth Theatre’s parent organisation, Crooked House Theatre Company, has come to an end at the Riverbank Arts Centre in Newbridge. The youth theatre is now renting space for its activities within the town.

### 2.1 Youth Theatre Models

What types of youth theatre exist in Ireland? Since the last *Centre Stage*, NAYD and the youth theatre community have witnessed greater diversity within youth theatre structures, policies and activities. How can this diversity be examined and explained? NAYD developed a classification of different ‘models’ to facilitate an exploration of the differences that were emerging between youth theatres.

Of course, every youth theatre is different. Each group develops at its own pace, according to its particular environment and the needs of young people in its area. Youth theatres have very diverse foundations: they can be created by local volunteers; they can evolve as part of an arts centre or an arts organisation; they can develop in partnership with support agencies in their communities such as local youth services or as initiatives of Local...
Authority Arts Offices. A youth theatre can operate on a small scale with one group of committed young people or might run a number of groups in a number of different centres across a city or county.

This classification of youth theatre models is not an attempt to pigeonhole youth theatres or create uniformity across the country. Within every model there is still huge variety. Models do assist, however, in highlighting some of the strengths and weaknesses in each of the different structures and revealing possibilities for development. Youth theatres can be categorised according to many different factors: for example, their founders, their structures, their purpose or their size. In Centre Stage +10, youth theatres are categorised according to the key decision maker, that is, the group of individuals or the organisation that is actually running the youth theatre. Therefore, youth theatres are categorised according to the ‘parent’ organisation that runs it (such as a professional theatre company, local youth services or a Local Authority Arts Office) or are classified as ‘autonomous’. Autonomous youth theatres are self-governing and have a voluntary board or committee.

In the first Centre Stage report, youth theatres were organised according to their principal founder but no data is provided to allow a comparison with current models. The youth theatres that took part in the first Centre Stage have been categorised in this research, for the purposes of comparison, according to information from the NAYD youth theatre archive. Figure 2.1 compares the models of the youth theatres that were involved in Centre Stage with those who were involved in Centre Stage +10.

![Figure 2.1 Youth Theatre Models](image)

The different types of youth theatre models are explored under the following headings:

2.1.1 Autonomous youth theatres
2.1.2 Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres and partnerships
2.1.3 Professional and Amateur Theatre Company youth theatres
2.1.4 Youth Services and Youth Arts Organisation youth theatres
2.1.5 Other youth theatre Models
Table 2.1 Provides information on the models of the youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage +10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOUTH THEATRE</th>
<th>MODEL</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dry Rain Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Autonomous</td>
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<td>Tallaght Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>Dublin</td>
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<td>Youthopia Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Autonomous</td>
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<td>Cabinteely Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celbridge Youth Drama</td>
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<td>Kildare</td>
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<td>Droichead Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>Louth</td>
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<td>Independent Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>Dublin</td>
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<td>Lightbulb Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>Cork</td>
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<td>Galway</td>
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<td>Stage Craft Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>Tipperary</td>
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<td>Griese Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>Limerick Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>Co. Sligo Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>Dublin Youth Theatre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galway Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>Galway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cavan Youth Drama</td>
<td>Arts Office</td>
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<td>Co. Carlow Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>Co. Limerick YT - Lough Gur</td>
<td>Arts Office</td>
<td>Limerick</td>
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<td>Co. Limerick YT - Abbeyfeale</td>
<td>Arts Office</td>
<td>Limerick</td>
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<td>LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>Arts Office</td>
<td>Leitrim</td>
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<td>LYTC Carrigallen</td>
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<td>Manorhamilton Youth Theatre (MYTh)</td>
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<td>Mayo Youth Theatre - Ballina</td>
<td>Arts Office</td>
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<td>Co. Wexford Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Prof Theatre Co / Arts Office</td>
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<td>Physically Phishy Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>Kildare Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Professional Theatre Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Na Crosain</td>
<td>Professional Theatre Co.</td>
<td>Galway</td>
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<td>Amateur Theatre</td>
<td>Longford</td>
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<td>Waterford Youth Arts</td>
<td>Youth Arts Organisation</td>
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<td>Cork</td>
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<td>Roundabout Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Youth Services</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letterkenny Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Theatre Venue</td>
<td>Donegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork School of Music Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Educational Institution</td>
<td>Cork</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2.1.1 Autonomous Youth Theatres

There are 16 autonomous youth theatres:

- 5 autonomous youth theatres are run on a completely voluntary basis;
- 7 autonomous youth theatres have a voluntary board or committee and pay facilitators to some extent (four of these are community initiatives employing professional facilitators);
- 4 youth theatres are established organisations with voluntary boards/committees and paid staff with full-time/part-time positions.

The autonomous youth theatre was the most common model during the original Centre Stage research period and is still the most common model in Ireland today. Many of the oldest youth theatres belong in this category.

The youth theatres of the 1970s and 1980s were generally initiated by one or a group of individuals who may or may not have had the support of local organisations and services. They existed as independent organisations who made decisions for themselves. The last decade has seen a rise in youth theatres created within local organisations and services, but there is still a thriving cluster of youth theatres that remain independent and self-governing.

The autonomous youth theatre model used to be termed a ‘voluntary’ youth theatre because of the voluntary board structure. These youth theatres were generally run on a voluntary basis by both youth theatre leaders and facilitators as well as board/committee members. The last 10 years have seen changes in the levels of voluntary adult involvement in youth theatre and have also witnessed the professionalisation of the facilitator and youth theatre leader. These, as well as other factors, have created a complex yet rich mesh of paid and voluntary involvement within the autonomous youth theatre model.

Five of the autonomous youth theatres included in this research are run on a completely voluntary basis by youth theatre leaders and board/committee members. Interestingly, only one of these youth theatres, Celbridge Youth Drama, was founded since the last Centre Stage report. The other autonomous youth theatres that have been created since 1997/1998 have all founded voluntary boards or committees and pay their youth theatre leaders/facilitators (although the payment given can range from a token to a standard wage).

Six autonomous youth theatres have been founded in this manner in the past 10 years and this model is particularly popular with community initiatives where local people are keen to set up a youth theatre but don’t have the necessary skills to run the drama activities themselves. One autonomous youth theatre was set up by a theatre school in central Dublin since the last Centre Stage and is now run by a voluntary board and facilitated largely by senior members, some of whom receive token payments.

There are also four large, established autonomous youth theatres where either permanent part-time or full-time staff report to a voluntary board/committee. These youth theatres are among some of the oldest youth theatres in Ireland and include Dublin Youth Theatre, Galway Youth Theatre, Limerick Youth Theatre and Co. Sligo Youth Theatre. Of these four youth theatres, Co. Sligo Youth Theatre is the youngest and has developed from an Arts Office initiative to a fully-fledged autonomous youth theatre with a voluntary board.

It is important to note that local youth services have been a significant support for autonomous youth theatres and many of the youth theatres are affiliated as youth clubs to local youth services such as Kildare Youth Service or local services run by Catholic Youth Care or the City of Dublin Youth Services Board.

**CASE STUDY: Co. Sligo Youth Theatre – an autonomous youth theatre**

County Sligo Youth Theatre was a joint initiative of the Local Authority Arts Office in Sligo and the Hawk’s Well Theatre. It was established in 1998 as a two-year Pilot Project and the Blue Raincoat Theatre Company joined the initiative as a partner in 1999. Over the past 10 years these partners have worked with drama facilitators to run youth theatre activities, with the Local Authority Arts Office as the lead agency providing funding and administration support.

As envisaged from the start, the youth theatre has developed into an autonomous model. By 2008, the youth theatre was run directly by a voluntary board including two members of staff from the Local Authority Arts Office, a member of HSE staff, the Artistic Director of Blue Raincoat Theatre Company, the Director of the Hawk’s Well Theatre, a parent and two member representatives. The youth theatre is managed by a full-time Artistic Director and employs freelance facilitators and directors to suit their programme.
2.1.2 Local Authority Arts Office Youth Theatres and Partnerships

- 15 youth theatres are run by Local Authority Arts Offices;
- 1 youth theatre is run by a professional theatre company in partnership with a Local Authority Arts Office.

The increase in the number of youth theatres run by Local Authority Arts Offices represents the largest growth of a specific model since 1997/1998 and the Arts Office youth theatre has become the second most common model in Ireland today. Of the 33 youth theatres created since the last Centre Stage report, 15 were Local Authority Arts Office initiatives. Only two youth theatres were run by Local Authority Arts Offices during the original Centre Stage research. The term ‘Arts Office youth theatre’ has become an umbrella for a broad range of youth theatres all ultimately managed by Arts Offices but differing in staffing and organisational structures. This is often due to levels of funding, the tradition of drama and theatre within the county, the interests and experiences of Arts Office staff and policies as well as the geographical profile of the county.

Arts Officers have a remit to serve their entire county and have a responsibility to provide access to youth arts projects for all young people in the county. This challenge has often led Arts Officers to create multiple youth theatres within their county. For example, Co. Mayo Arts Office runs two youth theatres in Castlebar and Ballina, Co. Laois Arts Office runs four youth theatres in Portlaoise, Rathdowney, Stradbally and Mountrath and Co. Leitrim Arts Office runs three youth theatres, in Carrick-on-Shannon, Carrigallen and Manorhamilton. This is particularly common in counties where the geographical profile means that young people can’t easily access one central town and one central youth theatre. Sometimes Arts Officers create an umbrella structure for all youth theatres in the county, making individual youth theatres branches of a much larger organisation. An example of this is Co. Limerick Youth Theatre which has two branches in Abbeyfeale and Lough Gur.

There are, however, some interesting variations on these structures. The three youth theatres in Leitrim are all different from each other, even though they are co-ordinated by one Local Authority Arts Office. LYTC Carrigallen is supported by a small committee of volunteers, Manorhamilton Youth Theatre works in partnership with the Glens Centre where it is based and LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon is run by two drama facilitators and has a space rental relationship with The Dock Arts Centre. Co. Carlow Arts Office has created a part-time Youth Drama Officer position which runs a single-centre, single-group youth theatre but includes other responsibilities such as building local relationships and developing youth drama and youth theatre across the county. Co. Cavan Youth Drama has developed this model into a very large multi-centre, multi-group youth theatre that is run by a youth theatre Co-ordinator, a part-time member of the Arts Office staff. This post co-ordinates the activities of all branches of the youth theatre but also has responsibility to explore the development and sustainability of the youth theatre at a county level.

A partnership model has been created in Co. Wexford, where Bare Cheek Theatre Company (a professional theatre company) runs Co. Wexford Youth Theatre with the Local Authority Arts Office. This youth theatre operates within the structures of the theatre company and is supported in many ways by the Arts Office including funding, strategic planning, advice and marketing.

**CASE STUDY: Clare Youth Theatre – a Local Authority Arts Office model**

Clare Youth Theatre is an initiative of the Local Authority Arts Office and was founded in 2005 following a youth drama project. The youth theatre works with two groups of young people aged between 12 and 18 and rents workshop and production space at Glór, arts and entertainment venue. The group is based in Ennis and draws a county-wide membership.

Two freelance drama facilitators run workshops and direct productions. Staff from the Local Authority Arts Office are very involved in running the youth theatre, providing co-ordination and administration support as well as funding.

‘Clare Youth Theatre aims to draw young people together from all over the county in a spirit of creativity, fun and personal development through the medium of theatre.’ – Mission Statement of Clare Youth Theatre

2.1.3 Professional and Amateur Theatre Company Youth Theatres

- 6 of the youth theatres are run by five professional theatre companies;
- 1 youth theatre is run by an amateur theatre company.
The professional and amateur theatre communities have been key initiators and significant supporters of youth theatre since it began in Ireland. There has been a substantial exchange in terms of theatre practice, personnel, support and advice but some theatre companies have also become integral to the structures of youth theatre by founding and running groups themselves.

There is a very strong relationship between youth theatre and professional theatre companies that create theatre for young audiences. Graffiti Theatre Company runs two youth theatres in Cork, Barnstorm Theatre Company runs Kilkenny Youth Theatre and in 2008, the Artistic Director of Branar Theatre Company, co-ordinated Na Crosáin Youth Theatre for An Taibhdhearc in Galway.

Staff, freelance facilitators and actors who work for these theatre companies have worked for youth theatres around the country and also contributed to the development of youth theatre at a national level through participation in regional networks and the board of NAYD.

One youth theatre is run by a professional theatre company that began as a professional community theatre collective: Crooked House Theatre Company in Newbridge runs Kildare Youth Theatre. One professional theatre company, Boomerang Theatre Company, actually began life as Boomerang Youth Theatre. The youth theatre has developed into a theatre company that focuses on multi-media, international and visual arts productions while still running the youth theatre as part of its core programme.

The amateur theatre community has played a large role in the development of Irish youth theatre over the years and four youth theatres that participated in the original Centre Stage were run by amateur theatre companies. Though this community is still very involved in youth theatre through venue rental and partnerships, only one youth theatre that is run by an amateur theatre company is included in the research: Backstage Youth Theatre is run on a completely voluntary basis by members of the Backstage Theatre Group in Longford. The theatre group is governed by a voluntary board and youth theatre leaders report to this board.

### CASE STUDY: Kilkenny Youth Theatre – a professional theatre company model

Kilkenny Youth Theatre is run by Barnstorm Theatre Company, a professional theatre company.

‘While the company develops professional theatre for specific audiences it also offers a resource to others in the community to use theatre as a means of education, self-development, exploration and celebration.’

Barnstorm Theatre Company website.

The youth theatre forms part of the theatre company’s outreach programme and is part of a series of activities (including the Junior youth theatre and the Adult Drama Club) where the local community can become actively involved in creating drama and theatre. The youth theatre was set up in 1991 and took a break from activities between 2003 and 2006. The youth theatre is staffed by the Barnstorm Outreach Officer, other facilitators and artists sourced from within the company and volunteers from the Adult Drama Group. All workshops and rehearsals take place at the Barnstorm building and the group use a local theatre for performances. The youth theatre works within the governance structures of the theatre company.

### 2.1.4 Youth Services and Youth Arts Organisation Youth Theatres

- 1 youth theatre run by a local youth service;
- 2 youth theatres run by youth arts organisations.

A natural affinity has always existed between youth theatre and youth work in Ireland. The youth services are an important partner for youth theatre through national and local funding, training, venue hire and support. Many youth theatres are affiliated to their local youth service and youth service staff sit on boards and committees of youth theatres or act as welfare advisors. Despite this close connection, only one youth theatre that is run directly by a local youth service is included in the research. The youth service model was strong during the first Centre Stage with three youth theatres being run directly by local youth services.

Many factors have contributed to this slight decline: among them the departure of key staff from the specific youth services involved, a trend towards film making and new technologies within youth work programmes as

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1 Barnstorm Theatre Company website, http://www.barnstorm.ie
well as a trend towards drama projects as part of an overall youth arts experience. Interestingly, NAYD saw a significant rise in affiliations from youth theatres run directly by local youth services throughout 2008.

The youth service model has largely been limited to the Dublin area and Roundabout Youth Theatre, run by the BRYR Youth Service, is based in Ballymun. A characteristic of this model is their location within areas of urban disadvantage.

Youth arts has been a developing field within the world of youth work over the past 10 years and the youth arts organisation model has become a new category. Two youth theatres are run by youth arts organisations in Kilkenny and Waterford and both have a large membership. Waterford Youth Arts developed from youth drama activities and was formerly known as Waterford Youth Drama during the first Centre Stage. The Young Irish Filmmakers developed Dreamstuff Youth Theatre from its initial film making activities.

**CASE STUDY: Roundabout Youth Theatre - a youth services model**

Roundabout Youth Theatre is run directly by a local youth service, Ballymun Regional Youth Resource. BRYR is a youth work organisation working for the welfare and development of 10-21 year-olds in Ballymun and views youth arts as an integral part of its services:

‘Arts are excellent vehicles for mobilising young people. In BRYR, we approach arts activities with the same ultimate welfare and developmental objectives as all our work. We recognise the particular communications and creative dimensions of art-based youth work... Theatre has been an important part of BRYR’s work since our formation in 1999.’ – Ballymun Regional Youth Resource website.

The youth theatre runs a programme of workshops and production work for three separate age groups: a junior group for the 10-12 age group, a middle group for the 13-16 age group and a senior group for young people aged over 16. The youth theatre is run by a part-time Artistic Director and supported by freelance facilitators and artists as well as a small team of volunteers. The youth theatre and its staff work within the governance and management systems of BRYR and are based at The Reco, Ballymun’s Central Youth Facility.

### 2.1.5 Other Youth Theatre Models

- 1 youth theatre run by an Arts Centre;
- 1 youth theatre run by an Education Institution;
- 1 youth theatre run by a Theatre Venue.

The remaining youth theatres represent an interesting mix of models. Arts Centres around the country are involved in youth theatre in terms of space and theatre rental but only one youth theatre (West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre) is actually run by a local arts centre. The original Centre Stage research included two youth theatres that were run by Arts Centres: First Call Youth Theatre which is still run by the Derry Playhouse and Stack youth theatre which was run by the South Tipperary Arts Centre. Equally, youth theatres have local relationships with theatre venues but only one youth theatre run directly by a theatre venue (An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny) is included in the research. This youth theatre is the first of its kind in Ireland.

The school model of youth theatre was popular in the early 1990s but has been in decline since the end of that decade. This was a model where teachers ran youth theatres after school on a voluntary basis. The original Centre Stage report included only one such school or educational institution model based in Wexford town so it would seem that this model was already in decline at that stage.

This research again includes only one youth theatre run by an educational institution: the Speech and Drama department of the Cork School of Music (part of the Cork Institute of Technology) runs the Cork School of Music Youth Theatre. Though secondary schools are involved in drama projects and some schools offer rich drama opportunities to Transition year students, the youth theatres where a teacher worked after school with a consistent group of young people over a long period of time seems to have disappeared.

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3 Ballymun Regional Resource Website, [http://www.bryr.ie](http://www.bryr.ie)
CASE STUDY: Letterkenny Youth Theatre – a theatre venue model

Letterkenny Youth Theatre was founded in 2004 by staff from An Grianán Theatre. The Director of An Grianán had always been interested in establishing a youth theatre and had run once-off youth drama projects and workshop weekends for the young people of Letterkenny. In 2004, An Grianán entered discussions with staff from the Letterkenny Arts Centre about setting up a joint initiative. Although the Arts Centre have stepped away from the youth theatre in terms of an organisational role, their involvement gave momentum to the youth theatre and resulted in the formation of weekly youth theatre workshops.

The youth theatre is part of An Grianán’s ‘Workshop and Courses’ programme for children, young people and teachers from the local area. The venue offers drama classes to 7-13 year olds and then offers young people the opportunity to progress onto youth theatre when they turn 14. The youth theatre work together as one group and meet once a week.

‘Letterkenny youth theatre Company aims to be an ensemble company which offers opportunities for play and creative and personal development through drama and performance techniques. It offers an insight into aspects of professional theatre through a series of workshops and showcase performances.’
– Letterkenny Youth Theatre, Mission Statement

The youth theatre is co-ordinated by the director of An Grianán and works within the governance and management structures of the venue. The artistic programme is facilitated by a pool of three freelance, youth drama facilitators and artists. Workshops are held in a local hall and productions take place at the venue itself.

2.2 Youth Theatre Foundations, Structures and Locations

Youth theatre foundations, structures and locations are explored under the following headings:

2.2.1 Youth theatre foundations
2.2.2 Youth theatre size and structure
2.2.3 Location of youth theatres

2.2.1 Youth Theatre Foundations

The original Centre Stage report stated that all youth theatres that participated in the research evolved from small-scale drama projects or from sporadic local youth theatre projects. In general, youth theatres founded since the last Centre Stage have moved very quickly from any initial drama activities to recognisable youth theatre structures and practice. As the idea of ‘youth theatre’ becomes more widely known, founders state at the outset that they wish to set up a ‘youth theatre’ and drama activities are often only initiated once structures have been put in place. Founders may be aware of the work of other youth theatres or may have made contact with the youth theatre Officer (formerly Development Officer) at NAYD. This seems to have supported youth theatres to develop solid structures and an annual programme more quickly than before. The development of membership criteria for youth theatres wishing to affiliate to NAYD has also encouraged youth theatres to plan strategically during the early days of the youth theatre and this may also have shortened the journey from ad hoc projects to an operational youth theatre.

There is still a notable diversity in the range of initial youth theatre foundations. In the first Centre Stage, youth theatre founders were listed as individuals, local agencies, youth services, Local Authority Arts Officers, arts centres and theatre companies. Youth theatres founded since the last report have, by and large, been initiated by the same combination of individuals and organisations, although Local Authority Arts Offices have been the most active. The last 10 years have also witnessed the involvement of theatre venues, youth arts organisations, and a third level educational institution as well as local agencies such as community arts groups and community development organisations. Historically, individuals have been the primary driving force behind youth theatre in Ireland but the last 10 years have seen organisations playing an increasingly prominent role within the creation of youth theatres. However, this involvement is generally driven by the individuals within these organisations rather than a strategic plan for the development of youth theatre.

Of the 45 youth theatres included in Centre Stage +10, 29 have been founded since the last report in 1998. Eight of these youth theatres developed into autonomous youth theatres. Looking more closely at the foundations of

3 Thirteen of the Centre Stage +10 youth theatres were also included in Centre Stage: Activate Youth Theatre, Cabinteely Youth Theatre, Cavan Youth Drama (as Cavan Youth Theatre), Droichead Youth Theatre, Dry Rain Youth Theatre, Dublin Youth Theatre, Galway Youth Theatre, Kilkenny Youth Theatre, Limerick Youth Theatre, Portlaise Youth Theatre (as Laois Youth Theatre), Tallaght Youth Theatre, Waterford Youth Arts (as Waterford Youth Drama) and Youthopia Youth Theatre. Boomerang Youth Theatre, Kildare Youth Theatre and Backstage Youth Theatre were founded prior to Centre Stage but were not included in the research. For a full list of the founding dates of all Centre Stage +10 youth theatres, see Figure 2.1 in Section 2.6 on ‘Sustainability’.
these youth theatres we find that:

- Two youth theatres (Lightbulb Youth Theatre and Portumna Youth Theatre) were founded as community initiatives by a combination of local individuals and organisations such as local arts groups, community development organisations and Local Authority Arts Officers;
- Two youth theatres were set up as other models by a combination of founding partners but developed into autonomous youth theatres. Independent Youth Theatre was founded by the Independent Theatre Workshop, theatre school based in Dublin, and developed into an autonomous model and Co. Sligo Youth Theatre was set up by the Local Authority Arts Office with local partners the Hawk’s Well Theatre and The Blue Raincoat Theatre Company, before developing into an autonomous youth theatre during the period of the research;
- Four youth theatres (Stage Craft Youth Theatre, Clondalkin Youth Theatre, Griese Youth Theatre and Celbridge Youth Drama) were set up by individuals from the local community. Although they may have received some support from particular organisations during the set-up phase, the individuals were the driving force behind the creation of these youth theatres. This would have been a very traditional way to found an autonomous youth theatre during the original Centre Stage research period.

**CASE STUDY: Lightbulb Youth Theatre -foundations**

Lightbulb Youth Theatre was founded as a community initiative by a combination of local individuals and organisations. A local community development organisation, Avondhu Development Group and the Local Authority Arts Officer for County Cork, in association with NAYD, held a meeting in Mallow for members of the public who were interested in youth theatre. The meeting attracted a number of people from the local arts community, including the Arts Alliance Mallow and the Pilgrim Players (amateur drama group), as well as parents who were interested in creating new activities for their children. ‘I remember at the first meeting a number of people were parents of kids who were just interested in drama and they were obviously doing other things, like stage school or formal exams and I’d say they thought this was just going to be another outlet for that. Then there were others who thought this would be great as a feeder into the adult amateur drama group. At the meeting, the NAYD representative talked about ‘youth theatre’ and then from very early on we knew that it was different and that was important I think.’ Lightbulb Youth Theatre leader

A core group of volunteers emerged from the public meeting and worked alongside key staff from the Local Authority Arts Office, Avondhu Development Group and staff from NAYD to decide how to set up the youth theatre and create a voluntary committee structure. The newly founded committee employed a youth theatre facilitator and developed a partnership with Graffiti Theatre Company that provided training and support for their new member of staff. The youth theatre ran taster workshops in the summer of 2003 to build an interest in drama and attract members for their first, full youth theatre year which started the following September. Avondhu Development Group and the Local Authority stepped back from the youth theatre once structures were in place and the committee was successfully running activities. The Local Authority continues to provide an annual grant of €6,000.

The remaining 25 youth theatres are all run by a combination of parent organisations.

Thirteen of the youth theatres were founded by Local Authority Arts Officers and include a variety of top-down and grass roots initiatives: Clare Youth Theatre, Co. Carlow Youth Theatre, Co. Limerick Youth Theatre – Abbeyfeale and Lough Gur, LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon, LYTC Carrigallen, Manorhamilton Youth Theatre, Mayo Youth Theatre – Ballina and Castlebar, Mountrath Youth Theatre, Rathdowney Youth Theatre, Roscommon County Youth Theatre, Stradbally Youth Theatre. Some Arts Officers developed youth theatres in accordance with a youth arts policy or because a gap in youth arts provision was identified. Other top-down initiatives allocated time to assess local interest in youth drama and run short-term projects before decisions were made about the establishment of a youth theatre. In other circumstances, Arts Officers were approached by youth drama facilitators or members of the public who proposed drama projects that were developed into Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres. This proved particularly common in counties with a strong amateur theatre tradition.

Though Arts Offices are the primary founding partner for most of their youth theatres, members of local communities have been involved and in some cases organisations such as local arts centres have also played a key part. In the case of Co. Wexford Youth Theatre, Bare Cheek Theatre Company approached the Local Authority Arts Office to explore the idea of setting up a youth theatre and a working partnership was established.
Professional and amateur theatre organisations, educational institutions, youth arts organisations, theatre venues and arts centres have also acted as the major founding partners in the foundation of youth theatres: Cork School of Music Youth Theatre, Dreamstuff Youth Theatre, Letterkenny Youth Theatre, Na Crosán Youth Theatre, Physically Phishy Youth Theatre, Roundabout Youth Theatre and West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre. These organisations are most likely to found youth theatres based on their own policies, core values and the close relationship between the work of a youth theatre and the principal activities of their organisation. Other than these factors, the critical component that enables these organisations to set up youth theatre is additional funding. These types of organisations generally found youth theatres by themselves and focus on building strategic partnerships with their local community and local agencies after the initial set-up phase.

2.2.2 Youth Theatre Size and Structure

There has been a large rise in the number of youth theatres with membership levels of 20 young people or less. The rise in small-sized youth theatres is a significant reflection of the difficulties that some youth theatres are experiencing in recruiting new members.

The Centre Stage +10 research categorised youth theatres as ‘small’, ‘medium’ or ‘large’ depending on their membership levels:

- Youth theatres with 20 members or less were termed ‘small’;
- Youth theatres with 21 to 50 members were termed ‘medium’;
- Youth theatres with 50 members or more were termed ‘large’.

Figure 2.2 outlines the membership size of youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage and those that participated in Centre Stage +10. Half of all ‘small’ youth theatres are run by Local Authority Arts Offices. Autonomous youth theatres account for 31.82% of all ‘small’ youth theatres. Youth theatres run by professional theatre companies are also likely to have low membership levels as two-thirds of these youth theatres had 20 members or less. These ‘smaller’ youth theatres are very evenly spread between cities, towns and rural locations. It is important to recognise that membership levels of 20 young people or less does not always signal a recruitment problem. In some cases these numbers are indicative of the working capacity of the youth theatre.

The increase in youth theatres with low membership levels has been balanced by the development of some large, multi-group youth theatres with high membership levels. This balance means that the average number of members per youth theatre has not changed significantly in the past 10 years. In the first Centre Stage, 33 youth theatres reported a membership of 1,530 young people, an average of 46 each. In Centre Stage +10, 38 youth theatres reported a membership of 1,803, an average of 47 each.

5 West Cork Arts Centre has also previously run Skibbereen Youth Theatre.
As youth theatres grow and develop, many create different working groups within their youth theatre. The key reason for the development of sub-groups has been the extension of the age range that the youth theatre serves.

Of course, youth theatres may run sub-groups for different reasons. Some youth theatres like to separate out new members for a special programme of introductory workshops and experiences, some youth theatres like to run separate groups to challenge older members and some youth theatres find they have so many interested young people that they split their usual workshop group in two rather than turn people away.

In the last 10 years, youth theatres have continued to extend beyond what was seen as the traditional youth theatre age range of 14 to 18. This trend had already been established by the first Centre Stage where 60.61% of the 33 participating youth theatres worked with young people under the age of 14 and 30.30% worked with children under the age of 12. In Centre Stage +10, 55.56% of the 45 participating youth theatres worked with young people aged under 14 and 31.11% worked with children under the age of 12.

At the other end of the age range spectrum, Centre Stage +10 youth theatres are also continuing the trend of working with young people aged 18 and over. 54.55% of Centre Stage youth theatres worked with young people aged 18 and over compared with 51.11% of Centre Stage +10 youth theatres. Youth theatres have significantly increased the number of young people they are working with from this age range. The 38 Centre Stage +10 youth theatres, that took part in Census Week, reported a combined membership of 196 young people aged 18 or over in comparison with the 71 young people reported by the 33 Centre Stage youth theatres.

During the Centre Stage +10 research period, 40% of youth theatres were running multiple groups. Large youth theatres run by youth arts organisations, arts centres or youth services are likely to run multiple groups that serve a wide age range. Medium and large autonomous youth theatres as well as a few Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres also reported work with multiple groups.

This number of multiple groups is not a new trend. In the first Centre Stage, 57.58% of the 33 youth theatres worked with multiple groups. Centre Stage youth theatres reported between two and eight sub-groups.
Figure 2.3 compares the group structures of youth theatres in Centre Stage with those that participated in Centre Stage +10.

![Figure 2.3 Comparison of group structures from Centre Stage and Centre Stage +10](image)

**Figure 2.3 Comparison of group structures from Centre Stage and Centre Stage +10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Youth Theatres</th>
<th>Centre Stage</th>
<th>Centre Stage +10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-Group</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Group</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures are based on 45 youth theatres who participated in Centre Stage +10 and 33 youth theatres who participated in Centre Stage.

- **Multiple Centres**

In the last 10 years, youth theatres have developed their structures to incorporate multiple activity centres. At the beginning of 2008, Cavan Youth Drama was an example of a large multi-centre youth theatre with activities in eight different locations around the county. The organisation was co-ordinated by an Artistic Director, a part-time employee of the Local Authority Arts Office. This role supervised the youth drama facilitators who ran activities in the eight centres and oversaw the development of the county programme.

Multi-centre youth theatres typically develop within a parent organisation such as an Arts Office, a professional theatre company or a youth arts organisation. At the beginning of 2008, Na Crosáin, a youth theatre run by a professional theatre company operated a multi-centre youth theatre in Galway city and Connemara. Waterford Youth Arts, a youth arts organisation, runs many different types of youth theatre activities in different communities around Waterford.

**CASE STUDY: Cavan Youth Drama – a multi-centre, multi-group youth theatre**

At the beginning of 2008, Cavan Youth Drama was working with 15 different groups in eight different centres around Co. Cavan:

- Mullahoran: 1 group under-12 age group
- Killeshandra: 4 groups under-12 and 12-18 age groups
- Bailieborough: 1 group 12-18 age group
- Drung: 2 groups under-12 age group
- Kingscourt: 1 group under-12 age group
- Cavan: 3 groups under-12 and 12-18 age groups
- Belturbet: 2 groups under-12 and 12-18 age groups
- Ramor: 1 group 12-18 age group

Cavan Youth Drama began in 1996 with one youth drama group based in Cavan town. The late 1990s saw the development of a new group based in Virginia (later to become the Ramor group with the opening
of the Ramor Theatre) and the Woodview group (later to become the Bailieborough group), which was established with the Cavan Partnership to serve the young people of a disadvantaged estate in Bailieborough. Peace and Reconciliation funding allowed Cavan Youth Drama to expand their programme and create further groups around the county. Taster workshops were carried out as part of 4-week projects around the county to gauge interest levels and identify potential locations for new youth drama activities. Cavan Youth Drama grew from three to 10 groups and then expanded to 14 groups over the following years. In 2008, Cavan Youth Drama was running 15 youth drama groups for children and young people around the county.

Autonomous youth theatres tend to serve the specific area in which they were created and would not typically develop a multi-centre structure. The larger, more established autonomous youth theatres have all engaged to some extent with the idea of outreach projects. Galway Youth Theatre, Dublin Youth Theatre and Co. Sligo Youth Theatre have all been involved in varying levels of outreach activity and Limerick Youth Theatre has a part-time Outreach Officer.

2.2.3 Location of Youth Theatres

In the 1980s and 1990s, youth theatres developed in cities and towns across the country and two of the oldest youth theatres (Dublin and Cabinteely) were formed in Dublin. The past 10 years have seen a more even distribution of youth theatres around the country and as a consequence increased access to youth theatre in rural areas. Figure 2.4 compares the location of youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage and Centre Stage +10. Youth theatres are categorised based on their location but it should be recognised that a youth theatre based in a town or a city may serve a county-wide remit and include members from rural areas.

Figure 2.4 Location of Youth Theatres

Two autonomous youth theatres are based in a rural setting and are community led initiatives. The remaining autonomous youth theatres are evenly spread between cities and towns and the four established, autonomous youth theatres are all in well populated areas. All youth theatres run by theatre companies, youth services, youth arts organisations, educational institutions, theatre venues and arts centres are based in towns or cities.
except for Na Croisín Youth Theatre which has a branch in Connemara. In these categories, eight are based in cities and four in towns. Youth theatres have evolved wherever the resources and expertise have existed to support them and traditionally this has meant that youth theatres clustered around the key arts and youth services in towns and cities.

The majority of rural youth theatres are run by Local Authority Arts Offices (seven rural youth theatres and one town/rural youth theatre). It should be noted that this model makes a significant contribution to the inclusion of young people from rural backgrounds and that strategic planning and support from county or regional organisations (i.e. youth and arts services) may be necessary to initiate rural youth theatres where local expertise or resources don’t exist.

Figures 2.5 and 2.6 show the locations of youth theatres from Centre Stage and Centre Stage +10. The figures highlight the current geographic spread of youth theatres, showing the decrease in urban youth theatres and the increase in rural youth theatres.

2.3 Youth Theatre Governance and Policies

Youth theatre governance and policies are explored under the following headings:

2.3.1 Governance structures
2.3.2 Youth Participation
2.3.3 Youth theatre policies

2.3.1 Governance Structures

The range of governance structures in youth theatre reflects the variety of models that currently exists. Though governance remains essentially the same as it would have been during 1997/1998, boards, committees and parent organisations face increased responsibility as employers of youth theatre leaders and facilitators, as fundraisers and in terms of welfare and child protection policy.
The 16 autonomous youth theatres follow traditional governance structures that would have been common during the first Centre Stage. Their governance structures involved paid/voluntary leaders/facilitators reporting to a voluntary board or committee structure. Leaders in youth theatres that are run on a completely voluntary basis are also likely to sit on the youth theatre board or committee. Autonomous youth theatres that employ facilitators are more likely to have a separate group of adults who are only involved in board/committee activities. The four large autonomous youth theatres have more developed, formal board and committee structures and there is likely to be little cross-over between staff who work practically with the young people and board/committee members. The smaller, autonomous youth theatres often have more informal governance structures and some would not have the appropriate constitution or legal standing to act as employers of facilitators, directors or other youth theatre staff.

Youth theatres run by Local Authority Arts Offices do not generally have board or committee structures. Usually, a facilitator or assistant facilitator reports directly to their employer, the Arts Officer or another member of Arts Office staff with responsibility for Youth Arts or Education. There are, of course, exceptions. In LYTC Carrigallen, a facilitator and an assistant facilitator are employed directly by the Arts Office but a team of local volunteers support the youth theatre and work as a youth theatre committee. In Co. Carlow, the Youth Drama Officer is line-managed by the Arts Office but is formally employed by Carlow Town Amenities Trust. The youth theatre is exploring the development of a more formal advisory committee and already has the Director of local youth work services in place as Welfare Advisor. Co. Wexford Youth Theatre is run by Bare Cheek Theatre Company in partnership with the Arts Office but the theatre company has its own voluntary board.

All other youth theatre models work within the governance and management systems of their parent organisation or the lead agency involved in the youth theatre. It’s worth noting that Backstage Youth Theatre, a youth theatre run by an amateur theatre company, operates on a completely voluntary level and leaders report to the voluntary board of the amateur theatre company.

Aside from formal governance structures, youth theatres often have an informal network of advisors who can be called on for assistance. An example of this is Mayo Youth Theatre – Ballina, where the Artistic Director of Yew Tree Theatre Company acts as an artistic advisor.

**CASE STUDY: Dublin Youth Theatre - governance structures**

Dublin Youth Theatre is one of the oldest youth theatres in the country and has a highly developed governance system. It is a self-governing, autonomous youth theatre with:

- One full-time, paid member of staff and a live-in house manager;
- A part-time artistic director who is paid a small honorarium for the role;
- A voluntary board of directors, which is elected by the company membership at Annual General Meetings. The maximum number of board members is 14 and the minimum is eight. The chair of the board acts as the manager of the full-time staff member on behalf of the board;
- A company membership consisting of people who have previously served on DYT sub-committees or on the board of directors and also people who have been co-opted into the company because of relevant skills and expertise;
- Artistic and welfare sub-committees to support staff and particular areas of work. Other sub-committees or working groups are formed when necessary, for example DYT has recently formed a fundraising committee;
- Two member representatives who sit on the board. They are elected by the membership and hold monthly forums for members.

“The forum is a leader-free zone. Members have the opportunity to speak candidly about things that are happening in the organisation and their ideas and their vision and that goes back to the board. It’s discussed at board level and then fed back to the membership by the members representatives.” - Dublin Youth Theatre Leader

**2.3.2 Youth Participation**

Young people are the heart of a youth theatre. Youth theatre members have traditionally been included in the decision-making processes of a youth theatre. It has always been part of the ethos of Irish youth theatre to value the voice of young people, to encourage young people to express their opinions and to feel ownership of their
work and their youth theatre. In general, youth participation structures within Centre Stage +10 youth theatres are quite informal. Young people can contribute to the running of their youth theatre by chatting with leaders and giving feedback on workshops, productions or general issues. These discussions would typically happen at the beginning or end of a weekly workshop or term of activities and would inform the annual programme of the youth theatre.

During the Centre Stage +10 Member Workshops, youth theatre members expressed a desire to contribute to decision-making within their youth theatre, particularly artistic decisions such as choosing a play for the next production, choosing skills workshops, or choosing facilitators and directors. Youth theatre members expressed a strong sense of ownership of their youth theatre and this drove their desire to be involved in running it. Members were keen to have their opinions heard. However, they felt unsure or reluctant about being involved in all decision making. They felt that areas such as finance, safety and child protection, as well as personal issues regarding youth theatre members, were more appropriately dealt with by youth theatre leaders. Some youth theatre members felt they did not have the skills or the knowledge to deal with these issues while other members believed that being involved in running the youth theatre might detract from their practical drama and theatre experiences.

Youth theatre members who participated in Centre Stage +10 Member Workshops were asked whether they would like to help make all the decisions in their youth theatre. They responded:

“I think we should have an opinion on everything... just to know what’s going on, not to have everything going on over your head.” – Letterkenny Youth Theatre Member

“We’re part of the youth theatre. We’re like the foundation of the youth theatre, so why shouldn’t we be able to make decisions for the youth theatre. Without us there wouldn’t be any youth theatre.”
– Roscommon County Youth Theatre Member

“It’s important to have your opinion but running the youth theatre and making decisions is a lot of responsibility. And like, you don’t know what the repercussions are going to be.”
– Co. Sligo Youth Theatre Member

“Like we couldn’t make a decision on some things because it’s not our job and it’s not what we’re here for. We’re here for the theatre and we can make decisions on what our productions are and on our workshops but some decisions aren’t ours to make.” – Roscommon County Youth Theatre Member

In the first Centre Stage, one third of the youth theatres had members’ committees and a total of 111 young people were involved in these committees. Although there has been a decline in formal youth participation structures, they still exist and are most common within the autonomous youth theatre model. In the larger autonomous youth theatres such as Dublin youth theatre and Co. Sligo Youth Theatre, member representatives still report to youth theatre staff or board. Smaller autonomous youth theatres such as Celbridge Youth Drama or Independent
Youth Theatre still have a high proportion of members involved at board level.

Formal youth participation structures are least common within the Arts Office model where the decision-making processes are generally layered between contract / freelance facilitators and Arts Office staff. One Arts Office youth theatre, Cavan Youth Drama, had piloted a formal youth participation structure during the Centre Stage +10 research year. The youth theatre created a central youth theatre forum for older members that suited its multi-centre, multi-group structure.

Youth participation is not common practice within some specific models where leaders work within a restricted annual programme, in youth theatres where the leadership style is less democratic or in youth theatres with a large contingent of younger members. In general, youth theatre leaders reported that they had experimented with a broad range of formal youth participation structures but had decided that informal discussions with youth theatre members was the most suitable method for their youth theatre.

2.3.3 Youth theatre policies

Modern youth theatres have to engage with policies in a way that would have been unfamiliar to the youth theatre sector during the first Centre Stage. The first Centre Stage discusses NAYD policies, guidelines and ideas of good practice but does not mention the policies of individual youth theatres. A policy is a programme of actions adopted by a youth theatre or the set of principles on which the youth theatre and its actions are based. It is a new language that youth theatre leaders have to engage with.

Policy development has been led primarily by external influences such as changes in child protection and vetting, the professionalisation of youth theatres and their parent organisations, the involvement of Local Authority Arts Offices, the need to communicate the ethos and value of youth theatre to funders as well as the development of NAYD’s criteria for affiliation. Youth theatres operate a range of different policies and may hold these policies in a variety of different formats such as policy documents, constitutions, aims and objectives documents, mission statements or simply as strongly held personal opinions.

All youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage +10 had formalised child protection policies. Some youth theatres had separate, written welfare policies that included broader welfare procedures (such as responses to bullying or procedures for overnight trips) as well as group rules that had been developed by members. The majority of youth theatres stated that they had a written artistic policy. Although child protection / welfare policies exist as separate documents others such as artistic policies, inclusion policies, youth participation policies, recruitment policies or non-competitive policies were often brought together in documents such as constitutions, mission statements or aims and objectives documents or were sometimes agreed informally without being written down. Many youth theatres do not have an official, written policy on inclusion, youth participation, recruitment or non-competitive approaches. Some leaders have strong opinions on these issues which inform their work within the youth theatre, while other leaders simply had not given these issues much thought.

**CASE STUDY: County Carlow Youth Theatre – policy development**

County Carlow Youth Theatre has recently updated its child protection policy within a document called: Child Protection Policies, Procedures and Practices for the protection of children and young people involved with County Carlow Youth Theatre

The policy document includes:

**Section 1: County Carlow Youth Theatre, Description and Roles**

**Section 2: Child Protection Policy Statement**

**Section 3: Policies and Procedures**

1. Code of Behaviour
   A) Child Centred Approach
   B) Good Practice
   C) Inappropriate Behaviour
   D) Physical Contact
   E) Health and Safety
Autonomous youth theatres develop policies with their board or steering committee. They often seek advice from a range of partners (including local agencies or services that they may be affiliated to) on the creation of these policies, especially child protection policies. All other models of youth theatre have parent organisations which may have policies in place already in the areas of child protection, welfare, artistic practice, health and safety or inclusion. Some youth theatres will simply adopt the policies of their parent organisation while others will adapt them or create new ones to suit their own specific purpose.

For some youth theatre leaders, policy development was a sign that youth theatre was becoming overly bureaucratic and they expressed concerns about the extra workload and the pressure they felt to put down on paper what they had been practising for years. Policy titles and language were very off-putting for some leaders who enjoyed the practical side of youth theatre work. At the other extreme, youth theatre leaders felt policies were necessary and important, not only to make procedures clear and transparent but also to ratify the rules and values of the youth theatre, so that a future generation of leaders could follow in the same spirit.

2.4 Local, National and International Relationships

Many youth theatres have strong local relationships, particularly those that grew organically from the community or those that invested in local relationships from the time of their initial set-up. Some youth theatres find the creation and maintenance of local relationships difficult because their key youth theatre leaders do not live in the local area and only visit for regular youth theatre activities. While some youth theatres overcome this challenge through the activities of local board members or parent organisations, others struggle to connect with their local community. Relationship building takes time and energy. Youth theatres mention a lack of time as the major barrier to relationship building.

Youth theatres have built up a varied range of national relationships. Some youth theatres have established connections with national arts or youth work funding organisations while others have made contact with theatre companies or venues outside their local area. The majority of youth theatres described a national network of relationships which included NAYD and other youth theatres. Youth theatre leaders described a mixture of long-term and short-term relationships with other youth theatres they met through training activities, festivals and exchanges.

A small number of youth theatres have international relationships with other organisations. Some youth theatres were still actively building international links but the majority described relationships that had been established through festivals or exchanges that had taken place many years ago. Boomerang Youth Theatre is a notable exception. Their programme and ethos centres on intercultural exchange and they are constantly building partnerships abroad.
CASE STUDY: Kildare Youth Theatre - local, national and international relationships

On a local level, Kildare Youth Theatre has built relationships with Kildare Youth Services, the Bridge Community Development Project in Newbridge, the Riverbank Arts Centre and local schools and youthreach centres through outreach work. The youth theatre has also developed a relationship with NUl Maynooth by offering placements for students and encouraging students to conduct research into the outcomes of participation in KYT. The youth theatre has good relationships with the two other youth theatres in the county, Griese Youth Theatre and Celbridge Youth Drama, as well as another youth drama group based in Prosperous. KYT organises an annual youth drama festival for all Kildare groups every summer that includes performance and workshop experiences.

On a national level, Kildare Youth Theatre listed other youth theatres, NAYD and national funders such as the Ireland Funds and the Irish Youth Foundation. KYT has also been involved in national festivals such as the Dublin Gay Theatre Festival and has been involved in running the Irish ‘Connections’ festival for many years, building strong connections with other youth theatres around the country.

KYT has developed a strong relationship with the National Theatre in England through its ‘Connections’ work and performed at the RNT Cottesloe Theatre in London in 2003. KYT aims, funding permitting, to travel once a year to a venue outside Ireland. KYT members have travelled to Florence to work with Teatro della Limoniaia as part of an ongoing exchange programme. They have also engaged with the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh, the Prague Theatre Festival, the West Lothian Youth Theatre, the Ulster Association for Youth Drama and a theatre festival in Berlin.

“Oh they [connections with other groups] definitely enrich the youth theatre. That comes across in their evaluations, about the international aspect for certain... that there’s a wider connected web of people out there and it’s not just about this town. In fact, they’re much more focused on the national and international than they are on the local.” – Kildare Youth Theatre Leader

During Census Week, 38 youth theatres logged the type and level of contact with local organisations and individuals. All youth theatres made contact with at least one type of local organisation or individual. Contact with Local Authority Arts Offices was the most common, mainly because of the number of youth theatre leaders contacting their employers. Although, one of the Arts Office contacts was a meeting between a small autonomous youth theatre and their local Arts Officer.

During Census Week, 60% of youth theatres felt their level of contact with local organisations and people was typical. 32% of youth theatres felt it was more than usual because of irregular activities such as recruitment drives or Open Days, monthly meetings, extra fundraising activities, attending performances and extra preparations for productions. 8% of youth theatres felt it was less than usual because production and administration levels were less than at other times of the year.
A few youth theatres recorded very low levels of contact with outside organisations during Census Week and seem to work on a relatively solitary basis. Figure 2.9 shows that 10 youth theatres made contact with only one type of organisation during Census Week (eight of these youth theatres reported this level of contact as typical). Half of these youth theatres had contacted their parent organisation and a further three had been in contact with another organisation because of space rental. The large autonomous youth theatres such as Galway Youth Theatre, Co. Sligo Youth Theatre and Limerick Youth Theatre reported very high levels of contact with local organisations. Kildare Youth Theatre reported the highest level of contact: it registered interaction with 14 different types of organisations and individuals during Census Week.

Figure 2.8 Local Contacts made by Youth Theatres during Census Week

Figure 2.9 Number of Contacts Made by Youth Theatres
Figure 2.10 shows the nature of youth theatres contact with external organisations and individuals. The most common reason was because the organisation was actually a ‘parent organisation’ involved in the running of the youth theatre (19%). These numbers were increased particularly by youth theatres leaders contacting the Arts Officers that employed them. The second most common reason for contact was space or venue rental (17%), one of the regular administrative tasks for youth theatre leaders.

Youth theatres that participated in the Census Week were also asked if they had made contact with NAYD (excluding issues surrounding Centre Stage +10) or another youth theatre during the week. The results for both questions are very similar with 36% of 36 youth theatres reporting that they had been in contact with NAYD and 38% of 37 youth theatres reporting that they had been in contact with another youth theatre. Seven of these youth theatres had been in touch with NAYD and another youth theatre. These youth theatres included three run by Arts Offices, two run by professional theatre companies, one autonomous youth theatre and one run by youth services. Fifteen youth theatres had not been in contact with either NAYD or another youth theatre.
What are the landmarks in the development of an Irish youth theatre?

Ten years ago Centre Stage identified three landmarks that were felt to be significant in the development of a youth theatre:

1. To survive the early stages of development, a youth theatre needs at least one adult leader who lives locally and has the necessary skills, vision and commitment. It is equally important that a youth theatre, in its early stages of development, has the encouragement and support from at least one, or a combination of, the following local resources:
   - Youth service;
   - Professional or amateur drama community;
   - Local Authority.

2. The next critical stage of a youth theatre’s development involves an increasing level of independent identity. Milestones in this process include:
   - Moving from borrowed or shared space to having one’s own address.
   - Accessing increased funding and assuming responsibility for one’s own budget;
   - Financial and accommodation independence allows the youth theatre to bridge this significant moment in its development, which is characterised by the expansion of its programme and the ability to employ professional support.

3. An established youth theatre is a focus and resource for the development of youth and community arts in its locality, in which older and former members assume leadership and artistic roles.

It appears that these landmarks were developed to suit the autonomous youth theatre model, the most common and developed model at the time Centre Stage was written. The landmarks follow the progression of a youth theatre such as Dublin Youth Theatre, one of the earliest and most established youth theatres in Ireland.

However, these landmarks don’t reflect the variety of youth theatre models that exist in Ireland today. These milestones need to be reviewed and adapted to encompass youth theatres that work within different structures such as professional and amateur theatre companies, youth services, youth arts organisations, arts centres and theatre venues. It is also important that any defined landmarks should respect and encourage the individual character and development patterns of youth theatres.

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NAYD, Centre Stage, the place of youth theatre in Ireland 1997–1998, 1998, P71
Throughout the Centre Stage +10 research project, youth theatres added their own individual landmarks to the above list. Developments in terms of structures and resources were still very significant milestones for youth theatre leaders. They mentioned events and meetings that led to the foundation of their youth theatre and the development of local, national and international relationships that were of benefit to the youth theatre.

The most common landmarks that youth theatres mentioned related to space, staff and funding. Improved access to workshop and performance space, the ability to hire and pay staff, an increase in funding and the ability to access regular funding were all major landmarks for youth theatres. The development of boards and contribution of key board members were also cited. Youth theatres that had recently found ‘homes’ for their youth theatre indicated that this was a very important development for their group.

Leaders were very clear that artistic landmarks were also very important to them and that certain creative processes and achievements were hugely significant in the development of a youth theatre.

Leaders mentioned:

- the first production of their youth theatre;
- the first devising project;
- the first productions directed by senior members;
- participation in festivals or exchanges;
- productions that celebrated anniversaries and past members such as Dublin Youth Theatre’s *This is Still Life*, Boomerang Youth Theatre’s *Searching for an Enemy* and Limerick Youth Theatre’s *Tentacle*.

Leaders were also clear that landmarks in terms of group and staff development were important:

- the recruitment of the first group of members;
- the second intake of members and being able to accept new members into the group;
- achieving a group task such as a production or participation in a festival;
- a new youth theatre leader being able to take over the running of the group;
- an increase in the number of youth theatre members or leaders;
- the development of senior members and their contribution towards the youth theatre;
- the return of ex-members who take on youth theatre leader roles.

The development of a strong identity is still central to the growth of a youth theatre. This is achieved through the artistic programme and the group dynamic as well as strategic developments such as having your own youth theatre home and permanent staff.

It should also be noted that not all landmarks are positive ones. Youth theatre leaders also mentioned the loss of key staff, a drop in funding levels, the decline of CE Schemes within arts organisations, a drop in levels of membership and loss of space as significant milestones in their history.

### 2.6 Sustainability

Irish youth theatres are growing older; their ages are increasing as the youth theatre sector matures. The age of Centre Stage +10 youth theatres ranged from a couple of months old (Portumna Youth Theatre) to 31 years (Dublin Youth Theatre). The average age of a youth theatre in Centre Stage was 6.5 years. It is now 9.6 years.

This does not mean that the overall youth theatre population is ageing, as 22.23% of the youth theatres included in Centre Stage +10 were under five years of age. As some established youth theatres continue to evolve, new youth theatres are being created each year. In 2008, eight new youth theatres became affiliated to NAYD.

Table 2.2 details the age of the youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage +10, the year in which they were founded and gives information about whether the youth theatres have been running continuously since their creation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Theatre</th>
<th>Age of Youth Theatre in 2008</th>
<th>Year of Foundation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin Youth Theatre</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinteely Youth Theatre</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford Youth Arts</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry Rain Youth Theatre</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Break from 2002 to 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway Youth Theatre</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny Youth Theatre</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Break from 2003 to 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Droichead Youth Theatre</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portlaoise Youth Theatre</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activate Youth Theatre</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallaght Youth Theatre</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomerang Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youthopia Youth Theatre</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Break for 6 months in 1999 and from 2006 to 2007</td>
</tr>
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<td>Backstage Youth Theatre</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan Youth Drama</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare Youth Theatre</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick Youth Theatre</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Sligo Youth Theatre</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork School of Music Youth Theatre</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Craft Youth Theatre</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clondalkin Youth Theatre</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Built from drama activities that had been running since the 1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamstuff Youth Theatre</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grieve Youth Theatre</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo Youth Theatre - Ballina</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo Youth Theatre - Castlebar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically Phishy Youth Theatre</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Carlow Youth Theatre</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundabout Youth Theatre</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celbridge Youth Drama</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na Crossiin Youth Theatre</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Wexford Youth Theatre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Youth Theatre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightbulb Youth Theatre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Rathdowney Youth Theatre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Letterkenny Youth Theatre</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2004</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stradbally Youth Theatre</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>LYTC Carrigallen</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Clare Youth Theatre</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Limerick Youth Theatre - Abbeyfeale</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Co. Limerick Youth Theatre was running groups in different areas during the late 1990s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Limerick Youth Theatre - Lough Gur</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mountrath Youth Theatre</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manorhamilton Youth Theatre (MYTh)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Developed from previous youth drama activities at the Glens Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portumna Youth Theatre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2007</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
Of the 45 youth theatres who participated in Centre Stage +10, 28.89% also participated in Centre Stage. Some youth theatres have evolved from the structure and name they were using 10 years ago. For instance, Waterford Youth Drama is now called Waterford Youth Arts, Cavan Youth Theatre has developed into Cavan Youth Drama and Laois Youth Theatre has evolved into four separate youth theatres that are included individually in the research.

Table 2.3 details the age of the youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage, the year in which they were founded and gives information on whether the youth theatres are still actively running youth drama activities. The youth theatres that are also involved in Centre Stage +10 are presented in bold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Theatre</th>
<th>Age of Youth Theatre in 2008</th>
<th>Year of Foundation</th>
<th>Is the Youth Theatre still running?</th>
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<td>1977</td>
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<td>Dublin Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>1977</td>
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<td>St Kevin’s Drama Workshop</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow Factory Youth Theatre</td>
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<td>Laois Youth Theatre</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Cryptic Youth Drama</td>
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</table>

The average age of youth theatres is rising as the sector develops and grows older together. Youth theatres are now beginning to reach their thirties. Figure 2.13 shows that the number of youth theatres surviving 10 years or more has increased dramatically and indicates that youth theatres are becoming more sustainable.

Youth theatres halt activities for many different reasons and the cessation of activities should not always be viewed negatively. Sometimes a simple change in local demographics can cause a youth theatre to close. Youth theatres may stop when the local population ages and demand for their activities drops.
More than half of all youth theatres (54.55%) that took part in Centre Stage are still running activities, though a few of them are now operating on a more informal or irregular basis. A variety of internal and external factors can contribute to the survival or decline of a youth theatre. As different youth theatre structures develop, however, it is interesting to look at the survival rate of youth theatres in terms of youth theatre models. Figure 2.14 shows which youth theatres from Centre Stage are still operating and categorises them according to youth theatre model.

**Figure 2.13** Comparison of Youth Theatre ages from Centre Stage +10 and Centre Stage, %

![Bar chart showing youth theatre ages from Centre Stage +10 and Centre Stage](image)

**Figure 2.14** Activity status of Youth theatres who participated in Centre Stage by Youth Theatre model

![Bar chart showing activity status of youth theatres](image)

Figures are based on 45 youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage +10 and 33 that participated in Centre Stage.
It appears that the autonomous youth theatre is the most likely to survive. Of the 18 youth theatres who continued work after Centre Stage, 55.56% were autonomous youth theatres. Eight out of the 13 youth theatres that participated in both research projects are autonomous youth theatres and are among the oldest youth theatres in the country. Waterford Youth Arts also participated in both research projects after starting life as an autonomous youth theatre and then evolving into a youth arts organisation.

However, the dominance of the autonomous youth theatre model in the 1980s and 1990s also means that more autonomous youth theatres have ceased activities since Centre Stage than any other youth theatre model. This factor suggests that the autonomous youth theatre model may not be able to survive and sustain its work above and beyond other models. Youth theatre is still a developing sector. Time and increased numbers of diverse youth theatres are needed in order for each model to demonstrate its sustainability.

CASE STUDY: Cabinteely Youth Theatre – sustainability

Cabinteely Youth Theatre is now 27 years old. It was set up in 1982 in the house of one of the voluntary leaders. A second leader joined the youth theatre in 1984 and together they moved their activities to a local school hall. Cabinteely Youth Theatre is autonomous and is run by voluntary leaders and a committee of four parents who help with insurance, finance and organising the annual festival. The youth theatre doesn’t receive any significant, regular funding. It relies mainly on membership fees, fundraising and box office receipts to keep the youth theatre going, although they have received a small grant from the Local Authority Arts Office in the past. The leaders believe strongly that funding isn’t the ‘be-all and end-all’ and find that their independence from funders and parent organisations has empowered them and created stability.

The same two voluntary leaders have been running the youth theatre continuously for 27 years and have managed to keep activities going throughout changes in their own personal lives such as pregnancy, illness or family pressures.

“It’s commitment. The bottom line is commitment. You have to keep it going because you don’t want to lose it. You can’t say, ‘Oh, I don’t feel well’ and not turn up. If your head is falling off, you’re still there. We trust each other. It doesn’t work if you’re half-hearted. You have to be totally committed to it.” – Cabinteely Youth Theatre Leader

One senior member has recently started to take on extra facilitating and directing responsibilities and is currently studying on the NAYD ArtsTrain facilitation course. The daughter of one of the voluntary leaders is also interested in assisting, so Cabinteely Youth Theatre is hopeful about its future sustainability.

CASE STUDY: Dry Rain Youth Theatre – sustainability

Dry Rain Youth Theatre is an autonomous youth theatre in Bray, Co. Wicklow. The youth theatre was set up in 1990 by local individuals with the support of youth service staff from Catholic Youth Care. The youth theatre was based in a large church hall for nine years, which included space for workshops, performances and administration. A paid staff member managed a team of five to six employees who were on a FÁS Training scheme and reported to a voluntary board.

A combination of funding, space and staff difficulties forced the youth theatre to close in 2002. The Celtic Tiger had increased local property prices and the youth theatre was asked to leave their rented home so that it could be sold and developed. At the same time its FÁS funding was cut drastically (even though they had received an award for excellent quality of service the previous year) and they lost the majority of their staff. The youth theatre was also coming to the end of their cycle of funding through CYC and they were experiencing a drop in the number of volunteers due to career and family pressures. This combination of internal and external factors meant that Dry Rain closed its doors for two years.

An ex-member of Dry Rain came up with the idea of re-starting the youth theatre as part of a Theatre Management project while studying Drama and Theatre at Trinity College. After analysing the reasons for its closure, mapping the available human, funding and space resources available in Bray and drawing up an action plan, he felt that Dry Rain should be given another chance. The youth theatre located a suitable workshop space, established a new committee and began activities again in 2004. It now runs on a completely voluntary basis without any regular funding.
During Centre Stage +10, youth theatre leaders were asked to identify factors that contributed to the sustainability of youth theatre.

Centre Stage +10 youth theatres highlighted continuity and consistency as important factors in sustainability. They mentioned:

- continuity of funding sources and levels of funding;
- consistency of youth theatre leaders, whether they are voluntary or paid;
- continuity of policy in terms of funders and parent organisations;
- consistency in terms of access to workshop, production and office space.

During Centre Stage +10 youth theatres also highlighted variety and diversity as an important factors in sustainability.

- a variety of youth theatre leaders so that the youth theatre isn’t dependent on one leader;
- a variety of artistic experiences for youth theatre members;
- diversity within the membership of the youth theatre and active, annual recruitment to refresh and develop the membership.

Youth theatre leaders and stakeholders emphasised the importance of the training and experience of the youth theatre leader and the availability of quality staff. Some staff felt that working within a larger support structure was very important while others believed that it was their independence that contributed to their sustainability.
Chapter 3: Funding and Resources
Youth theatres record extremely different levels of income and expenditure each year. The vast majority of youth theatres aspire to a larger and more secure income that would allow them to either maintain or extend their youth programme.

Youth theatre funding and resources are explored under the following headings:

3.1 Income
3.2 Expenditure
3.3 Space

3.1 Income

Youth theatres secure extremely different levels of income from a broad range of sources each year. Income levels ranged from €1,958 to €181,759 among the youth theatres that submitted financial information to the Centre Stage research project. These differing levels of income should not influence how the quality of the youth theatres’ work is perceived. Youth theatres aspire to different levels of income depending on the nature of their activities, their structure, aims and ethos.

Leaders made it clear during interviews that the vast majority of youth theatres aspire to higher levels of income. For some, an increase in funding would allow them to develop and extend their existing work, for others an increase would support and enrich basic day-to-day activities and for a few youth theatres an increase in income would prevent an impending decrease in activity levels and closure.

Participating youth theatres were asked to share basic income and expenditure details from 2007. This year was chosen to provide youth theatres with enough time to audit their accounts. Some of the youth theatres that provided information on their income during 2007 receive a considerable amount of in-kind support from their parent or other partner organisations. This in-kind support may involve the wages of core youth theatre leaders, space hire or administrative support. Youth theatres were unable to estimate the value of this in-kind support and did not note it as part of their income details.

Youth theatre income is explored under the following headings:

3.1.1 Funders
3.1.2 Membership Fees
3.1.3 Box Office
3.1.4 Other Income
3.1.5 Funding Priorities
3.1.6 Funding Challenges

3.1.1 Funders

Youth theatres access a broad range of funding schemes and organisations. However, youth theatres were accessing a similar range of funding bodies 10 years ago during Centre Stage.

The Arts Council

The Arts Council currently funds three youth theatres directly – Waterford Youth Drama, Galway Youth Theatre and Dublin Youth Theatre. This is not based on an Arts Council policy but rather on an historic precedent. The three youth theatres received a combined total of €190,000 from the Arts Council in 2007.

However, many youth theatres are funded indirectly by the Arts Council through Local Authority Arts Offices. In 2007, the Arts Council gave €137,160 directly to Local Authorities for 16 youth theatres: Clare Youth Theatre, Co. Carlow Youth Theatre, Co. Sligo Youth Theatre, Co. Wexford Youth Theatre, LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon, LYTC Carrigallen, Manorhamilton Youth Theatre (MYTH), Mayo Youth Theatre – Ballina, Mayo Youth Theatre – Castlebar, Mountrath Youth Theatre, Portlaoise Youth Theatre, Rathdowney Youth Theatre, Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre, Stradbally Youth Theatre as well as two youth theatres that are not included in this research, Westmeath Youth Theatre and Mountmellick Youth Theatre in Laois.¹

Also in 2007, the Arts Council gave €218,180 to Cavan County Council, Cork County Council, Galway County

¹ Mountmellick Youth Theatre in Laois ceased activities in 2008.
Council, Limerick County Council, Longford County Council and North Tipperary County Council as unspecified amounts for seven youth theatres: Backstage Youth Theatre, Cavan Youth Drama, Co. Limerick Youth Theatre – Abbeyfeale and Lough Gur, Galway Youth Theatre, Lightbulb Youth Theatre and North Tipperary Youth Theatre (not included in the research). Fingal County Council, Louth County Council, South Dublin County Council and Wicklow County Council all received unspecified amounts towards youth drama in their area, with South Dublin County Council receiving funds for youth theatre training, Kildare County Council receiving funds for a youth theatre festival and South Tipperary County Council receiving Percent for Arts funding which was directed towards a number of community groups, including youth theatre.

There are also a number of youth theatres who receive Arts Council support through the direct funding of their parent organisation. Activate and Physically Phishy Youth Theatres receive funds through Graffiti Theatre Company, Kilkenny Youth Theatre receive funds through Barnstorm Theatre Company, Dreamstuff Youth Theatre receive funds through Young Irish Film Makers and WCAC Youth Theatre receive funds through the West Cork Arts Centre.

Na Crosain Youth Theatre receives funding from Ealaín na Gaeltachta for their work in Connemara through their parent organisation, An Taibhdhearc.

Arts Council support of youth theatres has increased significantly over the past 10 years. However, no funding strand exists within the Arts Council for youth theatres to receive money that supports their day-to-day activities and sustained development if the youth theatre:

- is not run directly from a Local Authority Arts Office or in receipt of an annual grant from a Local Authority Arts Office;
- is not run directly by a parent organisation that can apply for regular annual funding from the Arts Council;
- is not one of the three existing youth theatres that receive regular funding from the Arts Council.

The new Youth Ensemble Scheme introduced in 2008 funds specific projects rather than annual running costs. Some youth theatres have received monies through the Artist in Youth Work scheme, another project-specific scheme which is part-funded by the Arts Council and administered on their behalf by the National Youth Council of Ireland.

- **Local Authority Arts Offices**
  Local Authority Arts Offices are major funders of youth theatre in Ireland at a county level. Arts Offices channel considerable amounts of Arts Council money towards their youth theatre initiatives, but Local Authorities also contribute significant amounts of money towards youth theatres from their own funding.

Some Local Authority Arts Offices give grants to youth theatres in their area. For example, Lightbulb Youth Theatre receives an annual grant of €6,000 from Cork County Council and Backstage Youth Theatre received a once-off grant of €500 from Longford County Council. Waterford Youth Arts and large autonomous youth theatres such as Dublin Youth Theatre and Galway Youth Theatre also receive regular funding from their City Councils. Youth theatres are welcome to apply for Local Authority Arts Office funding through the appropriate funding scheme.

Local Authority Arts Office support of youth theatres has increased significantly over the past 10 years. However, the majority of Arts Offices funding is directed towards their own youth theatre initiatives. Arts Offices do not have a track record of funding autonomous youth theatres or youth theatres with a different parent organisation where they have their own youth theatre initiative.

- **Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs**
  The Youth Affairs Section of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs funds a few youth theatres through the Special Funding for Youth (SPY) Scheme. This scheme is targeted at disadvantaged youth and is channelled through the Vocational Education Committees (VECs). Galway Youth Theatre, Limerick Youth Theatre and Waterford Youth Arts all receive funding through this scheme. Outside of this fund, Youth Affairs only fund national youth work organisations.

- **Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and Local Youth Services**
  Youth theatres access youth work funding at a local level through the Vocational Education Committees (VECs). VECs operate the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme, which provides grants for local voluntary youth groups. Youth theatres have acknowledged VEC grants ranging from €200 to €1000.  

\* At the time the Centre Stage +10 research was carried out the Youth Affairs Section was housed within the Department of Education and Science.\*
A few youth theatres, such as Celbridge Youth Drama and Clondalkin Youth Theatre, are affiliated to their local youth service and receive financial support through occasional small grants or discount insurance rates. Local Youth Services contribute higher levels of funding to youth theatres that they run directly themselves. For example, Roundabout Youth Theatre is funded through Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR).

- **National Youth Council of Ireland**
  The National Youth Council is not a funding organisation but it does administer the Artist in Youth Work Scheme and the Youth Arts Development fund on behalf of the Arts Council and the Youth Affairs Section of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Some youth theatres have received funding through these schemes in recent years. These schemes fund specific development or artistic projects and do not provide mainstream funding.

- **European Funding**
  Many youth theatres fund European exchanges and activities as well as national events and programmes through Léargas. In 2007, Tallaght Youth Theatre and Kildare Youth Theatre received a total of €18,254 for youth initiative projects and exchanges. In 2008, Waterford Youth Arts, Kildare Youth Theatre and Griese Youth Theatre received a total of €25,462 for youth initiative projects and exchanges.

  Youth theatres have also benefited from previous rounds of Peace and Reconciliation funding. Cavan Youth Drama and Boomerang Youth Theatre acknowledged Peace and Reconciliation funding that they had received in the past.

- **Development Agencies**
  Youth theatres have been successful at accessing resources from a number of local development agencies and programmes such as RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development), LEADER+, the Local Drugs Taskforce, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund as well as Garda Diversion Project Funding. These youth theatres tend to be located in areas specifically identified as disadvantaged.

- **Foundations and Charities**
  Youth theatres have received once-off project funding from a variety of foundations and charities such as the AIB Better Ireland Awards, Irish Youth Foundation, The Ireland Funds and programmes like the Dublin Bus Community Support Programme.

  Two youth theatres had also received funding from local Youth Banks. Youth Banks were founded by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, the Community Foundation for Ireland and the Irish Youth Foundation and are run through a network of grant-making committees run by young people.

**CASE STUDY: Waterford Youth Arts – funding**
Waterford Youth Arts has successfully built up a combination of different funders over the past 25 years, balancing a mix of local and national funding as well as arts and youth work funding. They have also received funding from foundations such as The Ireland Funds and are one of the few youth theatres in the country to secure corporate funding. Their major funders include:
- The Arts Council
- City of Waterford VEC Waterford Youth Committee
- Waterford City Council
- Waterford County Council
- FÁS
- The Ireland Funds
- Bausch & Lomb Ireland, Ltd.

**CASE STUDY: Backstage Youth Theatre – funding**
Backstage Youth Theatre is run by voluntary leaders from an amateur theatre company. Just over a third of their income is sourced from grants that are available at a local level and support from some of NAYD’s schemes such as ‘Go See YT’. The youth theatre has received a small grant from the Youth Bank in Longford and has also received a once-off grant of €500 from the Local Authority Arts Office.
3.1.2 Membership Fees

The vast majority of youth theatres charge a membership fee. Some youth theatres do this out of necessity in order to supplement existing funding or, in some cases, provide the only reliable funding stream for the youth theatre. Other youth theatres believe that asking young people to pay a small fee encourages them to place value on their participation and take their commitment to the group more seriously. The Ballina and Castlebar branches of Mayo Youth Theatre ask members to contribute to the youth theatres ‘savings’ instead of charging a membership fee as it is Local Authority policy not to charge for its arts services. Youth theatre members pay €2 per workshop towards savings that are used to organise theatre trips or events during the year.

All youth theatres that charge a membership fee will waive that fee if they feel a young person is unable to pay. Leaders believe strongly that youth theatres should be accessible to all young people and that a youth theatre’s ability to remove financial barriers distinguishes it from other more commercial drama opportunities that are available to young people in Ireland.

Youth theatres approach this sensitive issue in different ways. At the beginning of a new youth theatre year or after a recruitment drive, leaders will talk to the group about membership fees and ask the young people to have a chat if they feel the fee might be a problem. Generally, youth theatre leaders need to rely on their own knowledge of the group to judge when to ask a young person if they want to discuss the fee or when to simply stop mentioning it. Youth theatre leaders are concerned about dealing with this issue in a discreet manner and without the knowledge of the rest of the group. Youth theatres can be flexible about how they accommodate these young people, taking into account the young person’s situation and wishes. They can excuse the young person from paying the fee, offer a term / week-to-week fee or offer ‘scholarships’ to young people who are unable to afford the fee. One or two youth theatres who work with older members ask young people if they would like to do some work experience instead.

Roundabout Youth Theatre in Ballymun is the only youth theatre included in the research that does not charge a membership fee. It is run by a local youth service, Ballymun Regional Youth Service (BRYR), which has a policy of not charging young people to participate in any of its projects and believes in providing open access to quality arts experiences within disadvantaged areas. Core funding and support from the youth service enables the youth theatre to offer activities for free.

Traditionally, youth theatres charged membership fees on a workshop basis. Most youth theatres have now moved to a term or yearly fee. Leaders find this easier to administrate, reporting that they don’t lose time collecting money during each workshop and some feel the term fee is better value for young people because of the amount of activities that are arranged per term. Leaders stated that young people are used to paying on a term/yearly basis for different activities and that the parents of younger youth theatre members are more accustomed to this payment structure.

Of the 45 youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage +10, 37 provided details of their membership fees:

- 51.35% of youth theatres charge a fee per term;
- 29.73% of youth theatres charge an annual fee;
- 8.11% of youth theatres charge a weekly workshop fee;
- 10.81% of youth theatres charge a yearly fee and a workshop fee.
Youth theatres charge a wide range of membership fees and seem to differ on an accessible and acceptable membership fee for young people. The average membership fee was €122 per year. The scale of membership fees cannot simply be explained according to youth theatre models or existing levels of funding within the youth theatres. Factors can be identified that can contribute to high or low fees:

- **High Fees**
  - A lack of an annual funding source or grants creates a reliance on membership fees as a main source of income. This happens particularly in autonomous youth theatres but can happen within any youth theatre with low levels of annual funding;
  - Youth theatres that offer a wider programme of activities and a longer youth theatre year may have higher annual running costs and youth theatre members may participate in higher levels of activity that reflect the higher fee;
  - A production-focused youth theatre will have higher annual running costs and this may contribute to a higher level of membership fee.

- **Low Fees**
  - A secure source and better levels of annual funding make it easier for youth theatres to offer low fees. It also makes it possible to have the principle of free membership;
  - High levels of voluntary leadership matched with high levels of free or heavily subsidised workshop and...
theatre space make it possible for some youth theatres to offer lower membership fees;
- High levels of support from a parent organisation through staff, space, utilities and administration support make it possible for some youth theatres to offer lower membership fees;
- Youth theatres offering a simpler programme of activities (involving lower levels of production activity and a shorter youth theatre year) may be able to offer lower membership fees.

3.1.3 Box Office

Production costs form a considerable area of expenditure for many youth theatres and box office receipts offer youth theatres the possibility to cover some of their costs or, in some cases, make a profit that can be fed back into core youth theatre activities.

The price of tickets for youth theatre productions has increased since Centre Stage. This increase is in line with inflation and general increases in ticket prices. It also occurs because some youth theatres are performing in higher status venues within their area and placing greater commercial value on their own work.

Most youth theatres now offer pricing structures similar to professional theatre with full price and concession tickets. Full price tickets can range from €8 to €20, while concession rates can range from €5 to €15. Ticket price is not necessarily an indicator of the quality of the production or of the amount of work leaders and members have put into the production.

Factors that can influence the price of a ticket are:
- The cost of theatre or venue hire;
- Other production costs including directors, designers, etc;
- The profile of the youth theatre;
- The aspirations of the youth theatre.

Box office receipts can be a significant source of income for a youth theatre. Youth theatre productions can attract large audiences because of the ready-made audience created by the extended families and friends of members and leaders.

Youth theatres can earn significant money from box office receipts when they are performing in venues that have been donated, are owned by their parent organisation or where they pay low rent. Youth theatre leaders report that this form of income can be helpful because it does not involve the extra bureaucratic work involved in application and evaluation forms for funders.

However, a large number of youth theatre leaders report that income from box office receipts is drastically depleted by the cost of venue hire for productions. Ten youth theatres gave details of their box office income as part of their overall statement of income during 2007. Theses details are provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Comparison of Box Office Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Theatre</th>
<th>Income from Box Office Receipts 2007</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clare Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€3,614.14</td>
<td>21.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Sligo Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€3,420.45</td>
<td>6.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activate Youth Theatre &amp; Physically Phishy Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€2,950.00</td>
<td>44.70%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€2,881.00</td>
<td>2.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSM Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€2,800.00</td>
<td>87.90%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€1,300.00</td>
<td>18.31%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Limerick Youth Theatre - Abbeyfeale &amp; Lough Gur</td>
<td>€1,219.00</td>
<td>20.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backstage Youth Theatre Group</td>
<td>€883.00</td>
<td>28.46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The income figures of these youth theatres do not reflect the support of their parent organisations in terms of core Youth Theatre leaders wages, space hire or administration support.
Some youth theatres use a history of healthy box office receipts to negotiate profit-share arrangements with venues. The Civic Theatre and Tallaght Youth Theatre have negotiated profit-share arrangements in the past and Kildare Youth Theatre has contributed box office income from productions to the Riverbank Arts Centre as part of its residency agreement.

3.1.4 Other Income

Some youth theatres are very active fundraisers. Fundraising has always played a part in the activities of youth theatres, primarily because youth theatres had no other means of raising money to run their activities. Fundraising can be attractive to youth theatre leaders who are keen to involve young people in the running of the youth theatre and encourage them to work actively for the projects they want to take part in. Fundraising can also be a practical way to augment youth theatre finances at certain times of the year, to cover unforeseen expenses or to fund an unexpected opportunity to participate in a project, event or trip. Youth theatre leaders and members are the decision makers when it comes to fundraising.

- Celbridge Youth Drama runs an annual table quiz;
- Cork School of Music Youth Theatre generally supplement their annual production costs with a bag-pack in their local supermarket;
- Activate Youth Theatre in Cork hold what youth theatre members call ‘The Long Stand’ where members take the place of mannequins in shop windows around Cork City and collect money from the general public for their youth theatre;
- Griese Youth Theatre have held a tractor rally, table quizzes and a garden party to raise funds in the past.

CASE STUDY: Lightbulb Youth Theatre – fundraising

Lightbulb Youth Theatre (an autonomous youth theatre) raised €5,024.89 through fundraising during 2007. During Census Week, the volunteer board members and youth theatre members were fundraising busily in a number of different ways.

Half of their activities (four out of eight) during Census Week were related to fundraising. Nineteen young people and six voluntary board members were involved in eight hours of bag-packing in their local supermarket, raising €700. Three of the voluntary board members spent two and a half hours the following day counting all the coins. Three of the voluntary board members then met for 45 minutes at one of their homes to plan the next fundraising task, a Poker Classic in a local pub. The event was a huge success for the youth theatre and raised €1,300. Three of the voluntary board members ran the event over five and a half hours. Youth theatre members and leaders raised €2,000 during one week to contribute to the production costs of their next performance.

Fundraising is not an option for all youth theatres. Youth theatres run by Local Authority Arts Offices report that they are not in a position to fundraise because their activities form part of a public arts service provided by the Local Authority. It is easier for autonomous youth theatres and those whose parent organisations have charitable status to fundraise.

A few youth theatres in Ireland produce their own t-shirts, hoodies or dvds of performances that are then sold to members. Leaders comment that this generally develops at the request of the youth theatre members and is linked to the development of a group identity within the youth theatre. Though youth theatres list these items of youth theatre merchandise as income, it appears that they do not make a profit on them. During 2007, Backstage Youth Theatre spent €1,379 creating Backstage Youth Theatre hoodies and received €510 from sales, while Lightbulb Youth Theatre spent €915.80 on hoodies for their youth theatre members and received €660 from sales.
### 3.1.5 Funding Priorities

The funding priorities that youth theatre leaders proposed focused on key resources which they believed would improve the day-to-day running of the youth theatre and allow scope for the artistic development of their work. Funding priorities centred on permanent youth theatre staff, improved space for the youth theatre to work in and the annual programme. Youth theatre members and stakeholders echoed the priorities of the leaders when they identified the top 10 resources that every youth theatre should have during Centre Stage +10 interviews and Member Workshops.

Table 3.2 Top 10 Youth Theatre Resources as chosen by Youth Theatre Members and Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Theatre Members</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 10 Youth Theatre Resources</td>
<td>Top 10 Theatre Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 A group of committed members</td>
<td>1 A group of committed members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Money for productions</td>
<td>2 A skilled paid leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 A skilled paid leader</td>
<td>3 Money for productions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 A skilled voluntary leader</td>
<td>4 A rented workshop space that you share with other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 A workshop space that your Youth Theatre owns</td>
<td>5 Guest workshop facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 A store of props and objects for rehearsals / devising</td>
<td>6 An office with a computer and telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Lighting and sound equipment</td>
<td>7 A group of helpful voluntary adults / parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Guest workshop facilitators</td>
<td>8 Guest directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 A rented theatre space that you can book</td>
<td>9 A rented theatre space that you can book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 A rented workshop space that is exclusively yours</td>
<td>10 Money for exchanges &amp; festivals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 142 Youth theatre members completed this task during Centre Stage +10 Member Workshops and 25 stakeholders completed this task as part of their stakeholder interview.

The key funding priorities of youth theatre leaders were:

- **Permanent Staff**
  Many youth theatre leaders were keen to access funding that would allow them to have permanent part-time or full-time positions both for administrative and artistic roles. Some youth theatre leaders wanted to find funding to allow some key staff to move from token payments to proper part-time wages.

- **Space**
  Youth theatre leaders were keen to access funding that would enable them to pay for the rental of their regular workshop space as well venue/theatre hire once or twice a year for productions. Some youth theatres identified a need for additional resources to improve spaces (office space as well as workshop space) that they were already occupying.

- **Annual Programme**
  Youth theatre leaders wanted funding to allow them to maintain their regular programme of workshops and rehearsals and allow them the scope to plan for a new project or event during the year.

Some youth theatres with consistent levels of annual funding prioritised project and production funding. A few youth theatre leaders said they had no funding priorities at all and were happy with their level of income. These leaders were generally employed as facilitators in Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres and did not have any responsibility for financial management or fundraising.

### 3.1.6 Funding Challenges

Though funding levels have increased over the last ten years, the vast majority of youth theatres are still struggling to find the resources that will allow them to develop their work and in some cases simply sustain basic levels of activity. During Centre Stage +10 interviews, youth theatre leaders and stakeholders were asked what they believed were the key funding challenges for the youth theatre sector. Their responses are summarised below:

- **No funding ladder**
  Youth theatre leaders reported that it is very difficult to move from being a youth theatre that receives occasional grants to an annually funded one. They commented that there is no funding ladder that allows them to move
upwards to higher levels of income once they have proven they can deliver high quality youth theatre work. Only one of the autonomous youth theatres founded since the last Centre Stage has secured annual funding.

- **A lack of Annual Funding**
  A large percentage of the funding opportunities available to youth theatres are project specific and funders show a definite preference for project funding. Youth theatres find project funding enormously helpful for once-off projects, productions and events and it helps them fund outside facilitators, directors, writers, etc., to work with their members. However, this preference for project-specific funding means that youth theatres that cannot access annual funding may struggle to fund the heart of the youth theatre programme: members and leaders working together as an ensemble through an ongoing series of activities.

- **Criteria of Grants Dictating Programming**
  Youth theatres often find that they need to adapt their programme to suit the criteria of available grants. Project-specific funding, as well as some annual funding, can dictate the content, process or outcomes of youth theatre work. This can be especially difficult for youth theatres that are not in receipt of annual funding and may not have many project-specific funding options available to them. A few youth theatre leaders also noted that a significant percentage of project-specific funding was not accessible to them because funds were often targeted at designated areas of disadvantage.

- **Levels of Funding Restricting the Ability to Plan Ahead**
  There is a significant relationship between annual funding and the development of an annual programme. Youth theatres that are not in receipt of annual funding find it difficult to plan ahead because of insecurities over levels of income they might be able to generate during the year. It can be a struggle for these youth theatres to create an annual plan, although potential funders still expect high standards of strategic planning from these groups. Youth theatres in receipt of annual funding are required to plan in advance for funders without knowing the young people who will be taking part. Leaders note that the annual plans they deliver to funders need to be flexible to enable the youth theatre leader to adapt projects / activities to suit the needs of their group.

- **Replacing Large Funders**
  Medium to large sized youth theatres who come to the end of an annual funding agreement find it impossible to replace the shortfall in their income. Cavan Youth Drama was unable to replace Peace and Reconciliation funding with another type of annual funding and was forced to re-structure its activities. This may prove significant over the coming years for any other Local Authority Arts Office that seeks funding partners to help them support the youth theatres that they founded.

- **Lack of Transparency**
  Many youth theatre leaders felt confused as to why some youth theatres were in receipt of certain funding when they were unable to access it or had been turned down. Many youth theatres reported a general lack of transparency and cited in particular the Arts Council’s decision to give annual funding directly to three youth theatres but not to any others.

- **Frustration and Workload Associated with Fundraising**
  Youth theatre leaders reported frustration at the amount of time they spend applying for funding which they believe they are unlikely to receive due to competition for funding schemes. In relation to small grants of €200 to €500, leaders believed that levels of administration and evaluation were too high and not in proportion to the size of the grant. Stakeholders indicated some difficulties communicating the aims, ethos and activities of youth theatre to funders.

Youth theatre leaders spoke positively about some funding opportunities. For example, some leaders spoke of the ease with which they could access funding for exchanges through Léargas.

### 3.2 Expenditure

Youth theatres record diverse levels of expenditure each year, in accordance with the wide variety of income levels. The level of expenditure varies according to the model of youth theatre and the level of in-kind support it receives from parent or partner organisations. Other factors include the size of the youth theatre, the breadth of its workshop and production programme, staffing levels and related fees as well as how and where the youth theatre is housed. Twenty-six youth theatres provided expenditure details for 2007. Of these youth theatres, one had an annual expenditure of €182,150 and three youth theatres had an annual expenditure of between €46,000 and

---

Youth theatres include: Activate Youth Theatre; Backstage Youth Theatre; Celbridge Youth Drama; Clare Youth Theatre; Co. Carlow Youth Theatre; Co. Limerick Youth Theatre - Abbeyfeale and Lough Gur; Co.Sligo Youth Theatre; CSM Youth Theatre; Galway Youth Theatre; Kildare Youth Theatre; Kilkenny Youth Theatre; LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon; LYTC Carrigallen; Loughbulb Youth Theatre; Limerick Youth Theatre; Manorhamilton Youth Theatre (MYTh); Mayo Youth Theatre Ballina and Castlebar; Mountrath Youth Theatre; Physically Phishy Youth Theatre; Portlaoise Youth Theatre; Rathdowney Youth Theatre; Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre; Stradbally Youth Theatre; Tallaght Youth Theatre.
€83,000. Seven youth theatres had an annual expenditure of less than €6,000.

These details are collated in Table 3.3 and can be used as an indicator of the main areas of expenditure in youth theatre. It is important to remember that these figures illustrate key expenditure areas but are not a true representation of the amount of money it takes to run 26 youth theatres. Table 3.3 does not include estimates for the significant amount of in-kind support that youth theatres may receive through voluntary activity, donated venue and workshop space and support of a parent organisation through staff, space and administration.

Table 3.3 Main areas of Youth Theatre expenditure (2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of expenditure</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YT leaders fees</td>
<td>€213,200.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production expenses</td>
<td>€143,289.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre trips / Events / Festivals / Travel</td>
<td>€50,066.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freelance facilitator / director fees</td>
<td>€35,675.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special projects</td>
<td>€23,709.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent for weekly workshop space</td>
<td>€22,361.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training / Development</td>
<td>€20,080.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>€20,075.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities / Administration Costs / Canteen</td>
<td>€15,543.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity / Print / Design / Dvds / Stationary and postage</td>
<td>€13,200.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials / Equipment</td>
<td>€6,003.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>€3,582.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-shirts / Hoodies</td>
<td>€2,782.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit/ Accountancy fees</td>
<td>€2,075.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>€571,644.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A more detailed examination of youth theatre expenditure according to youth theatre model and situation can be made using expenditure records for the Census Week. Figure 3.2 provides an overview of the expenditure totals of 38 youth theatres during Census Week.

Figure 3.2 Level of Expenditure During Census Week

Figures are based on 38 youth theatres who completed Census Week questionnaires as part of Centre Stage ++.
Three youth theatres spent no money running their youth theatre activities during Census Week: Tallaght Youth Theatre, Cork School of Music Youth Theatre, Backstage Youth Theatre. This level of spending is only possible when youth theatres have low levels of activity and a combination of volunteer staff / donated space or paid staff / staff provided by a parent organisation. Tallaght Youth Theatre ran one workshop for members with a voluntary leader in a donated space. Cork School of Music Youth Theatre also ran one workshop for members with a leader whose wages were paid as part of their role within the parent organisation, in a space owned by the parent organisation. Backstage Youth Theatre ran one activity for members with voluntary leaders in a donated space.

- **€0 – €51**
Four youth theatres spent up to €50 running their youth theatre activities during Census Week: Physically Phishy Youth Theatre, Activate Youth Theatre, Clondalkin Youth Theatre and Youthopia Youth Theatre. All of these youth theatres ran one main activity with a group of young people. In Activate and Physically Phishy Youth Theatres, money was spent on an outside facilitator and transport. €50 was spent by Clondalkin Youth Theatre on the regular youth theatre leader and €20 was spent by Youthopia Youth Theatre on rent for the weekly workshop space. Again, all these youth theatres combine at least one of the following elements: donated workshop space, free space at a parent organisation, voluntary leaders, staff paid for by a parent organisation.

- **Over €1000**
Eight youth theatres spent over €1000 running their activities during Census Week: Cavan Youth Drama, Dreamstuff Youth Theatre, Galway Youth Theatre, Kildare Youth Theatre, Leitrim Youth Theatre: Carrick-on-Shannon, Limerick Youth Theatre, Stagecraft Youth Theatre and Waterford Youth Arts. Six of these youth theatres have a large membership and involve multiple groups. Carrick-on-Shannon Youth Theatre (a smaller sized youth theatre) and Kildare Youth Theatre were involved in productions during Census Week.

Table 3.4  Detailed Expenditure from Census Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Theatre</th>
<th>Total Expenditure during Census Week</th>
<th>Was the level of spending typical?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kildare Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€6,330.00</td>
<td>More than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford Youth Arts</td>
<td>€3,635.90</td>
<td>Less than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Cavan Youth Drama</td>
<td>€1,697.50</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€1,650.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stagecraft Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€1,285.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€1,130.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamstuff Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€1,111.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>€1,100.00</td>
<td>More than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co LYT – Lough Gur</td>
<td>€700.00</td>
<td>More than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundabout Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€800.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girose Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€610.00</td>
<td>Less than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€550.00</td>
<td>More than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlow Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€540.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Sligo Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€310.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na Crossin Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€440.00</td>
<td>More than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYT Ballina Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€380.00</td>
<td>More than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightbulb Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€375.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LYTC Manorhamilton</td>
<td>€350.00</td>
<td>More than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€350.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry Rain Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€345.00</td>
<td>More than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celbridge Youth Drama</td>
<td>€340.00</td>
<td>More than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCAC Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€254.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portumna Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€220.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co LYT Abbeyfeale</td>
<td>€170.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€156.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portlaoise Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€101 - €200</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountrath Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€101 - €200</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rathdowney Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€101 - €200</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steadbally Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€101 - €200</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Droichead Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€100.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clondalkin Youth Theatre</td>
<td>€50.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Spending (€)</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically Phishy Youth Theatre</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activate Youth Theatre</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youthopia Youth Theatre</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSM Youth Theatre</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Less than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backstage Youth Theatre</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallaght Youth Theatre</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 65.71% of youth theatres felt this level of spending was typical;
- 25.71% of youth theatres felt this level of spending was more than usual (generally because the youth theatre was building up to a performance, was in production week, had scheduled an activity that didn’t usually take place, or was working in a different space than usual);
- 8.57% of youth theatres felt this level of spending was less than usual (generally because they were having a quiet week and believed that if they were involved in productions or events, their costs would increase accordingly).

### 3.3 Space

Youth theatres run activities in a wide variety of spaces including arts centres, community centres and halls, theatres, youth centres, youth arts centres and schools. More youth theatres than ever before say they are working in spaces which they can describe as their youth theatre ‘home.’ However, there are still a significant number of youth theatres that are run from the car boot and home of the youth theatre leader and that locate their youth theatre activities in whatever local space they can afford to rent in any particular year.

#### YOUTH THEATRES WITH ‘HOMES’

The number of youth theatres with stable homes that incorporate a combination of office space and workshop space and in some cases, performance space has increased since Centre Stage. This is largely because of the increase in youth theatres run by parent organisations and the partnerships and contracts negotiated by large autonomous youth theatres. This stability is brought about through ownership, long-term leases and partnerships, residencies or inclusion in an established parent organisation.

The four large autonomous youth theatres (Dublin Youth Theatre, Galway Youth Theatre, Limerick Youth Theatre and Co. Sligo Youth Theatre) all have their own homes:

- Dublin Youth Theatre is still the only youth theatre in the country which owns its premises, however, they regularly rent spaces for workshop and rehearsals due to space restrictions in their own building;
- Galway Youth Theatre is resident at the Galway Arts Centre and Limerick Youth Theatre is resident at the Belltable Arts Centre. Both youth theatres have office space in these centres but would balance this residency with the rent of workshop space and performance space;
- Co. Sligo Youth Theatre has its own premises called The Factory on a long-term lease. It includes office and workshop space and was developed in partnership with Blue Raincoat Theatre Company.

Youth theatres which are run directly from a parent organisation (such as theatre companies, youth arts organisations, youth services, educational institutions, arts centres and theatre venues) are likely to have easy access to office space, workshop space and possibly performance space:

- Letterkenny Youth Theatre is based at An Grianán Theatre and has access to office space and performance space but rents its weekly workshop space;
- Roundabout Youth Theatre is based at The Reco (The Central Youth Facility in Ballymun) and has access to office space, workshop space that can be used as performance space, a canteen and other arts resource rooms;
- Cork School of Music Youth Theatre is based at the Cork School of Music and has access to office space, workshop space and performance space that is located in the same building;
- WCAC Youth Theatre is based at the West Cork Arts Centre and has access to office and workshop space but rents performance venues in the local area for productions;
- Dreamstuff Youth Theatre has a similar combination of space available to them at their Young Irish Filmmakers base which is on a long term lease;
- Waterford Youth Arts took hold of the anchor tenancy of their home at The Arch during 2005, their 21st anniversary year. The building provides the youth theatre with office space as well as a workshop/studio space.
Youth theatres run by professional theatre companies have access to a similar range of spaces but this depends hugely on the level of funding that the theatre company itself receives:

- Activate Youth Theatre and Physically Phishy Youth Theatre have access to Graffiti Theatre Company’s office space as well as a workshop and a separate performance space;
- Kilkenny Youth Theatre has access to Barnstorm Theatre Company’s office and workshop space but may rent performance space;
- Boomerang Youth Theatre has access to office space at the Triskel Arts Centre through Boomerang Theatre Productions’ residency but rent weekly workshop space and performance space;
- Na Crosáin Youth Theatre has access to workshop space and performance space at its parent organisation, An Taibhdhearc, (although the Connemara group rent their spaces).
- At the beginning of 2008, Kildare Youth Theatre had access to office space, workshop space and performance space at the Riverbank Arts Centre due to the residency of its parent company, Crooked House Theatre Company.

**SMALLER AUTONOMOUS YOUTH THEATRES**

Seven of the 12 autonomous youth theatres do not have stable homes and use a combination of rented or donated workshop and performance spaces, with the homes of youth theatre leaders being used for administrative work. In situations where space is donated, youth theatres still book workshop space on a week-by-week basis and don’t generally hold long-term residency agreements. Griese Youth Theatre has a more long-term arrangement with the Town Hall in Ballitore where it runs most of its activities.

These youth theatres are particularly vulnerable to competition for workshop spaces from other arts activities in their area. This competition can sometimes out-price youth theatres from their local spaces as other profit-making arts activities can afford higher prices. Leaders from these youth theatres still complete a large amount of administration and planning in their own homes, whether they are voluntary leaders, paid facilitators or board members.

**LOCAL AUTHORITY YOUTH THEATRES**

The youth theatres run by local authority Arts Offices have different levels of access to the three main types of space needed to run a youth theatre. All have access to office space through the Local Authority Arts Office and youth theatres with part-time staff are generally based at these offices. However, the majority of administration and planning carried out by these youth theatre leaders is completed in their own homes. The majority of youth theatres in this category rent their weekly workshop space and their performance venues despite many local arts centres or venues being Local Authority initiatives. However, there are some exceptions and some examples of long-term arrangements and partnership building:

- Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre has a strong partnership with the Roscommon Arts Centre where they have all their weekly workshops and performances;
- Clare Youth Theatre bases all of its activities at their local arts centre, Glór. However the relationship is on a rental basis;
- Leitrim Youth Theatre in Carrigallen and Co. Limerick Youth Theatre in Lough Gur both have partnerships with local amateur theatre venues where their performances take place and in the case of Lough Gur, their weekly workshops as well. One of the groups that forms Cavan Youth Drama bases its workshops and performances at the Ramor Theatre in Virginia.
- Co. Wexford Youth Theatre and Co. Carlow Youth Theatre are currently developing partnerships that may allow them to become resident at Wexford Opera House and VISUAL – Centre for Contemporary Art and the George Bernard Shaw Theatre respectively.

**PERFORMANCE SPACE**

During the Centre Stage research project, youth theatre performances were taking place in theatre venues, small studio spaces, local/school halls and on the street as well as in conference or leisure centres, youth clubs, schools and churches throughout Ireland. Some youth theatres were exploring street theatre and site-specific work because they could not access or afford local theatre venues. Most youth theatres involved in Centre Stage +10 described a good level of access to local theatre venues and arts centres. Increasing numbers of arts centres around the country over the last 10 years has helped access levels. However, most youth theatres find the cost of venue hire for their performances restrictive due to a number of different factors.
The cost may prohibit the youth theatre from renting the venue at all;
A higher rental cost at weekends and during popular holidays means that youth theatres are not always able to afford venues at times when young people are available;
The cost of rental may restrict the number of performances a youth theatre can arrange;
Rental costs and agreements can restrict the amount of time young people have to rehearse in the space and learn about the technical aspects of their production for the first time.

Youth theatre leaders report that theatre venues and arts centres are not offering discounts to their local youth theatres and are generally charging full commercial rates. This occurs even with youth theatres which are run by Local Authority Arts Offices and perform in local arts centres. For example, one arts centre charged a Local Authority youth theatre €800 a night and the price almost doubled for a Sunday night performance. Another Local Authority youth theatre was charged €1,300 for two nights of performances. Some small autonomous youth theatres also find it hard to afford local theatre venues:

“We only do two days a year and we hope we cover our costs and the two plays we did, didn’t have any royalties. It was €400 for the two nights. We did a Tuesday and a Wednesday. We can’t get weekend nights because it would cost too much.”

Youth theatre leaders report a general lack of negotiation around set commercial fees even in venues and arts centres that declare an interest in community and participative arts. One youth theatre that performed regularly in their local Town Hall paid €300 a night and an extra €150 if they included a matinee. The leader remarked:

“I mean we’re a local youth theatre trying to do something fun, you know? And there was no support for it. In the early days we’d write a letter and they’d give it to us but that stopped. They just put an embargo on it across the board – not specifically towards the youth theatre. It’s frustrating in itself but it’s local politics, what are you going to do? The place isn’t used as a result of it, you know?”

CASE STUDY: Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre – space
Roscommon Arts Centre is home to Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre’s workshops every Sunday and also provides performance and rehearsal space for their productions. This significant, in-kind support is part of the centre’s policy:

“We provide opportunities for the local community to actively engage with a range of artforms through participatory and performance-based activities. Our project space is located on the first floor level and it is here that we host our programme of classes and workshops. The space is also home to Roscommon County Youth Theatre and we soon hope to launch it as a second performance space.” – Roscommon Arts Centre

Roscommon Arts Centre is supported by Roscommon County Council and the Arts Council and Roscommon County Youth Theatre is run by the Local Authority Arts Office.

CASE STUDY: Tallaght Youth Theatre – space
Tallaght Youth Theatre is a small autonomous youth theatre run completely by voluntary leaders. For a number of years, the youth theatre ran workshops in a local community resource centre free of charge. The relationship and rental agreement had been negotiated with assistance from staff from the local youth services.

Youth theatre leaders also negotiated a profit-share arrangement with the Civic Theatre for use of their Loose End studio space, where no charges were made up front and the box office takings were split equally. Tallaght Youth Theatre has very recently moved its weekly workshops to the newly built Rua Red South Dublin Arts Centre where space again is given to it free of charge.
An examination of the spaces used by youth theatres during Census Week highlights the combination of spaces that youth theatres are using and the conditions of their use.

Table 3.5 Combination of Spaces used during Census Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Venue</th>
<th>Artistic Activities involving Young People</th>
<th>Artistic Planning Session</th>
<th>Administration Task</th>
<th>Meetings</th>
<th>Theatre Production tasks</th>
<th>Attending a Theatre Performance (leaders only)</th>
<th>Training Activity</th>
<th>Fundraising Activity</th>
<th>Travel</th>
<th>Social Events</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home / office of youth theatre</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth / community centre</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts centre</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home / office of leader</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub / café / hotel</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public space</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures are based on 243 activities recorded by 29 Youth Theatres during Census Week as part of Centre Stage +10.

Table 3.6 Space used during Census Week: Conditions of use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF VENUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home / office of youth theatre</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth / community centre</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts centre</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home / office of leader</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub / café / hotel</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public space</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures are based on 243 activities recorded by 29 Youth Theatres during Census Week as part of Centre Stage +10. Dublin Youth Theatre owns its own premises but did not participate in the Census Week.

**SUITABILITY OF VENUE**

Youth theatre leaders were asked to comment on the suitability of the venues they used during Census Week in both the Centre Stage and Centre Stage +10 research projects:

- In Centre Stage, just over three-quarters of all activities during Census Week were considered to have taken place in suitable venues;
- During Centre Stage +10, 95% of the 243 activities that took place during Census Week were considered to have taken place in suitable venues.

This would indicate that a higher standard of venue is currently available to youth theatres and that youth theatre leaders are generally much happier with the venues they are using.
However, not all youth theatres were happy with the spaces they used during Census Week. The size, location and general state of the venue were listed as reasons for unsuitability. Some leaders also reported that restrictions which venues placed on availability and noise levels could make spaces unsuitable for their youth theatre. Two youth theatre activities took place in spaces that the leaders considered were in bad repair or unsafe for youth theatre members. Both youth theatres that used these spaces were small, autonomous youth theatres run on a completely voluntary basis. This indicates that suitable and affordable workshop spaces are still a concern for some smaller sized youth theatres.

Figure 3.3 provides full details on the unsuitability of the 13 venues that leaders recorded during Census Week.

The majority of these venues were used for artistic activities with young people.
Chapter 4: Youth Theatre Practice and Programming
Introduction

The youth theatre movement has grown to encompass a wide variety of youth theatre practice and programming. This section of the report is explored under the following headings:

4.1 Youth Theatre Practice
4.2 Programming
4.3 Youth Theatre Activities
4.4 Other Elements of Practice

4.1 Youth Theatre Practice

Youth theatre practice is explored under the following headings:

4.1.1 Ethos of Youth Theatre
4.1.2 Quality in Youth Theatre Practice
4.1.3 Ingredients of a Quality Programme

4.1.1 Ethos of Youth Theatre

In Ireland, a wide variety of youth theatre practice exists. This diversity has increased since Centre Stage as youth theatres have developed new models, new founding partners and new parent organisations. Some youth theatres have also changed in size and structure as they continue to increase their number of sub-groups to engage a wider age range. The traditional model of one youth theatre group working with a small group of leaders has developed in some cases to multi-centre and multi-group youth theatres where young people may participate in different workshops or outreach projects and come together only for special projects, events or performances.

All youth theatres provide access to drama and theatre for young people. Aside from this common aim, however, youth theatres express different reasons for their existence. Some youth theatres describe their purpose as providing access to quality drama and theatre processes. The creation of theatre and drama with young people is the primary aim of these youth theatres and leaders may see the personal and social development outcomes as positive by-products of their work. Some youth theatres concentrate their efforts on theatre processes that build to performance while other youth theatres focus on drama processes within a workshop setting. The vast majority of youth theatres adhere to the principles and practices of youth work but not all youth theatres would state these as their primary aims. Some youth theatres are committed to providing personal and social development for their members and use theatre as the tool to achieve this end.

Youth theatres may look different and vary in terms of their purpose but there are some common principles and practices that link the youth theatre sector and define its ethos. Youth theatre leaders and stakeholders were asked to describe what they believed was the ethos of Irish youth theatre. The research project defined ethos as the ‘fundamental values that are specific to the youth theatre movement and inform youth theatre practice’.

Youth theatre leaders and stakeholders suggested the following:

• **Personal, social and artistic development**

  Though youth theatres may differ about the primary aim of their youth theatre, they all believed that youth theatre contributed to the personal, social and artistic development of their members. A youth theatre leader from Co. Sligo believed that youth theatre adhered to two different value systems, that of quality theatre and that of quality youth work:

  “The strongest point for me about our ethos up here is that you’ve got the value system that’s attached to quality youth work and best practice in youth work, which is important because developmentally it’s their creative needs, child protection concerns, their confidence—all that. And then you’ve got another value system, which is the theatrical value system which is about producing good work and mixing with professionals who are of a high quality and building a skills base, you know? What I’ve found through my experience in youth theatre is that sometimes one of these is used as an excuse for bad practice in the other. I feel here that those two systems complement each other very well and that the only way you can
run a good youth theatre is by saying we’re not going to slip on either of those things. They’re both equally important. We don’t have to compromise on either of them. We can invest in both of those fields. I think that’s the unique challenge of youth theatre.” – Co. Sligo Youth Theatre Leader

- **A Unique Form of Theatre**
  Youth theatre as an artform values the unique relationship between young people and theatre.

  “The role of youth theatre or young people’s theatre in the entirety of theatre in Ireland is critical. It’s hugely important. We need it. We need to hear it, hear about it and go to it. There’s good stuff out there, very good stuff going on and I think you can do things in youth theatre that you can’t do later on... scale, size but more importantly, themes. You can explore with young people the themes and concerns of their lives in a way you can’t with 40 or 50 year olds. There are things that are very distinctive about youth theatre that need to be acknowledged really.” – Head of Young People, Children and Education, The Arts Council

- **Young Person Centred**
  The work of the youth theatre is designed for the particular group of young people who are in membership of a youth theatre. The youth theatre process starts from the particular personalities, interests and needs of the young people who are involved.

  “I suppose one thing that would make youth theatre different from other drama opportunities is just putting the young person at the centre of it and making the work about them. It isn’t just about getting a script and being on stage, it’s about self-development and self-exploration as well.” - Arts Education and Development Co-ordinator, Co. Roscommon Arts Office

- **The Ensemble Experience**
  The ensemble approach is a fundamental principle of youth theatre practice. Ensemble techniques such as group improvisation and devising are commonplace. The youth theatre members work together as a company over a long period of time, working together to establish trust, making decisions collaboratively, sharing ownership of the artistic work and taking collective responsibility. Youth theatres still value the individual voice within the ensemble and provide for individual growth within an ensemble setting.

  “If I was given the opportunity to have a main part then perhaps I would excel and perhaps I would prove that I am a good actor, you know? Without having the opportunity then you’ll never know about that one particular person. And they will always be left in the background, which isn’t fair because youth theatre is about community. It’s about friends. It’s about being involved. It’s about being a part of something instead of being in the back.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

- **Opportunities for Young People to Take Part in Workshops**
  Youth theatres provide opportunities for young people to take part in workshops and process drama experiences that explore skills and themes that are relevant to the youth theatre members.

- **Opportunities for Young People to Take Part in Performance**
  Youth theatres provide opportunities for young people to take part in performance. The type of performance situation may vary and is defined by the profile, experience and history of the young people. Youth theatre values the processes involved in theatre production and the processes involved in the drama workshop.

- **High Artistic Standards and Production Values**
  Youth theatres aspire to the highest artistic standards and production values that their resources will allow. Creating the highest artistic standards for young people encourages respect for the work and the aspirations of the young people involved.

- **Voluntary Participation and Informal Settings**
  Youth theatres occur in informal settings where young people participate on a voluntary basis. Young people make an active choice to participate and commit to their youth theatre.

  “I think the biggest core value is probably voluntary participation. People are there because they want to be there.” – Youth Work Services Manager, CYC
Opportunities for Progression
Youth theatre provides opportunities for continuous development through new experiences and challenges. Youth theatre is clear about its capacity to deliver further training opportunities so that progression pathways are clear to youth theatre members.

Inclusion
Youth theatre welcomes all young people, regardless of ability or background and promotes a varied demographic in youth theatre membership.

“We’re all different... it doesn’t really make a difference to people here. Nobody here is judged on “Oh, look you’re this”. Everybody’s got some purpose. We’re all doing drama. It’s level. Everybody, you know, gets on no matter whether they’re from: different groups, different schools, ages... it doesn’t make that much difference.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

Productive Fun
Youth theatre is characterised by an informal approach to work and relationships that promotes an enjoyment of theatre and is fun for young people. However, youth theatres also require discipline and hard work from their members and have high expectations of young people and what they can achieve.

“It’s important to have fun but you have to do proper stuff as well... productive fun.”
– Portlaoise Youth Theatre Member

Youth Participation
Within an ensemble environment there is a unique power sharing balance between leaders and members. Youth theatres involve young people in the decision-making aspects of the organisation in different ways. The majority of youth theatres involve young people in decisions about which projects and productions to pursue and some youth theatres involve young people in decisions on the running of the organisation.

Respect
A mutual respect exists between members and leaders and their working relationship is collaborative. It may be the first time in the young person’s life where they have a relationship with an adult that is not authoritative by nature, such as with a teacher or a parent.

“I think respect is a core value. Respect for the young people, the stage they’re at, their imagination, their ability – you know, you can name all those kinds of things about them. I think I’ve rarely seen a situation where a youth theatre leader isn’t respected by the youth theatre they’re working with. So there’s kind of a mutual respect even though the age gap might be quite considerable. The person is treated with respect.”
– Artistic Director, Graffiti Theatre Company

CASE STUDY: Roscommon County Youth Theatre – ethos

‘As a youth theatre, we advocate a way of working which puts the integrity of the young people at the centre of a process valuing both exploration and artistic excellence. Our approach to youth drama differs from professional or amateur theatre in that youth drama is not about producing plays for people to see. The process involved is considered to be of equal if not greater importance than the finished product. Youth drama encourages the development of the whole person, and uses a range of drama methods to respond to the personal needs of the participants involved and contributes towards the development of the creative, physical, social and intuitive intelligences in its participants.’
– Roscommon County Youth Theatre Policy Statement

4.1.2 Quality in Youth Theatre Practice
Youth theatres have been working towards ideas of best practice for many years. Youth theatre leaders, members and stakeholders have debated concepts of best practice in relation to welfare, ways of working with young people and the planning and delivery of youth theatre activities. The emergence of ‘quality’ benchmarking in the youth work and arts sectors has recently influenced this debate as funders from both sectors express an interest in funding ‘quality’ youth theatres.
All youth theatre leaders and stakeholders were asked in interviews what the indicators of quality were in youth theatre practice. Most youth theatre leaders and stakeholders said they would look first to the quality of theatre production. For a few leaders, production standards were how they rated the overall quality of a youth theatre but for many leaders it was simply the easiest outward indicator of some of the work taking place in the youth theatre. Some youth theatre leaders commented that if you could feel an honest connection between the young people on stage, their actions and the content of the play it was a sign of a good rehearsal process and therefore a quality youth theatre. Others felt that a clear sense of ownership was also an indicator of quality.

Most youth theatre leaders felt that productions needed to be viewed in context, with an understanding of the journey the group has been on and an appreciation of the process. For these youth theatre leaders, a quality youth theatre meant a quality journey for the group and each individual young person. One youth theatre member believed that all youth theatres should be creating ‘quality’ productions but that this standard could vary between youth theatres. She said that quality should be described as:

“The highest standard you can possibly get with your own resources, talents and what you can do in the time.”

Other youth theatre members felt patronised by the idea that their productions would be judged by different standards to professional theatre and believed that their work should be seen objectively, without any need to understand the journey behind the production.

Youth theatre leaders felt that quality could be judged by the skill level, experience and qualifications of the leaders. They believed that ‘quality’ staff led to a ‘quality youth theatre’. Others believed that quality should be judged on the participation levels of the young people and their commitment to the youth theatre. Other leaders mentioned the individual stories of young people who had participated in the youth theatre and felt that these individual stories of growth and development signified quality practice.

When youth theatre leaders were asked what they would draw attention to in their own youth theatre to demonstrate the ‘quality’ of their work, nearly all leaders said they would invite people to witness workshops or rehearsals. They felt that these elements of practice would help an external person to understand the value of their work and its approaches. Leaders believed that an external person should talk directly to the young people about their views and then finally, if there was time, see a production. It appeared that those involved in youth theatre would often judge each other in terms of production standards but would like to be assessed in a different way themselves.

4.1.3 Ingredients of a Quality Programme

Youth theatre leaders and members around the country were asked what they felt should be included in a quality youth theatre programme. A large number of youth theatre leaders and members described the existing programme of their youth theatre. This could indicate a high level of satisfaction with the quality of their programme (some youth theatres have been developing and refining their youth theatre programme for 20 or 30 years). The suggestions of youth theatre members were based very much on their own personal youth theatre experiences and included activities they had prior experience of and had enjoyed. The aspirations of the youth theatre members who participated in the Members Workshops were very much dictated by the resources, programming and history of their own youth theatre. The responses of leaders and members could also indicate a lack of communication between youth theatres and a lack of knowledge about the types of activities other youth theatres are undertaking.

The majority of youth theatres felt that they were delivering a quality programme that reflected the resources and policies of their youth theatre. Some were aware that levels of resources and funding were preventing them from providing the type of programme they aspired to. Where youth theatre leaders described ‘quality’ programmes that were more developed than their existing programme it was always with the understanding that it would require increased levels of funding, staffing and time.

Youth theatre leaders described programmes that were in keeping with their existing ethos and value system. Youth theatre leaders added activities to their established annual programme such as festivals, increased numbers of skills workshops and different types of performance opportunities and projects. One or two youth theatres mentioned that if resources were unlimited they would shift towards a full-time youth theatre focused on ‘training’ that would provide a comprehensive weekly programme of workshops and a number of performance opportunities for members to build towards. Other youth theatre leaders believed that increased opportunities for the members to socialise amongst themselves and with other young people contributed to a quality programme.
Overall, leaders believed that a quality youth theatre programme needed to be planned in advance so that workshops, rehearsal and production processes and other activities connected together to provide a well-rounded experience. Leaders believed that first and foremost, a good programme should be designed to suit the profile and experience of each individual group and should challenge youth theatre members of all levels of ability. This indicates that a ‘quality’ programme needs to be flexible and adapt to the changing dynamic, skill levels and interests of each group of members. Leaders mentioned that a good youth theatre programme establishes a way of working that enables members to feel that they have ownership of their own work. Some leaders believed this meant creating structures that formally recognise the importance of members’ opinions and ideas. Both members and leaders believed that a quality programme would require the commitment and focus of youth theatre members but they also believed that it should create an atmosphere of fun and celebration that promotes an enjoyment of youth theatre.

Youth theatre leaders and members made some specific recommendations of what should be included in a quality programme:

- **A QUALITY WORKSHOP PROGRAMME**
  - A programme of regular workshops that offer a range of skills on all aspects of theatre designed specifically to suit the profile and experiences of the group;
  - A workshop programme designed to build self-confidence and the group dynamic, focusing on group development as well as personal development;
  - A special introduction programme for new members such as a 10-week induction programme for large groups of new members or a series of core skills/group development workshops for all members at the beginning of a youth theatre year;
  - Leaders felt that the programme should include workshops that are planned and delivered effectively and evaluated with the young people;
  - Leaders and members thought workshops should cover basic youth theatre skills such as improvisation and devising but also deliver specialised training in voice, movement, dance and music or advanced skills workshops in different actor training styles such as Stanislavski or Suzuki;
  - Leaders felt that the programme should include specialised workshops in theatre crafts and technical theatre such as costume and lighting and sound design/operation;
  - Some youth theatre leaders believed that a variety of stimuli should be used in the workshops such as a variety of texts, images and music.

- **QUALITY PRODUCTIONS AND THEATRE EXPERIENCES**
  - A quality programme should include a wide variety of drama and theatre experiences;
  - Leaders believed that youth theatres should expose members to contemporary theatre (new directors, new writing, new companies, other youth theatres);
  - Leaders and members thought that a good programme should include at least one performance opportunity for all members. Some leaders felt the programme should include one major and one minor production a year, others described a programme based on performance opportunities in selected categories of production. For example one production-focused youth theatre with a large membership felt the programme should include a classic production (Shakespeare, Marlowe, Greek theatre, etc.), a modern production (Wilde, Shaw, Ibsen), two or three new plays written for young people to perform and about three productions devised by the members and based on issues that they feel are relevant;
  - In general, leaders and members believed that there should be a balance of devised work, scripted work, writing by members, physical theatre, site specific and issue-based theatre;
  - Leaders mentioned the importance of encouraging members to write themselves and some mentioned providing opportunities for members to write sketches or one-acts that could be performed within workshops or one-act festivals;
  - Leaders and some members were also keen to include one-act festivals that provided young people with the opportunity to direct, write, produce and act in their own short pieces of theatre;
  - Leaders and members felt that there should be high production standards within a quality youth theatre, assisted by the employment of professional directors, designers and production staff;
  - A few youth theatre leaders felt that devising over a long period of time with a writer in residence would contribute to a quality programme.
• **QUALITY OF STAFF**
  - Youth theatre leaders felt strongly that only ‘quality’ staff could deliver a ‘quality’ programme;
  - The programme should be led by youth theatre leaders with a high level of skill and experience in theatre and work with young people;
  - The programme should be led by more than one youth theatre leader to allow members to experience a variety of approaches. However, consistency in leaders is also important to allow the rapport between leaders and members to develop and for the ensemble to create a way of working together;
  - A variety of freelance facilitators, directors and other artists should be invited to work with the group to provide variety and increase skill levels and production standards;
  - The youth theatre should support and promote senior members and one youth theatre leader suggested that these ‘young leaders’ should be able to do work-experience with other youth theatres.

• **QUALITY OPPORTUNITIES AND A VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES**
  - A quality programme should include opportunities to engage with the wider youth theatre community, theatre or arts community and other young people in general on a local, national or international level;
  - A quality programme should include annual activities or once-off projects and events that deepen and expand the regular youth theatre programme;
  - Some leaders felt that a good programme should involve increased levels of exchange between youth theatres and particularly between youth theatre leaders;
  - Leaders suggested that youth theatres should participate in festivals or exchanges abroad every two to three years. Some leaders felt it was very important that members should work with peers that have the same level of experience;
  - Some leaders felt there should be increased numbers of local youth theatre festivals initiated and organised by the youth theatres themselves;
  - Leaders recommended increased opportunities for groups of members to participate in NAYD Festivals and events so that all young people have the opportunity to take part. A few leaders felt it was important to provide opportunities that cater for varying levels of experience. They recommended events that focus on participation and basic skills as well as events that centre on performance or advanced skills workshops;
  - Some leaders mentioned that it was important for individual members to have experiences away from the main youth theatre through different arts programmes, exchanges or NAYD programmes such as the National Youth Theatre and Young Critics;
  - Some youth theatre leaders mentioned that special annual events should happen within a youth theatre. Leaders recommended week-end residencies that focus on skills and group development or specific projects such as devising;
  - One or two youth theatres felt that a quality programme should include a wider engagement with other disciplines and art forms including art, photography and film.

### 4.2 Programming

Youth theatre programming is explored under the following headings:

- **4.2.1 The Youth Theatre Year**
- **4.2.2 Levels of Activity**
- **4.2.3 Planning and Programming**

#### 4.2.1 The Youth Theatre Year

The youth theatre year varies in length and structure around the country. Each youth theatre creates their own individual annual pattern over time according to the profile and needs of the group, their artistic policy, opportunities for productions and projects as well as the resources available to them.

A typical youth theatre year starts in September and runs until May, taking breaks according to school holidays. These youth theatres generally run weekly workshops focusing on group and skills development during the Autumn term and then create blocks of workshops, devising and rehearsals for the remainder of the year. This type of youth theatre year would average at 28 weeks of activity per year. Youth theatres arrange their year according to what best suits their members and leaders, their access to local venues for performances or opportunities to participate in festivals, projects or exchanges.
Most youth theatres will vary from their own individual pattern each year according to the opportunities that arise, including festivals, extra productions, exchanges or residential trips. Some youth theatres regularly include two productions as part of their annual programme and youth theatres with multiple groups may arrange performance opportunities for each sub-group within the youth theatre. Youth theatres with a production-based artistic programme may create several performance opportunities for their members each year.

The youth theatre year will take into account group development issues such as the inclusion of new members at specific times of the year. A few larger youth theatres which recruit significant numbers of members every year will schedule a series of introductory workshops for new members before they join the mainstream activities of the youth theatre. However, it is much more common for youth theatres to include new members in the main workshop group for a series of general workshops which focus on skills-building and group development, leaving older members to act as role models and to help the integration of new members occur quickly.

### CASE STUDY: Stradbally Youth Theatre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September – December</td>
<td>Weekly workshops focusing on group and skills development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January – May</td>
<td>Weekly workshops may develop into a devising process and rehearsals or weekly workshops may move straight into the rehearsal of a scripted piece. A performance will take place at the end of the youth theatre year, usually in May. One or two weekly workshops may follow the production to conclude the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June – August</td>
<td>The youth theatre does not run activities during the summer.</td>
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There are many reasons why youth theatres close down during the summer months. Youth theatre members may be busy with summer work, family holidays, residential language courses and other hobbies or they may be involved in state exams until the end of June. It becomes difficult for a youth theatre leader to retain a consistent group of young people over the summer months. Some youth theatre leaders remarked that they needed a break to refresh themselves for the following year while others mentioned budget constraints as one of the reasons they close for the summer months.

However, there are a considerable number of youth theatres organising a longer youth theatre year and operating during the summer months. For example, Kildare Youth Theatre runs throughout the year except for a break of two weeks at Christmas, one week at Easter and two weeks in the summer. Youth theatre leaders take into consideration the difficulty of retaining consistent attendance across the summer and are more likely to schedule short-term, intensive projects rather than weekly workshops. For example, Co. Clare Youth Theatre organises a short ‘summer school’ for youth theatre members and other local young people who are interested in drama. The summer months can create a distinctive atmosphere and offer different opportunities to youth theatres.

“I think there’s been a couple of years where we did break for the summer but it’s not something I’m that interested in doing and certainly from the feedback I get from the kids- some of them are asking already will we go on for the summer, you know? Now some of them go away and it does tend to be quieter. We’d usually have one production, a smaller production on during the summer. Last year we travelled up to Omagh and did a joint production up there. It’s a good time to do something smaller, low-focus, that doesn’t cost as much money and doesn’t stress people out as much and maybe do something more fun when not all the eyes are on it, you know?” – Sligo Youth Theatre Leader

For some youth theatres, the summer months mark the busiest time of the year. They take advantage of the fact that many of their youth theatre members may have increased free time and run intensive rehearsal periods that lead to productions at the end of the summer. This is more likely in a youth theatre with older members who show high levels of commitment.

### CASE STUDY: Limerick Youth Theatre

**First Years:**
- **October – December:** Theatre History – from Greek Tragedy to contemporary styles
- **January – March:** Performance – approaches to text, character, improvisation, physical theatre
- **March – May:** Production Skills – lighting, costume, sound, writing...

**Second Years:**
- **October – December:** Project 1 (in film/radio/performance art)
January – March: Project 2 (in film/radio/performance art)
March – May: Preparation for Summer Production

The Summer Production usually takes place in August.

The modular structure that Limerick youth theatre uses to plan the youth theatre year is unique but bears some similarity to Galway Youth Theatre. Galway Youth Theatre breaks its youth theatre year into different terms by running an ‘education’ term from September to April and then focusing on productions until August. They also run separate workshops for first year and second year members before bringing the two groups together in January each year.

“We tend to do about 10 weeks of classes, maybe 12 weeks, and in that, there may be three master classes at weekends. They would do two to three classes a week and our classes would run four nights a week, 6-8, 8-10 from Monday to Thursday. So the first term is really given up to that, particularly with first years. It’s the same thing with the second years, but one of those classes is a devising project where they create a piece that would be staged in December. Now then in January we mix the classes. So, first years would still have one class with just first years, second years would have one class with second years and then we’d give a range of classes for them together. They do five weeks of Shakespeare together and then jump over and do five weeks of physical theatre and at that point the first years are doing their devising piece, which is staged around February. So, the education term would last from September until April.”
– Galway Youth Theatre Leader

Levels of activity vary across the youth theatre year but also within a typical week. Figure 4.1 shows the levels of activity that took place on each day during Census Week and the balance between youth theatre activities involving young people and those involving leaders only.

Activities involving young people take place every day of the week across the country. The most popular day for youth theatre workshops and rehearsals is Saturday. This was also the case 10 years ago in Centre Stage. However, youth theatres are scheduling an increasing number of activities on weeknights to suit youth theatre members who are working or involved in other hobbies on a Saturday and also to secure a suitable space. Some community halls and centres charge more for rental at the weekends, making weeknights a more affordable option for
youth theatre leaders. Youth theatre leaders are active throughout the week but are more likely to be involved in administration, planning and production tasks on weekdays. Sunday is still regularly the quietest day of the week which can prove useful for leaders who are trying to schedule extra rehearsals leading up to a production.

4.2.2 Levels of Activity

Levels of typical youth theatre activity were captured during the Census Week of Centre Stage +10 where 39 youth theatres logged all activities that involved youth theatre members and leaders. Census Week took place between Saturday, 24th November and Friday, 30th November, 2007. The dates were chosen to match the Census Week organised during the Centre Stage research period and to ensure that activity levels could be compared. The Census Week demonstrated high levels of activity:

- 243 youth theatre activities took place during Census Week;
- 6.2 youth theatre activities was the average number for a youth theatre;
- 129 activities involved youth theatre members;
- 243 activities involved youth theatre leaders;
- 114 activities involved youth theatre leaders only.

During the original Centre Stage Census Week, youth theatre leaders from 32 youth theatres logged their activities in the same manner. Youth theatre leaders logged a total of 112 activities in that original Census Week. This would indicate that the average number of weekly youth theatre activities has grown from 3.5 to 6.2 in the past 10 years. However, it is unclear whether youth theatre leaders from Centre Stage logged all administrative and planning tasks during that week so the increase in activity levels may not have been as steep. Of the activities that were logged during the first Centre Stage Census Week, 5.36% involved planning or meetings for leaders and a further 5.36% of activities involved production tasks which could have been carried out by leaders on their own.

The youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage +10 logged a range of activities in which they were involved, from administration tasks through to workshop and rehearsal planning and cleaning the space used by the youth theatre. The log shows an increased recognition of the level of administration and artistic planning involved in running a youth theatre. Many youth theatre leaders reinforced this point during their interviews, commenting on an increase in the level of administration required as part of their youth theatre role.

Census Week data shows that 46.91% of all youth theatre activities involve leaders working behind the scenes to create the 53.09% of youth theatre activities that involve young people.

![Figure 4.2 Breakdown of Hours spent on youth theatre activities during Census Week](image-url)

Figures are based on 243 youth theatre activities that took place in 39 youth theatres during Census Week as part of Centre Stage +10.
Activities during Census Week lasted from 15 minutes (a telephone conversation about booking a venue) up to 12 hours (script editing). The 39 youth theatres that took part in Census Week registered:

- 607 hours of youth theatre activity;
- 15 hours and 30 minutes was the average time spent on youth theatre activities in a youth theatre;
- 299 hours of activity involving youth theatre members;
- 607 hours of activity involving youth theatre leaders;
- 308 hours of activity involving youth theatre leaders only.

During the original Centre Stage Census Week, youth theatre leaders from 32 youth theatres logged a total of 277 hours. This would indicate that the average number of hours spent on youth theatre activities has grown from 8 hours 40 minutes to 15 hours 30 minutes in the past 10 years.

Activity levels for individual members and leaders during Census Week varied according to the role of the youth theatre leader (see chapter 5.4 for further information) and the age range of the youth theatre members. During Census Week, 1,452 young people participated in 129 activities but some members took part in one workshop while others were involved in a series of workshops, rehearsals and performance. The Census Week data shows that 1,452 youth theatre members engaged 1,999 times in youth theatre activities, creating 1,999 different points of contact between young people and youth theatre activities. Figure 4.3 compares the percentage of young people who took part in Census Week with the percentage of contacts made, to examine which age range was the most active during Census Week.

![Figure 4.3 Comparison between youth theatre members who participated during Census Week and contacts between youth theatre members and activities, by age range](image)

Figure 4.3 shows that the 14-18 age category has the highest number of members but also the highest participation rate. They are most likely to be involved in multiple activities including workshops, rehearsals and performances. Youth theatre leaders indicated that the same is true for members aged 19 to 25, though the statistics from Census Week don’t indicate high participation levels.

Figure 4.3 also indicates that youth theatre members aged 12 and 13 are not likely to participate in multiple activities during a typical week. This tendency increases with the 6-11 age range where youth theatre members are likely to only participate in a weekly workshop.

The levels of activity vary greatly between youth theatres and are determined by the resources available to the youth theatre as well as the policy, size and ethos of each group. Some youth theatres programme one activity per week when they are not involved in a production week while other youth theatres may programme a weekly combination of workshops and activities alongside a busy rehearsal and production schedule.

- The maximum number of activities for any youth theatre was 19;
- The minimum number of activities for any youth theatre was 1;
- The average number of activities for a youth theatre was 6.
CASE STUDY: Celbridge Youth Drama

Six activities took place during Census Week, involving five leaders and 26 young people over 12 hours 15 minutes.

1. Accounts 1 hour
2. Rehearsal for upcoming show 3 hours
3. Booking theatre tickets, checking insurance, sending emails regarding permission and printing permission letters 1 hour
4. Meeting with Assistant Arts Officer, Kildare County Council 1 hour
5. Weekly Workshop 2 hours
6. Visit to the Riverbank Arts Centre to see Macbeth performed by Kildare Youth Theatre 4 hours, 15 minutes

CASE STUDY: Kildare Youth Theatre

Eighteen activities took place during Census Week, involving 20 youth theatre leaders and 105 youth theatre members over 73 hours.

1. Weekly workshops 5-13 age group (Crooked Mice) 4 hours
2. Administration 7 hours
3. Technical rehearsal for Macbeth 4 hours
4. Filming of a fight scene for Macbeth 4 hours
5. A dress rehearsal for Macbeth 4 hours
6. Weekly workshop in improvisation 2 hours
7. Introductory session for work-experience student 4 hours
8. Workshop about the viewpoints technique for older members 2 hours
9. Research and evaluation session for members with NUI Maynooth student 1 hour
10. Administration 7 hours
11. Performance of Macbeth 2 hours, 30 minutes
12. Administration 7 hours
13. Performance of Macbeth 2 hours, 30 minutes
14. Administration 7 hours
15. Performance of Macbeth 2 hours, 30 minutes
16. One-to-one monologue and audition preparation work with members 3 hours
17. Administration 7 hours
18. Performance of Macbeth 2 hours, 30 minutes

4.2.3 Planning and Programming

Youth theatres are involved in a greater level of strategic planning than ever before. Youth theatre leaders are also increasingly likely to organise activities involving young people more than one month in advance and to plan the content of each individual workshop and rehearsal.

A significant number of youth theatres have developed artistic policies and it is these policies that provide the framework for the annual programme of the youth theatre. The policy will guide leaders on the design of a workshop programme, their choice of productions and the ethos, purpose, style and content of their work. Artistic policies are generally created by a combination of leaders, members, board members, advisors or staff from parent organisations. When designing an annual programme, youth theatres will receive support from their existing governance structures, such as boards or staff from parent organisations. A few youth theatres create extra structures to advise on artistic planning such as Dublin Youth Theatre’s artistic sub-committee which works to support the Artistic Director. Other youth theatres have informal arrangements with an external artistic advisor such as Ballina Youth Theatre’s relationship with the Artistic Director of a local professional theatre company.
CASE STUDY: County Wexford Youth Theatre – artistic policy

Artistic Policy:
CWYT provides an outlet for artistic expression among the young people of County Wexford through the medium of theatre production and performance. CWYT develops and presents existing, new and experimental work by young people across disciplines. CWYT is inclusive and apolitical and actively promotes equal access to the arts for all.

Aims:
- To enable members to articulate their needs clearly in a safe group;
- To enable members and leaders to develop interpersonal skills, such as confidence, social interaction, responsibility sharing, planning, decision-making, and problem sharing;
- To introduce young people to new and innovative elements of the arts;
- To provide training and education in creative skills for leaders and members.

Objectives:
- To develop and nurture young peoples’ artistic/creative interests, abilities and talents;
- Establish an ethos and atmosphere of trust, support, respect and democracy;
- To promote the social interaction of members especially those marginalised by geographical, financial and educational backgrounds;
- To enable young people to negotiate their own development (personal and artistic) within a safe environment;
- To introduce young adults to training for the theatre and film industries, helping them to source agents, find further training at third level, and perform audition pieces with confidence;
- To provide an alternative for young people to existing, exclusive private fee-paying Drama Schools;
- To cater for non-performers through instruction in skills which are complementary to those developed in drama workshops; e.g., stage management, technical theatre, administration etc.;
- To incorporate other artistic disciplines such as dance and movement, music theatre, film making, writing, etc., through workshops by visiting youth theatre practitioners;
- To provide a public focus for the work by producing public performances of established, new and devised works;
- To participate in local, regional and national festivals through venue-based and site-specific public performances;
- To participate in national and international youth theatre exchanges;
- To play an active role in the work of the National Association for Youth Drama.

Some youth theatres operate according to a basic artistic policy where they commit to offering a wide variety of drama and theatre experiences that provide for the artistic, personal and social development of youth theatre members. Some youth theatres plan on a very informal level, making flexible plans that adapt to changing circumstances throughout the year. These youth theatres are likely to create a loose, annual programme together but are unlikely to write it down.

Youth theatre leaders generally create annual programmes because they feel it is best practice but some leaders are required to write up annual programmes for funders and for parent organisations. Youth theatre leaders noted that annual plans need to be flexible to allow them to respond to the needs of each particular group, to allow youth theatre members time to contribute to the planning and to allow leaders to respond to opportunities that arise to participate in festivals, projects or exchanges. Leaders also remarked on the difficulty of the budget year (January to December) not matching the youth theatre year (September to August).

One autonomous youth theatre included in the research was not in a position to plan ahead because the lack of regular, voluntary leaders was making it difficult to organise a consistent series of workshops or build towards a production. They were planning on a week-by-week basis depending on who was available to lead a workshop. Other youth theatres that have no annual funding source other than membership fees can find it difficult to plan ahead due to the insecurity of their resources.

As part of the Census Week in Centre Stage +10, youth theatre leaders were asked to indicate when they had organised the activities that involved youth theatre members and when they had planned the content of the artistic activities that involved youth theatre members. The figures show that nearly half of all activities (46.67%) were planned more than one month in advance, with 30.48% being planned more than three months in advance. This would indicate that almost a third of youth theatres are organising activities a term in advance.
Figure 4.4 provides information about the organisation of youth theatre activities that took place during Census Week.

Not all activities were organised in a way that gave advance notice to members. 19.04% of activities that took place during Census Week were organised during the previous week, with 1.90% being organised on the previous day. Of the activities that were planned one day before included a weekly drama workshop and a devising/script workshop. Of the activities that were planned in the previous week, five involved rehearsal and the remaining 13 were weekly drama workshops that involved a mix of activities such as improvisation, script work and devising.

In general, youth theatre leaders create a workshop or rehearsal plan for each individual activity that they organise. Youth theatre leaders during Census Week planned the content for 76.47% of activities that involved young people. There is no data from Centre Stage to illustrate levels of planning in 1997/98 but anecdotes from leaders and stakeholders indicate that planning and preparation have progressively emerged as common practice in the last 10 years.

Leaders had not planned the content of 6.86% of artistic activities involving young people. Only one of these activities was a weekly drama workshop. The remaining activities were trips to see professional and youth theatre productions, rehearsals and workshops given by freelance facilitators. Leaders did not plan the content of 16.67% of activities because they were re-using a workshop or rehearsal plan that they had written previously. The majority of these were drama workshops that leaders had run before with different groups but leaders also stated that they did not plan for four rehearsals because they used previous rehearsal plans. Figure 4.5 provides a breakdown of the level of planning that leaders undertook for activities that occurred during Census Week.

Figure 4.4  How far in advance did you organise the activity?

Figures are based on Census forms for 105 different Artistic Activities that involved young people during Census Week, part of Centre Stage +10.

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Figure 4.5  Did you plan the content of the artistic activity beforehand?

Figures are based on Census forms for 102 different Artistic Activities that involved young people during Census Week, part of Centre Stage +10.
A vast amount of this organisation and planning is carried out by leaders alone. According to the Census Week data, youth theatre leaders spend almost half of all youth theatre hours working by themselves, planning and organising youth theatre activities. Youth theatre leaders were asked to indicate whether young people contributed to the planning of activities during Census Week. Leaders responded that young people were involved in planning 36.45% of 107 artistic activities. They stated that young people were not involved in planning 42.06% of activities and a high percentage of leaders did not respond to this question.

4.3 Youth Theatre Activities

Youth theatre activities are explored under the following:

4.3.1 Types of Youth Theatre Activity
4.3.2 Workshop Programme
4.3.3 Productions
4.3.4 Attending Youth Theatre and Professional Theatre Productions
4.3.5 Festivals and Exchanges

4.3.1 Types of Youth Theatre Activity

It is clear from Census Week data that youth theatres are often incredibly busy places that provide a multitude of different drama and theatre related activities for the young people in their area. The data also shows that these activities are only made possible by the wide variety of administrative, planning and fundraising tasks carried out by youth theatre leaders. Figure 4.6 illustrates the different types of activities that took place during Census Week.

Figure 4.6 Types of Activity that took place during Census Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Activity</th>
<th>Number of Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A meeting</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An artistic planning session</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An administrative task</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An artistic activity involving young people</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending a youth theatre performance (leaders only)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending a professional theatre performance (leaders only)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A training activity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fundraising activity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A social event</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A theatre production task</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Figures are based on 243 activities involving 39 youth theatre during Census Week, part of Centre Stage +10

90
The Census Week that took place during Centre Stage +10 showed that:

- 46.91% of all youth theatre activities involved leaders working by themselves on administrative, planning and productions tasks;
- 4.12% of all youth theatre activities involved young people in non-artistic activities;
- 48.97% of all youth theatre activities were artistic activities involving young people.

- **YOUTH THEATRE ACTIVITIES INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE**

This section explores youth theatre activities involving young people in greater detail.

Youth theatre leaders and members identified key types of artistic activity within their youth theatre year:

- Drama workshops;
- Rehearsals, Production work and Performances;
- Attending professional theatre performances and youth theatre performances;
- Festivals and Exchanges.

Each one of these activities is explored in detail in Sections 4.3.2 to 4.3.5. The balance between these artistic activities during Census Week is indicative of a typical youth theatre programme. Figure 4.7 provides details of this breakdown of activities. 64.71% of activities were drama workshops and 26.89% of activities were rehearsals and performances.

Activities included in the ‘other’ category of Figure 4.7 included preparing audition pieces and monologues with some older members, reading excerpts from plays, filming a fight scene for an upcoming production, and a ‘project session’ for the 6-11 age range.

- **NON-ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE**

Youth theatre members are also involved in a wide variety of non-artistic youth theatre activities. During Census Week alone, young people completed administration, took part in fundraising activities, went to meetings, training activities and social events, were involved in theatre production tasks, tidied up a venue after a show, put up posters and talked to other young people as part of a recruitment drive.

Some youth theatres arrange a number of social activities throughout their youth theatre year. These can include end of year celebrations, Christmas parties, or post-show parties. Other youth theatres consider visits to see professional or youth theatre productions their social events and arrange for the group to travel and eat together as well. A few youth theatres, for example Dublin Youth Theatre, maintain a space where youth theatre members can spend time together on weekly workshop days or others such as Celbridge Youth Drama arrange breaks in
Youth theatre members value informal activities and many members described their own youth theatre traditions such as going for smoothie breaks, ‘having the craic’ and eating pizza when describing typical youth theatre activities during Member Workshops.

**CASE STUDY: Co. Sligo Youth Theatre – youth theatre activities**

Co. Sligo Youth Theatre is a large autonomous youth theatre based in Sligo town. The youth theatre has recently reviewed its programme of activities but at the beginning of 2008 its youth theatre programme consisted of:

- Regular weekly workshops for three different age groups (11-12 year olds, 12-14 year olds and 15 upwards);
- One large production each year and possibly one smaller, devised production during the summer;
- Regular weekly workshops in circus skills. The Circus Group is a voluntary wing of the youth theatre and is one of the oldest circus clubs in Ireland. Volunteer leaders focus on the development of circus skills through workshop activities and occasional performances. Circus group leaders and a senior member recently travelled to Los Angeles for an extensive three-week training placement with the Scarlet Sisters Circus Group;
- Regular visits to local professional and youth theatre performances and occasional visits to Dublin. This element of the programme was developed into the ‘Young Audience Programme’ which organises theatre visits, negotiates cheaper ticket prices with venues, organises events such as post-show talks and includes young people from Sligo who are not members of the youth theatre;
- Assisting Omagh District Council in the establishment of Omagh Youth Theatre. A series of weekend workshops culminated in a week-long intensive summer school, when Omagh Youth Theatre welcomed a group of young people from Co. Sligo Youth Theatre. Together, they spent a week creating and rehearsing a performance that incorporated masks, live music and puppets. The piece was performed in Sligo during Census Week as part of the second stage of the exchange.
- Participation in NAYD projects such as the Young Critics and the National Youth Theatre;
- Fundraising activities such as an improvised comedy show that was developed and organised by members with assistance from youth theatre facilitators and members of the local improv group ‘Scratch That’;
- Outreach projects are being developed which target young people in Sligo who may not have easy access to youth theatre and drama.

Every youth theatre offers a different combination of experiences to their membership and these can also vary according to the age range of the youth theatre. Members aged 12 and over were asked to identify their youth theatre experiences from a set list. Their responses are collated in Figure 4.8.
Other activities included:
- design -set/costume/poster/technical (18.30%);
- writing for youth theatre (16.29%);
- participating in international festivals/exchanges/projects (15.40%);
- making costumes (15.40%);
- stage management (12.05%);
- set construction (12.05%);
- technical -light/sound (11.38%);
- directing plays (7.59%).

Figure 4.8 indicates that youth theatre members have regular opportunities to participate in drama workshops and perform in plays while a significant number are also accessing other youth theatre and professional theatre productions. The data indicates that opportunities to participate in events such as festivals or exchanges are less common. The irregularity of these events within youth theatres where young people average 2.3 years of membership, means that specific generations of youth theatre members may miss out on the opportunity to take part.

Although youth theatres are keen to provide a programme of activities that include different aspects of technical theatre and theatre crafts such as costume and set construction, it appears that very small numbers of members are accessing these experiences. Some youth theatre leaders state that members develop theatre skills such as writing and directing and that they organise opportunities for members to explore these skills independently through one-act festivals and other low-pressure performance situations. The data from the ‘over-12 member questionnaires’ and information from leader interviews would suggest that these types of activities are not commonly included in a youth theatre’s annual programme.
YOUTH THEATRE ACTIVITIES INVOLVING CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 12

Children under the age of 12 were asked to describe what they did in their youth theatre as part of their questionnaire. The majority of this age group listed activities that take place within the workshop experience. This suggests that the workshop is the central experience for this age group and that there is considerably less variety in their programme than in the over-12 category. Drama ‘games’ were mentioned by 62.11% of members and appear to be the principal youth theatre activity. Figure 4.9 lists the top 10 youth theatre activities that children under the age of 12 mentioned.

Youth theatre members in this age group describe their workshops in terms of two separate sections: drama games or warm-ups and what the children call “doing the acting” or “doing drama”. These ‘acting’ activities may involve working on short scenes or ‘little acts’, some improvisation or devising scenes. The language this age group use to describe their activities can seem basic but may reflect the instruction and communication style of the leaders as well as the real content of workshops for this age group. Some children had developed a strong vocabulary to describe their activities and mentioned improvisation, devising, script work and vocal exercises.

Only 34.77% of members aged under 12 had been involved in activities they called ‘plays’. 13.28% of members in this age group specifically mention performing in plays and only 2.34% mentioned rehearsals. This indicates that this age group is not generally involved in performance. They are also unlikely to go to see plays, only 3.91% of members had been to see a play with their youth theatre. This age group do not seem to engage with other youth theatres or groups and do not participate in festivals or exchanges outside of events such as St. Patrick’s Day parades.

Other activities that the under 12s mentioned were:

- seeing plays (3.91%);
- mimes (3.13%);
- parades, dancing (1.95%);
- art (1.95%);
- building confidence (1.56%);
- use imagination (1.56%);
- breathing/vocal exercises (1.56%);
- learning acting (1.17%);
- street theatre (1.17%);
- poems (1.17%);
- making costumes (1.17%).
Workshops lie at the heart of the youth theatre programme. A workshop is a series of planned activities which engage young people in an active exploration of drama. They create a safe environment for young people to play and experiment. Youth drama practice involves group or ensemble drama approaches and responds to the developmental needs of the participating young people.

All youth theatres that were involved in Centre Stage +10 ran workshops during their youth theatre year. Data from the Centre Stage +10 Census Week shows that 64.71% of artistic activities that involved young people were workshops. Youth theatre members who completed questionnaires for Centre Stage +10 also indicated that workshops were the most common youth theatre experience. 87.28% of members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires had taken part in a youth theatre workshop.

The youth theatre year is typically built around a structure of weekly workshops. These workshops may develop into devising sessions or rehearsals as the group approach a production, but within youth theatres that have a large membership it is common for weekly workshops to continue so that members who may not be involved in a production can maintain their level of engagement with the youth theatre. Workshops last between one and three hours. The younger age groups are more likely to work for an hour to an hour and a half.

Youth theatre leaders and members work hard to create a supportive as well as a creative environment within the youth theatre. A supportive environment is key to enable young people to take risks, push beyond their comfort zones and learn from new experiences. Many youth theatres create group contracts where members agree rules that deal with behaviour within youth theatre activities. A large number of youth theatres felt that the facilitation style of the leaders and the example provided by older members were instrumental in creating a positive environment. The inclusion of time for group feedback and discussion had a positive effect on the group dynamic and leaders believed that it was very important for the personal development of members.

Workshops are directed at the specific age range of the members and their skill and experience levels. Youth theatres with a wide age range divide members into different age groups to ensure that workshops will be directed at their specific developmental needs. One exception to this was Boomerang Youth Theatre where the weekly workshop included members aged between five and 18. The youth theatre used to divide the group into different age ranges but were experimenting with a multi-age group in 2008:

“It was hard for the first while because I couldn’t figure out how to relate to the whole group at the same time and make sure that the older ones were progressing. I didn’t want repetition. So what we do is the first hour and a half will be warm-ups and devising and brainstorming and things like that and then sometimes I’ll take the older ones and get them to work on specific character building exercises or on actual ideas for the play. I’ll send them off to direct the younger ones in small scenes. So, that’s how I’ve worked it for the last while. I think they’ve gotten used to me and I’ve gotten used to them in this huge group now and it is much better. It took the younger ones a long time to get used to it as well because they had to get used to not having as much of my attention as they normally did, you know, for stories and talk about things they did during the week.” – Boomerang Youth Theatre Leader

**WORKSHOP CONTENT**

Workshops are designed to meet the developmental needs of the group and cover a wide variety of material:

- **Skills development**
  Youth theatre workshops explore and develop basic drama and theatre skills. Leaders identified these as improvisation, character work, script work and basic movement and voice work. Many youth theatres focus on devising skills and through the sharing of short devised scenes, members also explore basic skills in performance, analysis and constructive criticism.

- **Group development**
  Youth theatre workshops aim to develop the group dynamic by exploring teamwork and trust and by taking a group / ensemble approach in tasks and activities.

- **Issue-based and process drama**
  The main objective of a workshop can be the exploration of a specific issue or theme rather than the development
of a skill. Process drama techniques are used to explore issues that are relevant to the group and issues that emerge as part of a devising or a rehearsal process.

- **Specialist skills and theatre techniques**
  Youth theatres may engage members with advanced movement and voice skills, actor training methods developed by Stanislavski, Grotowski, Lecoq or Suzuki. Youth theatre groups may also engage with other theatre forms and techniques such as ‘viewpoints’ and Playback Theatre.

- **Technical theatre workshops**
  Youth theatres may run workshops to explore lighting and sound design as well as set design and costume design. These workshops may be built into a production process or could be arranged as part of a separate skills development programme.

- **Dance and other art forms**
  Many youth theatres involve movement, dance and music within their regular drama workshops but some arrange specific workshops that focus on these individual art forms. Youth theatres may also run workshops on art forms such as film or radio that lead to specific projects.

The workshops that took place during Census Week explored improvisation (including issue-based improvisation), character building and text analysis, ‘acting skills’, monologues, script work, movement and dance, devising, status and viewpoints technique, circus skills and lighting. One workshop explored trust-building and another was about creating a group contract.

- **WORKSHOP STRUCTURE**

  Youth theatre leaders develop workshop patterns and structures that become traditional within their youth theatre:

  “Well, I’d always start off with a warm-up, a game... like always a physical warm-up, then voice, you know with tongue-twisters, trying to work on a bit of diction, trying to do a bit of something every night just to move it along. And games, loads of fun games, you know? There’d always be a concentration game and memory games. There are loads of different things that I’ve worked on over the years cause I still go to workshops myself. I just came from... last week I went to Dublin for a week and did a clown workshop so I take lots of bits from that and bring them back to workshop with them”
  – Ballina Youth Theatre Leader

  “My idea is to get them so that they can improvise... so everything is geared towards that. The warm-up, composing activities, whatever main improvisation thing we’re doing and then the wind-down... and then within that we’d do movement or mime as well and a bit of voice.”
  – Stradbally Youth Theatre Leader

  Youth theatre leaders were asked to outline the content of their workshops during Census Week and leaders gave information about the content of 66 different workshops. The workshop outlines that were provided by leaders suggest some common characteristics of youth theatre workshops in Ireland.

- **Warm-ups**
  The majority of youth theatre workshops begin with a warm-up and most use games to focus the group. Many are ‘traditional’ youth theatre games such as ball games for concentration, ‘pass the clap’ and versions of ‘zip, zap, boing’. It appears that leaders who have completed professional theatre training, youth drama facilitation or have associations with theatre companies are more likely to include technical, physical and vocal exercises as warm-ups.

- **Preparation games and exploratory exercises**
  Preparation games included in the workshops are often simple and concise in the mode of ‘Pass the clap’. ‘Walk-abouts’ are still present in the youth theatre workshop and are used to achieve various aims such as preparation for movement, building the group dynamic, character development or spatial awareness. Exploratory exercises are longer exercises that in some way build towards the main activity of the workshop. This type of exercise appeared in less than half of all workshops.

- **Main activity and ‘showing’**
  The main activity of 61 workshops that took place during Census Week involved the development of scenes that were shown at the end of a workshop. The majority or these main activities explored improvisation and
devising skills where frameworks were given to members so that they could prepare a piece to show to the rest of the group. Stories and fairytales were popular frameworks for devising workshops, particularly for the 6-11 age group. Scripts and other texts were also popular stimuli for scene work. The majority of workshops contained some form of ‘showing’, either of results from exploratory exercises or from the prepared pieces. In some cases, work was re-shown after feedback.

- Feedback, wind-up and closure
  Feedback is present in the majority of workshops, mostly in relation to the ‘show’ in the main activity. Information was provided about the closure of about half of all workshops. Groups usually finished with a discussion about the main activity, a few ‘de-roled’ from activities in a simple manner and some groups finished with a favourite game such as ‘pass the clap’ or ‘zip, zap, boing’.

4.3.3 Productions

Youth theatres can have very individual artistic programmes and often the type of productions they choose really define the artistic character of a youth theatre. The artistic interests and tastes of both leaders and members can direct youth theatres to scripted or devised performances, work written for their own age range or beyond, theatre based or site-specific work, multi-disciplinary performances or traditional actor-focused theatre. During Census Week youth theatres were involved in productions of Macbeth, ‘East of the Sun West of the Moon’, and a contemporary version of King Lear.

Youth theatres all have their own unique manner of choosing plays. In some youth theatres the decision is made by a leader or a commissioned writer and in others, young people are involved in the decision making process. Clondalkin Youth Theatre described a democratic process where young people could present their proposed plays to the rest of the group and members voted to pick the play. Co. Wexford Youth Theatre leaders felt that young people don’t often have the theatre knowledge to be able to find or suggest plays that would interest and challenge them. They developed a process where the group would feedback on issues, themes and styles of theatre that they were enjoying and ideas that they were interested in developing. The group then trusted the leaders to search out a play that would answer their criteria and provide new challenges.

Another leader described their process as:

“I don’t choose a play and land it on them. I would normally go with five or six that I have short-listed and then we will spend a couple of weeks, we will read parts of them. They will improvise around them and kind of hot-seat different characters from them and maybe different groups of three or four would look at one script for a couple of weeks. So they decide the play with some guidance and then they feel ownership of it. They feel that they chose that play and that’s the play that they want to do. So they are very instrumental in what we choose.” Co. Limerick Youth Theatre Leader – Lough Gur

Youth theatres will usually try to provide a variety of different theatre experiences for their members. Youth theatres may focus on providing an overall balance between scripted work and devised work so that a young person can experience both styles of rehearsal. Some youth theatres may take other factors into consideration when choosing a play such as the style, genre, or content of the play:

“We do a modern contemporary play for Christmas where they play teenagers, they play their own age range and they play something that’s of particular relevance to them as teenagers. And then later in the year we work on a period play. They’re three act adult plays that are not written for young people, that don’t necessarily include young people, that have issues and also I try to make them different types of plays. So last year they did an 18th century melodrama, this year they’re doing a play set in the 1930s in the depression, in a Glaswegian tenement but it’s actually a play about the economics of women’s labour so it’s their first political play. So that they have to explore a fictional world that’s very, very different to their own.” – Co. Limerick Youth Theatre Leader – Lough Gur

When choosing scripted plays, leaders mention that they search out plays with large casts so that they can provide an ensemble experience for their group. The gender breakdown of a play can also play a large factor in its selection.

- SCRIPTED PLAYS

The vast majority of youth theatres perform scripted plays but they have very different ideas about which type of scripted play is best suited to youth theatre.
• Traditional / classic plays are very popular with youth theatres who love to engage with Shakespeare and plays such as Arthur Miller’s The Crucible or modernists such as Caryl Churchill. Some youth theatres have a strong interest in performing Irish plays and both young people and leaders have been active in suggesting plays by Sean O’Casey, Brian Friel, Oscar Wilde, Yeats and Synge. A few youth theatres mentioned that they had a strong preference for these types of scripts because they found plays written for young people limiting, occasionally patronising and based too much on what were deemed to be ‘teenage’ issues;

• Some youth theatres prefer to perform plays that are specifically written for young actors to perform. Youth theatres choose these plays because they are relevant to the issues and situations within young people’s lives or because they have a strong belief that young actors should only play characters within their age range. Plays that are commissioned for youth theatres generally fall within this category;

• Other youth theatres perform one-act and full length plays that have been written by members. Full-length plays written by members are not very common but Limerick Youth Theatre has produced a full length version of a play written by one of their members called In Rear View.

• DEvised AND ADAPTED PLAYS

Devising is a very different process to the rehearsal of a scripted piece and can provide different opportunities for skills development. It can provide young people with the opportunity to develop a piece that is specific to their locality and their youth theatre and a chance to explore and value their own ideas. Devising can bring about a very clear sense of ownership of a process and a production. Leaders also remarked that devising can help young people to develop theatre skills around structure and narrative as they develop a piece of theatre from the potential of an initial concept. The majority of youth theatres devised productions because of an interest or a commitment to the process of devising rather than a lack of suitable scripted plays. The only exceptions to this were situations where leaders working with younger groups and Na Crosáin Youth Theatre who devised partly out of a love for the process and partly due to a lack of good scripts for their age group written in the Irish language.

Roundabout Youth Theatre have a strong tradition of devising productions inspired by their local area and people and have produced theatre-based as well as site-specific pieces such as Tumbledowntown and Xspired. Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre recently devised a production called Carshow, a site-specific piece of theatre based on characters from their local area. A few youth theatres work primarily on devised pieces and Boomerang Youth Theatre has a policy of devising all productions.

Youth theatres are also very active adapters of novels, poems and films. Co. Clare Youth Theatre recently adapted To Kill a Mockingbird and Dreamstuff Youth Theatre has adapted The Life of Brian, Treasure Island and Grimm Fairy Tales.*

CASE STUDY: Na Crosáin Youth Theatre – devised productions

Na Crosáin Youth Theatre is run by An Taibhdhearc, a professional theatre company and venue in Galway. The youth theatre runs two groups in Galway city (Dordán and Ardán) and one group in Connemara. Na Crosáin is the only youth theatre included in the study working through the Irish language and the youth theatre has a strong interest in physical theatre.

“I’d love to see the Irish language theatre going more towards a non-verbal, not-language heavy, theatre, where you can’t rely on your audience having the amount of language that you need to understand everything they’re watching. So we work a lot on physical theatre and physicalising what you’re doing. I suppose we do a lot of skill work based on mime and physicality and we do a lot of Lecoq style exercises.” – Na Crosáin Youth Theatre Leader

The youth theatre show a strong preference for devised work, partly because of a lack of suitable plays for young people written in Irish and partly because of a love of the devising process.

“I like to give everybody a kind of equal experience. Then we have an ensemble and there’s no focus. There’s no pressure because the pressure is on the group so they bind together as a group and they have ownership over the piece.” – Na Crosáin Youth Theatre Leader

Workshops involve a large amount of ensemble work, movement work and improvisation. Ideas often emerge through workshop improvisations which are then developed as part of a devising process before eventually being directed as a youth theatre production. Jane was inspired by a Bjork song which was

* Adapted from Grimm’s Fairy Tales
written in Icelandic. The group used ideas from Boal’s image theatre to develop material and devised a performance over a five month period.

As a venue-based youth theatre, the group generally creates productions that are traditionally staged. However, the group was commissioned to create a street theatre performance for a St. Patrick’s Day Parade and members worked alongside professional street performers and actors skilled in Commedia dell’Arte to create the piece.

The group have also worked on scripts that were translated into Irish. The youth theatre worked in three separate groups to translate, act and direct three short plays by Chekhov. In spring 2009 the youth theatre were starting work on a scripted play based on Siobhán McKenna’s life and career.

* MULTI-DISCIPLINARY AND MULTI-MEDIA WORK

Some youth theatres have a strong interest in physical theatre, dance, movement and other types of multi-disciplinary theatre. The West of Ireland is particularly rich in facilitators trained in Lecoq and Commedia dell’Arte and this has impacted on the production choices and styles of some youth theatres. Limerick Youth Theatre has a strong connection to local dance companies and have been involved in large scale dance-theatre projects and performances such as *The Odyssey Project*.

Youth theatres in Ireland have not traditionally engaged with musical theatre but recently Activate Youth Theatre devised a cabaret about young people and their experience of the ‘Debs’ called the *Debutantes’ Cabaret* and Mayo Youth Theatre – Ballina produced *Into the Woods* by Stephen Sondheim. Backstage Youth Theatre has experience in developing dance and musical numbers with members from the senior drama group for the annual Longford pantomime. They also generally include a musical interlude during their one-act performances.

Some youth theatres have also become interested in multi-media work within their productions. This can range from the projection of images and films within a theatre performance to the live use of cameras on stage. Dublin Youth Theatre has actively engaged with new technologies in recent theatre productions and has established relationships with young theatre companies that are working in this field. They believe strongly that multi-media work should be integral to the theatre performance. Live cameras were used in two of their recent productions, *Daily Bread* by Gesine Danckwart and *This is Still Life* which was devised by the cast with Brokentalkers Theatre Company.

New technologies are emerging more clearly in the content of youth theatre productions, especially productions which have been devised by the cast. The internet and mobile phones have had a profound effect on the way in which young people communicate with each other and this surfaces in their improvisations, in their devised work and in popular plays such a *Chatroom* by Enda Walsh.

* A VARIETY OF PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

Youth theatre members are often keen to perform to the wider community, travelling to youth theatre festivals and events with their productions. They are excited about sharing their work with the outside world. Leaders believed that it was their responsibility to ensure the youth theatre provided appropriate performance opportunities for their members based on their experience, ability and performance history.

Some youth theatres have closed performances where only members, family and friends are directly invited. These events are typically one-act festivals where young people have directed, written, produced and acted in their own short plays. A few youth theatre leaders described the importance of providing a supportive and low-pressure performance environment where young people can experiment with new skills and find their own unique voice through theatre. Dublin Youth Theatre has traditionally organised two one-act festivals for members each year that are usually attended by family and friends of members as well as friends and ex-members of Dublin Youth Theatre. The ‘First Year One Acts’ Festival is an opportunity for first-year members to act in short plays that are directed by professional theatre practitioners, with the ‘Members One Act Festival (MOAF)’ providing opportunities for members to write, direct, produce and act in their own short plays. These types of festivals are very difficult to organise in youth theatres with a smaller membership and have generally declined in popularity over the past 10 years.

Youth theatre stakeholders commented positively on the increase in high profile youth theatre productions,
their participation in mainstream theatre festivals and their access to quality theatre venues. However, some stakeholders wondered if the decline in smaller, less pressurised performance opportunities meant that youth theatre members were losing out on the freedom to experiment and to take risks.

- **PRODUCTIONS WITH YOUNGER GROUPS**

A large amount of younger groups within youth theatres do not create productions but focus instead on the workshop experience. Some youth theatres will create presentations of short scripted or devised scenes that they have developed within their workshop for parents and friends. A few youth theatres, such as the West Cork Arts Centre, ensure that every age group has a performance opportunity once a year. The content of these plays is often based on stories and fairy tales.

**CASE STUDY: Physically Phishy Youth Theatre – productions with younger groups**

Physically Phishy Youth Theatre is run by Graffiti Theatre Company and works with young people aged 10 to 14. The youth theatre have a strong history in devising theatre based on themes and issues that emerge from the young people’s lives. Leaders found that young people in this age group weren’t always in control of their own lives and were not always able to attend rehearsals on a regular basis. Therefore, the group often structure their plays around scenes involving a small number of young people.

Their plays have included *And so this is Christmas* based on the group’s experience of Christmas time and *Growing Pains and Gains* based on the group’s experience of being a teenager. One of the group’s devised plays was called *Abandon Shandon* and was about the members’ feelings about the area where they lived and where the youth theatre was based. The play explored the recent development of the area and the lack of facilities for young people. It was performed locally in the Shandon area and was also included in an international festival.

“We invited the Lord Mayor to *Abandon Shandon*. He turned up and I think he was expecting a Christmas play and he got a group of young people who were saying this is your fault. And they were saying if any more developers come in here... there’s nothing left and this is what the consequences are. I suppose it was agit-prop in a big way but they were very full of it at the time and afterwards we got a phonecall from the Lord Mayor to say we don’t want you to abandon Shandon. The phrase had gone back to the City Hall. I always thought that was a kind of ‘Whoa’ moment.” – Physically Phishy Youth Theatre Leader

**CASE STUDY: Waterford Youth Arts – productions**

Some of their productions from the past 10 years include:

- **Diversions**
  Seven local writers each wrote short scripts that were directed by senior members of WYA. The performance took place on a bus.

- **et cetera**
  The play was devised by a cast of older members.

- **I Can Hear The Night-Birds Sing**
  The play was written by Jim Daly specifically for the 12-14 age group. The story is set in a Hospital with the main character, a young man of 17 years, who has temporarily gone blind.

- **Festival**
  The play was devised by the cast and director. It featured a main stage for spectacle, a dance tent for drama and chill-out zones for comedy.

- **To Leap from Paradise**
  The play was written by Jim Daly. It tells the story of 14-year-old John and his younger sister Rosie, during an emotionally-fraught time in the life of their family, a captivating young girl enters John’s life.

- **The Outsiders**
  The play was written by Pat Daly and looked at obsession with celebrity and image.

- **Clem and Ben**
  A promenade play written by Pat Daly. It’s an urban tale about two skateboarders, with a tragic twist.

- **The Exam**
  By Andy Hamilton. The play was a comic look at the pressures facing Andrew, Bea and Chas as they faced...
the inevitable state exams.

**CASE STUDY: Backstage Youth Theatre – productions**

Some of their productions from the past 10 years include:

- **The Do-It-Yourself Frankenstein Outfit**
  A play by David Campton. A demonstration of the latest DIY robot does not quite go to plan. The demonstrator finds a hostile audience and his assistants are not all they seem to be.

- **Toil and Trouble**
  A play by Ciarán Gray. The play takes place in a centre for girls who have been in trouble with the law and who are on short-term remand while they are assessed.

- **Dream Jobs**
  A play by Graham Jones.

- **Totally over You**
  A play by Mark Ravenhill.

- **Folie `tha**
  A play by Ciarán Gray.

- **On the Outside**
  A play by Tom Murphy. Two lads stand outside the local dance hall in rural 1950s Ireland without the social or financial resources to gain entry.

- **None the Wiser**
  A play by Anthony Booth. The action focuses on a group of ‘nuns’ who live in a convent by night and shoplift by day. Everything is going well until they meet another group of ‘nuns’ and then they have to pretend to be real.

**CASE STUDY: Limerick Youth Theatre – productions**

Some of their productions from the past 10 years include:

- **The Odyssey Project**
  A collaboration between a Latvian composer and dancer / choreographer (who runs a youth dance troupe in Latvia called Zvaigznu Aka) and the youth theatre, including members of the new Latvian community within Limerick. It was an original piece of dance-theatre about immigration to Ireland, told by bodies and metaphor.

- **Tentacle**
  A Tenth Anniversary Show in 8 parts, written, designed and produced by 10 past members of Limerick Youth Theatre and performed all over the Belltable Arts Centre.

- **Plan Nine from Outer Limerick**
  Plan 9 was the first full-length devised play by LYT. Mixing Physical Theatre with Metaphysics, the group created an enormous cast of characters who find that their lives are playing out as the Reality TV of the future.

- **Romeo and Juliet**
  A Limerick version of the play by William Shakespeare.

- **In Rear View**
  A full three-act play by Caoimh McCarthy, a former member of the youth theatre. The play is about the experience of secondary school from the first day to the Leaving Cert.

- **The Beggars’ Opera**
  John Gay’s anti-opera is set among the thieves of 18th century London. The libretto was set to contemporary well-known tunes, including Chris de Burgh and Michael Jackson.

- **Rhinoceros**
  A piece of Theatre of the Absurd by Eugene Ionesco. Rhinoceros is about a town where the inhabitants turn into rhinoceroses.

**CASE STUDY: Activate Youth Theatre – productions**

Some of their productions from the past 10 years include:
Debutantes’ Cabaret
A cabaret devised by youth theatre members about the experience of going to the ‘debs’.

Ideal Homes Show
A play devised by youth theatre members and then scripted and directed by ex-members of Activate Youth Theatre. The play explored the concept of home in a changing Ireland. Where is home these days and what does it mean?

Requiem for Lena
By Veronica Coburn. This was play was commissioned as part of the NAYD Nextus project.

Morelight
By Bryony Lavery. The play portrays the life of a Geisha and explores ideas about women being seen as objects. The play was commissioned as part of the New Connections programme.

After Juliet
By Sharman MacDonald. The play was commissioned as part of the New Connections programme.

My City Saturday
A play devised by the youth theatre members about life in their city on a typical Saturday.

‘Juliets and Romeos’, Shakespeare in Shandon
A promenade performance through Shandon of scenes and monologues from Romeo and Juliet.

4.3.4 Attending youth theatre and professional theatre productions

The majority of youth theatres endeavour to see professional theatre. It is an important but irregular part of their youth theatre programme. Youth theatres are also likely to travel to see other youth theatre productions, with a small number of youth theatres watching several youth theatre productions every year. Youth theatre leaders want to expose members to a wide world of theatre that will inspire them and open their eyes to different approaches and styles.

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE

The majority of youth theatre leaders state that their members see a professional theatre production at least once a year. During Census Week, the senior group of Roundabout Youth Theatre went to see Rosaleen McDonagh’s play Stuck at the Project Arts Centre and Limerick Youth Theatre went to see a dance performance. However, only 44.20% of 448 youth theatre members who completed questionnaires for those aged 12 and over reported that they had attended a professional theatre piece with their youth theatre, indicating that less than half of all youth theatre members are attending professional theatre together on an annual basis.

Youth theatres who regularly attend professional theatre generally negotiate deals with theatre venues or receive special offers or free tickets from theatre companies and venues. It is this assistance that makes professional theatre trips feasible. Roundabout Youth Theatre mentioned that they had received free tickets from a theatre company and a dance company which enabled them to bring youth theatre members to see performances. The cost of theatre tickets can make professional theatre inaccessible for youth theatres with low levels of funding and resources. One or two venues who maintained good relationships with their local youth theatres had actually initiated a ‘Youth Theatre Member’ rate that was lower than the general concession rate. The majority of youth theatres subsidise a theatre trip so that the young person is either attending for free or is contributing a small sum towards the travel and ticket costs.

Youth theatre leaders want to expose members to challenging, high quality theatre. Many leaders were keen to take their members to see more theatre but felt limited by the options that were available to them locally. Youth theatres that are not based near urban centres mentioned that it can be difficult to find theatre that is not only suitable for the age range of the group but also theatrically interesting. These leaders felt that some arts centres and local venues were under pressure to programme theatre that would be popular with local audiences but that may not be the most theatrically challenging material for their youth theatre members. Some leaders spoke of their desire to expose members to a style of theatre that was different to the amateur theatre background of their local area. They felt that experiencing a wider range of theatre styles would encourage their members to experiment and find their own way of making theatre. Leaders at the Backstage Youth Theatre praised a recent professional theatre network, NOMAD, for bringing quality theatre to their local venue.

Youth theatre leaders say that a lack of time is one of the main barriers to organising theatre trips. Leaders feel that they can put in an immense effort to arrange tickets and travel to a local town only to be disappointed by the quality of the theatre that they experience. They feel that theatre trips can be a great risk when there is no
guarantee of quality. A sense of cultural or geographical isolation can really limit the practical possibilities, as well as the aspirations of youth theatres. However, some youth theatres do travel great distances to create opportunities for their members. Co. Clare Youth Theatre recently travelled to Dublin to see a performance at the Abbey Theatre.

In 2004, NAYD introduced the Young Critics Programme to offer youth theatre members greater opportunities to see professional theatre, to explore and articulate their opinions about theatre and learn about the craft of the critic. Some youth theatres have also developed activities to support their members’ engagement with professional theatre:

– Co. Sligo Youth Theatre recently introduced their own ‘Young Audiences’ programme to explore professional theatre productions in their local area;
– Co. Clare Youth Theatre and Backstage Youth Theatre have arranged post-show talks or workshops with directors and actors that have been involved in local touring productions.

• YOUTH THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

The majority of youth theatres do travel to see each other’s productions. During Census Week, the youth theatre in Killeshandra went to see the production of a neighbouring group, Celbridge Youth Drama went to see Kildare Youth Theatre’s production of Macbeth, Manorhamilton Youth Theatre (MYTH) travelled to see a performance given by LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon in their home town. Of the 448 youth theatre members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires, 55.80% had been to see another youth theatre show.

Some youth theatres build strong relationships with other local youth theatres and they will regularly go and see each other’s work. This is very common within youth theatres run by Local Authority Arts Offices. The youth theatres are often encouraged to view themselves as belonging to a countywide community of youth theatres and the Local Authority Arts Office will usually fund tickets and travel so that they can view each other’s performances. The Local Authority run youth theatres in Leitrim are one example of this tradition:

“The youth theatre were at Carrigallen last night and they’ve been to Carrick-on-Shannon before Christmas... a contemporary version of King Lear which I really liked and they have been to the Sligo Drama Circle and that was a devised piece that was all about teenage issues and stuff and they really enjoyed that. And we had questions and answers afterwards.” – Manorhamilton Youth Theatre (MYTH) Leader

However, youth theatres do build strong relationships with youth theatres from different counties and different backgrounds. These relationships are often created during residential exchanges and festivals. Urban youth theatres demonstrated low levels of attendance at youth theatre performances. There were very low levels of engagement between the multiple youth theatres based in Dublin and Cork city and it was uncommon for youth theatres in these areas to see each other’s work. Galway Youth Theatre and Limerick Youth Theatre also reported low levels of engagement with youth theatres in their area and they prioritised engagement with professional theatre practice.

Many youth theatres mentioned seeing other youth theatre performances at the New Connections festival (previously Shell Connections) at the Everyman Palace in Cork and more recently at the Riverbank Arts Centre in Newbridge. Some youth theatre leaders also mentioned NAYD programmes such as Nextus or the National and Regional Youth Theatre Festivals as opportunities to develop relationships with other youth theatres.

Leaders and members felt that participation in Connections had allowed them to see the work of many other youth theatres from around the country. Both leaders and members commented on the unique performance context of a festival. It provides an opportunity for youth theatre members to perform and to weigh their work against the quality of other youth theatre productions. A sense of competition can sometimes be made explicit in the formal structures of a festival.

“Yeah of course quality matters. You know, you go to compete really against the other ones, you know? So you want to... you want to take it seriously.”
– Independent Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre members are concerned about producing quality theatre and want to see quality theatre in return. They want to view youth theatre as they would any other theatre production:

“Youth theatre is getting more credible now, like in the last two years there’s just been some really good stuff produced and I think it’s starting to lose that stigma of like... people are starting to say “That was...
actually a really good show” and not just for young people, do you know what I mean like? But they aren’t just young people – they’re actors as well.” – Dublin Youth Theatre Member

Other youth theatre members wanted an audience to see youth theatre productions within the context that they were created. They wanted an audience to understand what they recognised as the purpose of youth theatre productions:

“Well, like you know, if the production is bad or whatever, like... you learn from that. So I think like even if a play is bad, it’s more about having fun with the play instead of having it perfect. It’s what you make of it really instead of what the audience make of it.” – Lightbulb Youth Theatre Member

This sense of understanding the context of a youth theatre performance is possible when youth theatres see each other’s work as part of an ongoing and developing relationship. It is easier within this framework for young people to have a shared understanding of each other’s rehearsal process.

Lack of time and the cost of travel and tickets were the most common reasons that youth theatres did not attend other youth theatre productions. Some youth theatres feel very geographically isolated and may not have developed relationships with nearby youth theatres or the nearest youth theatre may be some distance away. Some leaders mentioned that NAYD’s “Go See YT” fund had helped subsidise travel costs and enabled them to travel to their nearest youth theatre. A few youth theatre leaders were negative about the standards of youth theatre productions and felt happier to encourage their members to see local professional theatre instead.

Youth theatre leaders and members also cited trips to see professional and youth theatre productions as a strong social element of their programme:

“Our social event is going to a show. All the girls got dressed up for going to the theatre last week. That was brilliant. So we went at Christmas and we went last week and we’re going again this Thursday night to another show which is in Ballina so we don’t have to organise a mini-bus or anything and... so it’s brilliant.” – Ballina Youth Theatre Leader

4.3.5 Festivals and Exchanges

Youth theatres really value taking part in festivals and events and they can often be the highpoint of a youth theatre year. These type of events do not generally form part of the regular youth theatre programme but may happen once every year or two depending on the youth theatre. These activities typically revolve around group participation and group exchange, however, some projects may involve the participation of individual youth theatre members working with young people from other youth theatres, youth drama groups or arts projects.

The key to these types of activities is the artistic and social exchange that takes place between young people from different youth theatres and backgrounds. Youth theatre leaders report that this ‘exchange’ can be viewed as an important landmark for a group but they felt it was important that youth theatre members have enough time to bond and develop as a group first before they look outwards and engage with others. Participation in festivals and exchanges can foster a sense of belonging to a wider community and this can prove beneficial for both members and leaders.

Each youth theatre builds a different type of relationship network, with some youth theatres feeling part of a very local community and others having an international sense of community. Other youth theatres may feel part of the youth theatre community, the professional arts community or the local youth work community. Youth theatres organise participation in exchanges and festivals based on their own particular relationship network and outlook and there are also a few who are happiest working in isolation.

Youth theatres who took part in Centre Stage +10 had participated in:

- NAYD
  Recent NAYD festivals and programmes such as Regional Festivals involving skills workshops and performance, the European Children’s Theatre Festival in Cork, Young Critics Programme, the National Youth Theatre. They had also participated in older projects organised by or with NAYD such as week-long National Festivals, NEXTUS, Bards in the Yard, NAYD 25th Birthday Celebrations and European Youth Theatre Encounters.
New Connections
Many youth theatres had taken part in the New Connections Festival (previously Shell Connections), an initiative of the National Theatre in London. The New Connections Programme commissions playwrights to write for young actors and provides opportunities to workshop with the writer, perform in a home venue, present the production to an NT Staff Director, and perform it at a New Connections Partner Theatre.

Local Festivals
Youth theatres had participated in local festivals. In some cases these were local arts or community festivals. Some youth theatres mentioned St. Patrick’s Day parades while others such as Co. Carlow Youth Theatre had a record of participating in their local arts festival, Éigse. Kildare Youth Theatre had also engaged with a Human Rights Festival.

Local Youth Theatre Festivals
Youth theatres were also creating festivals that focused on youth theatre workshops and performances. Youth theatres in Kildare (Kildare Youth Theatre, Griese Youth Theatre and Celbridge Youth Drama and another local youth drama group from Prosperous) participate in an annual festival, combining skills workshops and performance opportunities. Roscommon Youth Theatre hosted a youth theatre festival called 'West Awake' and the South East Network of Youth Theatres (SENYT) used to hold annual youth theatre festivals.

Theatre and Arts Festivals
Some youth theatres regularly participate in mainstream festivals. Dublin Youth Theatre and Roundabout Youth Theatre have taken part in the Dublin Fringe Festival and Galway Youth Theatre regularly participate in the Cúirt Festival and the Galway Arts Festival.

International Festivals and Exchanges
Youth theatres had also participated in European and International festivals and exchanges. Some youth theatres had sent individual members to take part in European Youth Theatre Encounters while others had organised exchanges where the youth theatre group travelled to another country and took part in in a combination of workshops, theatre performances and cultural exchanges. These exchanges were generally theatre-focused but could sometimes serve a broader cultural or social remit and include multi-art form practice. Waterford Youth Arts had recently attended the Big Youth Theatre Festival in London hosted by the National Association for Youth Theatres in England and Kildare Youth Theatre had recently visited Teatro della Limonaia in Florence, Italy as part of an ongoing exchange programme.

In general, youth theatres were very interested in participating in festivals and exchanges. The main barriers to participation were cited as lack of time, lack of funding and a lack of contacts or experience in creating exchanges. Youth theatre leaders felt more secure when a national organisation such as NAYD was involved because they could more confident about the level of accommodation, food and welfare provided and they believed that artistic and welfare policies were similar to their own. Youth theatre leaders were concerned about the level of responsibility they would have for the welfare of their members on an exchange or residential festival. Youth theatres were also concerned about finding good exchange partners who would have a similar ethos and way of working with young people, would have a similar age range within their membership and a similar level of interest and ability in drama/theatre.

Youth theatre leaders who have been involved in exchanges and festivals are very positive about the outcomes for their members and the importance of these types of activities within their programme.

“I think exchanges and festivals have a really profound effect on young people- theatrically, socially and emotionally. You just see people going away and coming back about three foot taller because they’ve experienced other stimuli and I think it’s really, really positive”
- Artistic Director, Graffiti Theatre Company.

Youth theatre members and leaders reflect that participating in an exchange or festival can help young people feel not just part of a wider community but also part of a wider artistic community.

“The first time when we were in Cork [Connections Festival] when we were all there with loads of other youth theatres and stuff... and kind of realising that all these people, all these youth theatre people are kind of like-minded. They’re all absolutely off the rocker completely and you cannot get embarrassed, you cannot... no-one will look at you weird for saying something random or anything. You’re all together.” – Portlaoise Youth Theatre Member
"We’ve always had somebody from Activate in every Encounter [European Youth Theatre Encounter]. There was always someone coming back with stuff. The utter excitement of it and the way some people’s lives just utterly changed. One member is now working in theatre in Germany but she always said that this was because they went to Denmark [the youth theatre took part in a festival called ‘The Celts are Coming’] and she suddenly realised that there was a whole life of theatre going on that she could be part of and, you know, she went to live in Germany and stayed there.”

– Activate Youth Theatre Leader

The statistics from the member questionnaires indicate that the level of participation in festivals and exchanges is quite low. However, leaders from many groups described previous experience of these types of activities. The majority of youth theatre members remain part of their group for between one and three years and the irregularity of these exchanges and festivals means that particular generations of members can miss out on these valued experiences.

There is no record of the 6-11 age group participating in festivals and exchanges that involve travel although some younger members may be involved in local festivals such as St. Patrick’s Day parades. The 12-13 age group also demonstrate low levels of participation in these type of activities, the only activities mentioned for this age range were the European Children’s Theatre Encounter in Cork and the NAYD Regional Festivals in 2006.

CASE STUDY: Boomerang Youth Theatre – international exchange

International collaboration and exchanges are central to the annual programme of Boomerang Youth Theatre. The youth theatre members participate in two international exchanges every year. Groups of young people have travelled to and worked with other young people in Germany, Finland, Czech Republic, Italy, France, Portugal, England and more recently to Jordan and the Middle East. The exchanges are often issue-based, with young people from the youth theatre exploring diverse cultures, traditions and opinions through the medium of drama, other arts forms and discussion. Youth Theatre Leaders at Boomerang feel their members really benefit from these exchanges:

“It’s just really good to let the kids see these totally different styles and totally different ideas. It does change the way they look at things. It’s great for them to have that at such a young age. I think it creates much more interesting theatre as well because there is a language barrier there and so they had to learn to relate to each other in a completely different way. I think, really, they just see outside of their own little world. They do start questioning things a little more.”

Boomerang have also been involved in a joint venture with The Playhouse in Derry called YouC.A.N. It is a cross-border, cross-community Youth Culture Arts Network that promotes partnerships between arts and youth organisations and works towards developing creative and innovative projects to facilitate cross-border communication between young people. Activities centre on annual conferences and training for young artists.

4.4 Other Elements of Practice

Other elements of youth theatre practice such as programme delivery, evaluation and documentation and recruitment are explored under the following headings:

4.4.1 Programme Delivery
4.4.2 Evaluation and Documentation
4.4.3 Recruitment of Members

4.4.1 Programme Delivery

Youth theatre leaders have high levels of skills and training. In general, leaders felt that they had achieved good levels of core youth theatre skills. Leaders felt comfortable facilitating drama workshops and leading a variety of activities such as drama games, improvisation and devising. Leaders spoke positively about their ability to work with and relate to young people and were happy with their leadership and teamwork skills.
SKILLS OF YOUTH THEATRE LEADERS

Figure 4.10 indicates that leaders are generally confident in their facilitation skills with 35.19% of leaders who completed questionnaires describing themselves as having an intermediate level of skill and 37.04% describing themselves as having advanced facilitation skills. Leaders who described themselves as ‘beginners’ came from a wide age range but all had been working in youth theatre for a comparatively short amount of time. Some leaders also reported specialisms in certain areas such as puppetry, clowning, physical theatre, process drama, and Shakespeare.

“I suppose my skills are... I’d say, certainly management of teams and of people. I’m good on drama skills, improvisation and workshops. I would be a director and I’d know the production side of things pretty well and would have a life of training on that. I would be good around group dynamics- people working together, teamwork and empowering youngsters.” – Carrigallen Youth Theatre Leader

Youth theatre leaders were also asked through the questionnaire how they would assess their directing skills. Figure 4.11 demonstrates that youth theatre leaders are less confident of their directing skills with 40.74% of them describing themselves as beginners. However, the majority of youth theatre leaders feel they have intermediate or advanced levels of directing skills and some mentioned that they were very confident of their rehearsal techniques and characterisation. Some youth theatre leaders were most comfortable directing script-based productions with a rehearsal process that was built around the interpretation of the text and characters. This is particularly common with leaders who come from a background in amateur theatre but not exclusively so, as theatre in Ireland has traditionally been text-based and this is the comfort zone of many youth theatre leaders across the country. A number of leaders were more comfortable with a rehearsal process built on a period of devising and script-writing while other leaders felt most comfortable with physical theatre.

![Figure 4.10 How would you assess your workshop facilitation skills?](image1)

![Figure 4.11 How would you assess your directing skills?](image2)

EXTERNAL FACILITATORS AND DIRECTORS

“What we’re looking for I suppose, is things that we don’t have or things that they’re better at doing.”

– Co. Wexford Youth Theatre Leader

In general, youth theatre leaders do not deliver the annual programme of a youth theatre by themselves. They will bring in freelance facilitators, writers, artists, directors and designers to complement the expertise that already exists within the youth theatre. This level of input by external staff will vary according to the budget and resources that are available as well as the ethos of the youth theatre and attitude of the youth theatre leaders. The most common way that youth theatre members engage with external staff is through specialist skills workshops. This is a short-term input that focuses on a particular skill that youth theatre leaders believe would benefit the members and provide more experienced members with opportunities for progression. The most common specialist skills that leaders would like to explore with external facilitators are voice, movement and physical styles of theatre. Other skills areas that leaders have been keen to explore are:
• choreography;
• singing;
• stage combat and swordplay;
• street theatre;
• radio plays;
• viewpoints technique;

• technical workshops in lighting and sound;
• mime;
• the Lecoq approach to physical theatre;
• Alexander Technique.

“All artistic skills... there is enough experience in the youth theatre to do the process-based work, the reflection, work about social issues, devising, that sort of work. What they have to develop are the artistic skills like Commedia, voice work and viewpoints.” – Kildare Youth Theatre Leader

External facilitators are sourced through the leader’s own social and professional network, through parent organisations such as Local Authority Arts Offices, theatre companies or youth arts organisations as well as through NAYD. Some youth theatres will also approach theatre companies and individual performers in local arts centres and theatres about facilitating a workshop with their group. Clare Youth Theatre has run workshops with two different actors who were touring productions to their local arts centre.

Youth theatres are also interested in developing relationships with external staff that will contribute towards a more long-term process or a production. Youth theatres may hire directors and designers that work with members throughout a rehearsal period and a production week. The four large autonomous youth theatres, Dublin Youth Theatre, Limerick Youth Theatre, Galway Youth Theatre and Co. Sligo Youth Theatre all regularly hire freelance directors to work on their main annual productions. Other youth theatres have also hired freelance directors including some run by professional theatre companies, Local Authority Arts Offices and youth arts organisations.

Youth theatres may also commission writers and other artists to work with them to develop scripts and projects. For example, Co. Wexford Youth Theatre worked with a leader skilled in Commedia dell’Arte to learn some physical theatre skills and devise and write a piece for an Arts Festival, while the final performance of the piece was directed by the regular youth theatre leader. A few youth theatre leaders mentioned that they would be interested in the support of a skilled facilitator to help with the long term development of specialist skills such as devising.

CASE STUDY: West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre – external facilitators and artists

West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre regularly finds opportunities to engage with artists who may be involved in arts projects or exhibitions at the centre. The youth theatre commissioned a writer to create a play for their younger age group in 2005. Frances Kay worked with the youth theatre members and staff to develop script ideas and then created a play called Corcadia that was performed by the younger age group and directed by the regular youth theatre leader. The project was funded by a commissions award.

Leaders felt that it was of huge benefit to the members to experience the process of the writer and thought it had been a very successful development in their programme for the younger age group.

The youth theatre is also keen to bring in external facilitators and artists to assist the training of the core youth theatre leader. The youth theatre recently hired an external facilitator to act as mentor to the youth theatre leader during the rehearsal process for a play by Shakespeare.

“I get to work with other people and constantly be kept on my toes. I can learn various different things from other people and everybody has their own different styles, you know? I suppose my style is constantly developing as well, as a result of the different people that I work with. Just being in the room with somebody else, you are able to pick up different things – the way they say things and their use of language. So it’s really intriguing watching other people work. I’ll be sitting there taking my notes and seeing what I can learn out of it so that I can incorporate ideas into future classes.” – West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre Leader

• REASONS FOR HIRING EXTERNAL FACILITATORS OR DIRECTORS

Leaders cited specific reasons for bringing in external specialists to assist with the skills development of their youth theatre members. Youth theatre leaders felt that members should be exposed to other theatre styles and types of work but that they should also work with a variety of different leaders. It was important to many leaders that young people understand that there isn’t just one way of doing things. Stakeholders remarked that youth
theatre members who work with a variety of facilitators and experience different approaches become less dependent on a sole youth theatre leader. Working with freelancers and working with a variety of regular youth theatre leaders can help members develop a bond with the identity of the youth theatre rather than simply the youth theatre leader and can assist with sustainability issues if the key youth theatre leader leaves.

Freelance facilitators, directors and artists can help the leaders learn new skills as well. The short-term specialist workshops as well as more long-term involvement can support a leader with aspects of theatre where they feel less confident. Youth theatre leaders commented that they really enjoyed learning from other people’s style of facilitation too and valued the opportunity to watch someone else work. These experiences often provided them with an opportunity to stand back and watch the participation of their members on a more objective level. Youth theatre leaders reported that working alongside another skilled leader can refresh and invigorate their work and many voluntary leaders remarked that it also gave them a much needed break. Some youth theatres also consider the fact that certain facilitators or directors may increase the status of a youth theatre project or the profile of the youth theatre.

Activate Youth Theatre employed an ex-member to write a script based on a collaborative, devising process and an ex-member to direct the final production. The youth theatre leader was keen to reflect the type of director and writer that these ex-members had become but also to celebrate the continued creative relationships between current members, ex-members and youth theatre leaders. It is also worth noting that leaders highlighted a few difficulties that can arise with the process of letting an external facilitator or director work with your group:

“The handover can be a difficult process. You’ve got to be prepared to step back and you’ve got to know who you’re dealing with. I would only take in a director if I was really, really sure that it didn’t upset that creative exchange. If somebody started to enforce or direct in a way that I see some people directing, I think it would be completely against the whole ethos of Activate or Physically Phishy.”

– Activate and Physically Phishy Youth Theatre Leader

**TRAINING NEEDS OF YOUTH THEATRE LEADERS**

Youth theatre leaders were asked to rank their training needs as part of the leader’s questionnaire. Leaders get involved in youth theatre because of a commitment to young people and a passion for theatre and drama. Their self-assessment of training needs (Table 4.1) underlines their enjoyment of practical drama work with young people and their commitment to skill development in this area.

Table 4.1 Training Needs of Youth Theatre Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERALL RANK</th>
<th>AREA OF TRAINING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Workshop facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Directing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Acting</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Devising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Improvisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Street theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Technical (lighting, sound)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Circus skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Event management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Child protection &amp; welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Stage management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Governance (boards etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.2 Evaluation and Documentation

Youth theatres are all involved in evaluating and documenting their work to some degree. In general, youth theatre leaders are keen to keep records of workshop plans and scripts as well as photographs and films of productions and events. Youth theatre leaders are involved in very informal styles of evaluation but a few examples of a more formal approach exist around the country.

**Evaluation**

Youth theatres were asked if they had evaluated any work during Census Week. Of the 36 youth theatres who responded:

- 55.56% youth theatres had evaluated something during Census Week;
- 44.44% youth theatres had not evaluated something during Census Week.

Figure 4.12 provides further information on the types of activity that were evaluated during Census Week.

![Figure 4.12 What was evaluated during Census Week?](image)

Figure 4.12 indicates that a significant number of youth theatres are regularly evaluating their core activities. Youth theatre leaders explained in interviews that this evaluation generally consisted of short and informal discussions between leaders or leaders and members at the end of a workshop or rehearsal to explore simple questions such as “How do you think that went?”. Leaders state that the discussions influence plans for the next workshop, rehearsal or project but the outcomes of the discussions are not generally recorded or written down.

Some youth theatres create more formal evaluation sessions for youth theatre members at the end of projects. These types of sessions are also discussion based and provide young people with a dedicated space to feed back their opinions on youth theatre activities. Other youth theatres, such as West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre, complete a one-page evaluation form at the end of each workshop that is added to a central youth theatre file. Information about the content of the workshop and the response of the group and the leader are recorded.

Youth theatres do not generally engage with formal evaluation structures that examine whether youth theatres are achieving their aims. There is very little academic evaluation of youth theatre activities and the benefits of participation for youth theatre members. A few Local Authorities, such as Co. Mayo Arts Office have organised external evaluations of their youth theatres. Kildare Youth Theatre encourages postgraduate students from NUI Maynooth to study their youth theatre and evaluate the benefits of participation for its members. In general, evaluation ranks quite low in the priorities of youth theatre leaders. A lack of time and expertise prevents people from more formal evaluation processes but a dislike of administration and bureaucracy also influences their practice.

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Youth theatres were asked if they had documented any work during Census Week. Of the 36 youth theatres who responded:

- 80.56% of youth theatres had documented something during Census Week;
- 19.44% of youth theatres had not documented something during Census Week.

Figure 4.13 provides further information on the types of activity that were documented during Census Week.

Youth theatre leaders show more positive attitudes towards documentation. In Census Week, leaders stated that they documented many of the core activities of their youth theatre. Leaders may have kept records of workshops plans, written down new scenes from a devised piece, updated rehearsal notes or filmed or photographed an activity such as a performance. The motivation for this level of documentation can be very practical if youth theatres are working through a devising or a rehearsal process or if it’s part of a contractual agreement with a funder. It can also be driven by a commitment to memory building that validates and support youth theatre practice.

Youth theatre members are becoming significant documenters of their own work, using new technologies to post comments, photographs and film clips on their youth theatre web pages. Photographs, scripts and programmes traditionally remained in the office drawer or the attic of a youth theatre leader but young people are increasingly sharing their youth theatre memories online to a wider youth theatre community through bebo and myspace.

### Recruitment of Members

“The members will always be there. It’s our responsibility to find them. We as a Local Authority have a civic responsibility to provide that kind of service for our young people. The problem will never be membership because there will always be young people who will always need this.”

– Local Authority Arts Officer, Co. Wexford

Youth theatre membership appears to be thriving in Ireland. The 39 youth theatres who took part in the Centre Stage +10 Census Week reported a membership of 1452 young people, an average of 37 members per youth theatre. However, a significant number of youth theatres have a membership of less than 20 young people, including some well-funded youth theatres who have the resources to carry out effective recruitment drives. There is great disparity between the membership levels of youth theatres around the country even though youth theatres are often using the same recruitment strategies. It is an issue effecting both rural and urban areas alike. What is clear from leaders and stakeholders is that it is easier to attract young people to youth theatres that already have high membership levels, a strong programme of activities and a sense of excitement and commitment among the membership.

Once youth theatres become caught in a cycle where they are losing members and are unsuccessful at recruiting
new ones, it can have an effect on their ability to plan and provide a strong programme and have a knock-on effect on the atmosphere among existing members. Some youth theatre leaders and stakeholders point to ineffective or non-existent recruitment strategies as a significant problem, while others feel that the sector is not communicating effectively with young people and that there may be problems in ‘selling youth theatre’, that is expressing the unique values and opportunities that make youth theatre different. Others point to a shift in youth culture as the main reason for difficulties in recruitment. They point to increased pressure from schools and parents to succeed in exams as well as increased levels of part-time work as large factors in this trend.

A Youth Work Services Manager at Catholic Youth Care believed that this trend was something which has an effect on all areas of youth work:

“I’ve seen in youth work in general, both at voluntary level and at full-time level, a gradual slide towards the younger age group. I think it’s because it is easy to engage younger kids. I think the older ones are harder to reach because people perceive them as more challenging. I think the other thing is that the programmes need to be engaging, creative and challenging or else they are not going to engage. Because I mean there are loads of other things that they can do with their time. They will vote with their feet. Whereas a 10,11,12 year old, they will come to something because it’s on.”

The most common type of recruitment strategy is passive in nature. Leaders rely on word of mouth to bring in extra members and will ask youth theatre members to talk to their friends and see if they are interested in joining. Youth theatre leaders report that this is a very effective way to bring new young people to the youth theatre and some youth theatres rely on word of mouth as their sole recruitment strategy.

Small youth theatres who run one workshop group have the resources and staff to typically accommodate up to 25 members, though some will accept more. These youth theatres may only be able to accept 4 or 5 new members every year and can be reluctant to run recruitment drives that may result in leaders having to disappoint young people who are genuinely interested in joining.

Leaders report that word of mouth is the most effective but also the fairest method of recruitment in this instance. Leaders also indicated that young people who come to the youth theatre on the recommendation of existing members have a clear set of realistic expectations on joining the youth theatre. However, youth theatre leaders and stakeholders pointed out a number of difficulties that arise when recruitment strategies are entirely passive. They pointed out that it usually doesn’t help the diversity of youth theatre members as it can multiply the number of young people from similar areas and backgrounds and can increase any existing gender imbalance in the group. It can also be difficult for leaders to estimate membership for the year or ensure a consistent group of young people in the Spring when members traditionally leave for study and exams.

The most popular type of active recruitment is delivering free workshops in secondary schools. Youth theatre leaders arrange opportunities to work directly with young people through practical drama workshops to help young people get a ‘taste-tester’ of youth theatre. Leaders can target schools in specific local towns or areas of a city to balance out the geographic spread of their members and also target boys’ schools to address a gender imbalance in the group. Many youth theatre leaders work professionally as freelance drama facilitators within formal education settings and they also direct interested young people to the youth theatre that they are connected to. A further example is The Civic Theatre in Tallaght which runs a theatre project for local Transition Year students and at the completion of the project provides information about the local youth theatres in the area.

Youth theatre leaders find that there can be difficulties with recruiting young people directly from schools. Leaders are often only invited to provide the free workshops for 1st year, 2nd year and 4th year students or asked to run workshops within 30/40 minute class times. There is also confusion about whether leaders are allowed to gather the contact details of interested young people within a school so that they can be contacted at a later date to discuss their interest in joining.

Limerick Youth Theatre mentioned that they had stopped running workshops in schools as a recruitment method because they felt that atmosphere and levels of participation weren’t representative of the youth theatre experience and may actually be putting young people off. Instead, they make a presentation on the youth theatre and its activities and simply encourage young people to turn up and try it out.

Youth theatres try many different approaches to recruitment, based on their knowledge of the local area and local young people but also based on their youth theatre model and resources:
• Youth theatres place advertisements in local newspapers, village newsletters, church bulletins or on Bebo pages and youth theatre websites. Youth theatres may also be featured in the brochure of a local arts centre where activities are based;

• Youth theatres get referrals from local youth services, residential centres for young people and from local teachers who believe that youth theatre could be of benefit to particular young people that they are working with;

• Sometimes the high profile of a youth theatre or its parent organisation can attract the interest of young people or their parents who will make contact with the youth theatre to talk about joining without seeing any direct advertising. This would be more likely to take place within the large autonomous youth theatres or within those run by professional theatre companies;

• Productions are often the public face of youth theatres and many young people become interested in joining after seeing a performance. They may be attracted by the standard of the production, by the atmosphere around the production or sometimes by the sense of teamwork and group achievement that is evident amongst members. Some youth theatres will keep in touch with interested young people over a long period of time, inviting them to productions and events to maintain their interest until the time of year when they can accept new members;

• Some of the larger youth theatres run outreach projects in city estates or local towns and villages, targeting areas where young people have a low level of access to the arts and other services. These outreach projects can attract a variety of young people to the main youth theatre activities once the project finishes.

• Youth theatres also attract members who are participating in other types of activities being run by a parent organisation. For instance, young people who are involved in an art project within a youth arts organisation may be willing to try youth theatre as well or a young person who participates in a school project run by a professional theatre company may be willing to try the youth theatre based within that company;

• Youth theatres may also attract members from other activities and groups working within the same building. For example, Co. Carlow Youth Theatre runs regular workshops within the local youth services building and may attract the attention of the young people who are regularly using the space. Stagecraft Youth Theatre in Clonmel often attracts young people who are attending other activities within the local arts centre;

• Youth theatre leaders who live in the same area as their youth theatre often try direct recruitment by walking around the local area, speaking with young people about the youth theatre and inviting them to come along and try a workshop. This is easiest within a rural setting where the youth theatre leader has strong local connections and is known by parents in the area.

• A few youth theatres such as the Cork School of Music Youth Theatre and Independent Youth Theatre will recruit a majority of members through other drama courses and classes. Students who attend the drama department at the Cork School of Music are invited to attend the youth theatre. Young people who attend the Independent Theatre Workshop are encouraged to join the Independent Youth Theatre. Both youth theatres also welcome any young people from the local area who have an interest in drama.

CASE STUDY: Tallaght Youth Theatre – recruitment strategies

Tallaght Youth Theatre is an autonomous youth theatre run on a completely voluntary basis. The youth theatre operates a number of active recruitment strategies however, at the time of the Centre Stage +10 Census Week, the youth theatre had low membership levels.

Strategies include:
- running taster workshops in local secondary schools;
- putting up flyers and posters;
- promoting the youth theatre through articles in local newspapers;
- linking with the local youth service and ensuring youth workers have enough information on the youth theatre to refer any interested young people;
- linking with staff who run the Transition Year ‘Tenderfoot Project’ at The Civic Theatre to ensure they have enough information on the youth theatre to refer any interested young people;
- inviting other local groups of young people to see performances.

The youth theatre runs a recruitment drive at least once a year but will often run additional strategies to increase membership levels prior to a rehearsal process or project. The youth theatre will generally accept members throughout the year.
Chapter 5: Youth Theatre Members
Youth theatres are welcoming a wide variety of young people between the ages of 5 and 25 to participate in their activities. The profile and participation of youth theatre members are explored under the following headings:

5.1 Youth Theatre Member Profile
5.2 Participation in youth theatre – Members
5.3 Senior Members

5.1 Youth Theatre Member Profile

The profile of youth theatre members is explored under the following headings:

5.1.1 Age
5.1.2 Gender
5.1.3 Nationality and Ethnic Background
5.1.4 Geographic Distribution
5.1.5 Educational Background
5.1.6 Work Background
5.1.7 Leisure Interests
5.1.8 Career Aspirations
5.1.9 Family Background

5.1.1 Age

The age range of youth theatre members has remained largely the same over the past 10 years. The average age for a youth theatre member in Centre Stage was 15.3. The current average age for a youth theatre member is 15.5 (based on 446 completed questionnaires from youth theatre members). In both Centre Stage and Centre Stage +10, the youngest member who returned a questionnaire was five. In Centre Stage +10, the oldest member who returned a questionnaire was 23, a drop of two years from the oldest member in Centre Stage.

The most significant change in the age range has been the decline in 17 and 18 year olds in youth theatres around the country. The youth work sector in general has registered declining numbers of young people from this age group participating in local youth work services and projects.

Figure 5.1 Comparison of Numbers of Youth Theatre Members, by Age Range (%)

Errors due to OCR: 1. Figure 5.1: ‘Centre Stage +10’ overlaps with ‘Centre Stage’
2. Figure 5.1: ‘Centre Stage’ is not properly aligned in the legend.
3. Figure 5.1: ‘Centre Stage +10’ is not properly aligned in the legend.

Figures are based on 38 youth theatres who completed Census Week Questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 and 369 youth theatre member questionnaires from 33 youth theatres who participated in Centre Stage.
Comparing the data for the age of current youth theatre members with the results from Centre Stage shows that:

- The percentage of youth theatre members aged 13 and under has remained largely the same;
- The percentage of youth theatre members aged 14 to 18 has dropped by 4.31%;
- This percentage of youth theatre members aged over 18 has risen by 5.44%.

Table 5.1 Number of Youth Theatre Members by age range*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number of Youth Theatre Members</th>
<th>Percentage of Youth Theatre Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members aged 6-11</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>23.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members aged 12-13</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>16.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members aged 14-18</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>46.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members aged 19-25</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>12.77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures are based on 38 youth theatres that completed questionnaires during Census Week as part of Centre Stage +10.

Youth theatre members were asked their age as part of the Centre Stage +10 members questionnaires. Figure 5.2 collates these responses and demonstrates some of the major national trends in the age of youth theatre members.

- **6-11 Age range**
  23.73% of young people in membership of 39 youth theatres were under the age of 12. Although the youngest member registered as part of Centre Stage +10 was five, the majority of young people from this age range were between nine and 12. Youth theatre leaders commented that parents of this 9-12 age group make the highest level of enquiries about joining youth theatre. This category of youth theatre membership hasn’t grown considerably since Centre Stage where the majority of this age range were also between nine and 12.

- **12-13 age range**
  16.62% of youth theatre members are aged 12 to 13. The research focuses on this narrow age range as it is the most common extension of the traditional youth theatre age range. The NAYD National Programme has included members from this age group in recent years.

- **14-18 age range**
  The largest percentage of youth theatre members (46.88%) fall into the 14-18 age range. This age range forms the backbone of youth theatres around the country. Youth theatre leaders reported a general membership pattern that was closely associated with the structure of the formal education system and the pressure of state exams.
They reported that young people would join in the first or second year of secondary school as well as during fourth year (Transition year). Members would often drop out for a few months at the end of third year because of their Junior Certificate exams. Leaders reported that if members rejoined in fourth year, they would be likely to leave again at the beginning of sixth year due to pressures associated with the Leaving Certificate.

Figure 5.2 reinforces the observations of the youth theatre leaders. The questionnaire data registered a high membership level of 96 sixteen year olds dropping to 27 eighteen year olds. Youth theatre leaders also reported a high level of part-time work among this age group that also affected their participation levels.

• **19-25 age range**

There has been an overall increase of nearly 5% in the numbers of youth theatre members aged over-18 since the last Centre Stage, although this age range still forms a minority in terms of the overall age range of youth theatre in Ireland. Most members leave their youth theatre before their Leaving Certificate or on completion of secondary school. Young people tend to move away from smaller urban and rural areas to larger urban areas for third level education. Youth theatre members are most likely to stay after 18 if they live in or near an urban area where they can access third level education or if they decide to begin working or training locally. They are also likely to stay in youth theatres where there is a culture of retaining older members and where the minimum entry age is higher.

5.1.2 **Gender**

The typical youth theatre member has always been female. Statistics from Centre Stage highlighted this 10 years ago and Centre Stage +10 statistics prove that this is still the case. Youth theatres generally have an inclusive recruitment policy that welcomes young people from all backgrounds, nationalities and abilities. Data from Centre Stage +10 shows that boys are the most underrepresented group of young people in youth theatre and that gender should be added to the inclusion debate. It is an issue for the vast majority of youth theatres and an important issue for some who have very low levels of male youth theatre members, effecting not only the dynamic of the group, but also restricting content in workshops and productions. During Census Week, Tallaght Youth Theatre and Mountrath Youth Theatre recorded no male youth theatre members taking part in activities and other youth theatres such as Activate Youth Theatre and Stradbally Youth Theatre recorded percentages of male youth theatre members as low as 9.09% and 5.88% respectively during Census Week.

Nearly two-thirds of all members who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 were female. Of the 709 youth theatre members, 63.61% were female and 36.39% were male. This strong female presence is slightly increased in the ‘under 12’ category (69.23%) and slightly decreased in the ‘12 and over category’ (60.38%). In general, the overall ratio was maintained regardless of length of membership or region. The overall average is similar to that of Centre Stage where 67% were female and 33% were male.
This male/female ratio was also confirmed by data from the Census Week and Youth Theatre Member Workshops:

Table 5.2 Male to Female Ratio of Members during Census Week and Youth Theatre Member Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Theatre Member Workshops</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of contacts between young people and youth theatre activities during Census Week</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some youth theatres manage to create a healthy balance between numbers of male and female members. According to youth theatre leaders and statistics gathered throughout Centre Stage +10, large percentages of male youth theatre members are found:

- In youth theatres that have traditionally had a large percentage of males and this factor forms part of the public profile of the youth theatre;
- In youth theatres where there are male leaders;
- In youth theatres where the local culture supports the participation of boys in the arts;
- In youth theatres where leaders actively recruit each year and where leaders target boys schools in their recruitment drive to improve the male/female ratio in the group;
- In youth theatres that provide a rounded programme of activities including opportunities to get involved in technical theatre, writing, film and design.

“We have 1 boy and 13 girls. We had 2 boys but one of them... it’s quite hard in a small town like Manorhamilton. I think he was having a real hard time from his friends and he came to me and he said “Look I don’t want to be onstage”. And I said that’s ok, we’ll do some lighting stuff but I think the... I think the peer group pressure just got too much.” – Manorhamilton Youth Theatre Leader

Among the youth theatres who completed Census Week activity logs as part of Centre Stage +10, some had achieved a good balance between male and female members.

- In Dreamstuff Youth Theatre, 53.10% of youth theatre members during Census Week were male;
• In Co. Sligo Youth Theatre, 50.68% of youth theatre members were male;
• In CSM Youth Theatre, 48.65% of youth theatre members were male;
• In Co. Carlow Youth Theatre, 46.15% of youth theatre members were male;
• In Waterford Youth Arts, 44.53% of youth theatre members were male.

5.1.3 Nationality and Ethnic Background

The vast majority of youth theatre members (85.65%) are of Irish nationality. The percentage of youth theatre members of non-Irish nationality appears small but is actually above the percentage of young people who are non-Irish in Ireland. Overall, it appears that the levels of diversity in terms of nationality and ethnicity are reflective of the national average. However, youth theatres in rural areas and smaller urban centres tended to have better levels of diversity than those in the larger urban areas such as Dublin, Cork or Galway.

Table 5.3 Comparison of Nationality (%)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Number of Young People aged 10-19 in Ireland</th>
<th>% of Young People aged 10-19 in Ireland</th>
<th>Number of Youth Theatre Members</th>
<th>% of Youth Theatre Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>507511</td>
<td>90.69%</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>85.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Other</td>
<td>8341</td>
<td>1.49%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Irish</td>
<td>43769</td>
<td>7.82%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures for ‘Young People aged 10-19 in Ireland’ are based on statistics from the 2006 Census and figures for youth theatre members are based on 446 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

Table 5.4 provides a breakdown of the nationality of the 14.35% of youth theatre members who were ‘Non-Irish’ or ‘Irish Other’. Young people from English speaking countries have higher participation rates in youth theatre, but generally the number of members from these countries are reflective of the number of young people in Ireland from these countries. People from the UK are the largest immigrant group in Ireland and young people from the UK remain the largest category of non-Irish youth theatre members. It is important to note that some of largest immigrant groups who have moved to Ireland as part of recent immigration trends do not include high numbers of young people aged between 10 and 19. However, young people who speak English as a second language may consider language a barrier to participation in youth theatre.

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1. This data is drawn from figures listed in Volume 4 of the 2006 Census: Usual Residence Migration Birthplaces and Nationalities
2. ‘Usually resident persons, males and females, present in the State on Census Night, classified by nationality and age group’
3. The term ‘Non-Irish’ describes young people who are not of Irish nationality and ‘Irish Other’ means young people who describe themselves as having a dual nationality. The terms are drawn from the 2006 Census to allow for the comparison of statistics.
Table 5.4 Comparison of Nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Number of YT Members</th>
<th>Number of Young People in Ireland (2006 Census)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Age 5-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRISH</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>258,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish / UK</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish / American</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish / Canadian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish / German</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRISH OTHER TOTAL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Irish</td>
<td></td>
<td>23,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadians</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldovan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures for ‘Young People aged 5-24 in Ireland’ are based on statistics from the 2006 Census and figures for youth theatre members are based on 446 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

In the 2006 Census, 76% of the 414,512 people who were non-Irish were based in urban areas (cities and towns) and 24% were based in rural areas. Of the 64 members who stated they were non-Irish or Irish Other in Centre Stage +10, 56.26% were based in urban areas (cities and towns) and 43.75% were based in rural areas. This could indicate a higher level of inclusion of non-Irish young people in rural areas. It should be noted that a high percentage of youth theatre members from the UK, the largest non-Irish group, live in rural areas and that according to the 2006 Census, 51% of all people from the UK live in rural areas.

The ethnic background of youth theatre members is predominantly ‘White Irish’ (86.04%) with the second largest category of ‘Any other White Background’ reflecting immigration trends from the UK, other European countries, America and Canada.

Table 5.5 Comparison of Ethnic Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Background</th>
<th>% of Young People aged 10-19 in Ireland</th>
<th>% of Youth Theatre Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>90.85%</td>
<td>86.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Traveller</td>
<td>0.98%</td>
<td>0.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other White background</td>
<td>4.09%</td>
<td>11.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>0.78%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other Black background</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other Asian background</td>
<td>0.53%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other including mixed background</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>1.39%</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures for ‘Young People aged 10-19 in Ireland’ are based on statistics from the 2006 Census and figures for youth theatre members are based on 450 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

The percentage of youth theatre members whose ethnic background is Irish is slightly less than the percentage of young people in that category in Ireland. Youth theatres include a significant number of members from the ‘Any other white background’ category, a rise of 8% above the national average.

1 This data is drawn from figures listed in Volume 4 of the 2006 Census: Usual Residence Migration Birthplaces and Nationalities - ‘Usually resident persons, males and females, present in the State on Census Night, classified by nationality and age group’ and also from the Census 2006 Non-Irish Nationals Living in Ireland Publication, Appendix 3, ‘Table A1 Persons, males and females by age group for selected nationalities’
2 The terms used to describe the ethnic background of youth theatre members are drawn from the 2006 Census to allow for the comparison of statistics.
3 This data is drawn from figures listed in Volume 5 of the 2006 Census - Ethnic or Cultural Background, ‘Persons, males and females, usually resident and present in the State on Census Night, classified by age group and ethnic or cultural background’
5.1.4 Geographic Distribution

Youth theatre members live in a combination of rural and urban areas. The number of members residing in smaller towns and villages has grown over the past 10 years as youth theatres have spread beyond the larger towns and cities with and inclusion levels of young people from rural areas have increased.

The questionnaire statistics indicate that young people from cities are under-represented in the overall membership. The 2006 Census finds that 32.40% of all young people aged between 10 and 19 were based in cities whereas the Centre Stage +10 questionnaires show that 20.36% of youth theatre members are based in cities. This may be due to an under-representation of urban young people in the questionnaires but also due to the drop in the number of youth theatres in Dublin over the past 10 years.

5.1.5 Educational Background

Almost all youth theatre members are in formal education at either primary, secondary or third level. Youth theatre members want to achieve high levels of academic qualifications with 71.10% of members aspiring to degree level. This may be part of a wider education trend illustrated by the huge growth of applications to the CAO system from 14,845 in 1977 to 65,853 in 2007. Figure 5.6 provides a breakdown of the educational background of youth theatre members who completed questionnaires.

- 88% of youth theatre members were still at school, a small drop from the Centre Stage report where 94% were still at school. This may be related to the rise in members aged over 18;
- 5% were involved in third-level education on a part-time or full-time basis in comparison with 3% from the Centre Stage report;
- 3.16% youth theatre members were involved in training and apprenticeship programmes such as Post Leaving Cert courses, apprenticeships or Youthreach and a further 4% of youth theatre members were involved in other types of training or studies.

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6 This percentage is based on figures listed in Volume 2 of the 2006 Census- Ages and Marital Status, ‘Persons, males and females, in each Province, County and City classified by age group’ where 182,780 young people out of a state total of 564,129 were registered as living in Cork city, Dublin city [all councils], Galway city, Limerick City and Waterford City.

7 Board of Directors Report 2007, Central Applications Office, P4
There has been a rise in the educational aspirations of youth theatre members in the last 10 years. In Centre Stage +10, 71.10% of youth theatre members aged 12 and over planned to study for a degree in comparison with the 60% in Centre Stage who planned to pursue a degree or a diploma. However, youth theatre members do report a wide variety of educational or training paths:

- 12.82% of youth theatre members were planning to complete the Applied or Vocational Leaving Certificate or pursue a trade. These members were aged between 12 and 18;
- 2.80% of youth theatre members were not planning to achieve any educational or training qualifications. The vast majority of these members were aged 17 and over.

Table 5.6 Educational aspirations of Youth Theatre Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational /Training Aspirations</th>
<th>Number of Youth Theatre Members*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A degree</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Certificate</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A diploma</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A certificate</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A trade</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied or Vocational Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures are based on 429 youth theatre members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires. Members could choose more than one type of qualification.

5.1.6 Work Background

Youth theatre leaders reported in their interviews that work was often a barrier to participation for youth theatre members. Youth theatre leaders from rural and urban areas noted an increase in the number of youth theatre members with part-time work, particularly at the weekend, and some youth theatre leaders felt that part-time work restricted participation levels in their youth theatre.

Young people’s engagement with the world of work increased considerably during the economic boom of the last decade. A survey carried out in selected Dublin secondary schools in 2000, found that nearly one fifth of those in disadvantaged schools were working more than 20 hours per week. The sample of young people reached through questionnaires did not show such high levels of employment. In fact, the sample of youth theatre members shows only a small increase in working hours compared with the young people who participated in Centre Stage 10 years ago.

Since the last Centre Stage there has been a slight rise from 17% to 19% of members who are involved in part-time work and a drop from 83% to 21% in members who are engaged in occasional work. Nearly half of the youth theatre members aged 12 and over were in education and were not working.

On the whole a higher proportion of girls worked but this generally corresponds to the higher proportion of girls participating in youth theatre. In general, youth theatre members who are from small towns or rural backgrounds are most likely to be engaged in occasional, holiday or part-time work.

**Figure 5.7 Work Background of Youth Theatre Members**

- **In education and not working**
  53.89% who were in education and not working were based in large towns (31.09%) or cities (22.80%). The remaining young people were reasonably evenly spread between small towns, villages and the countryside.

The age range for this group was 12 to 25 with the majority of young people (70.10%) clustering around 12 to 15. A further 26.80% aged between 16 and 18 were in education and not working.

- **Part-time work**
  Young people from rural backgrounds were most likely to be working part-time hours. 46.25% of young people who worked part-time were from rural backgrounds with 30% coming from the countryside and 16.25% coming from villages. A further 22.50% of young people were from small towns. Only 18.75% of the young people who were working part-time were from cities and 12.50% were from large towns. The majority of young people (57.50%) doing part-time work were aged 16 and 17.

- **Occasional work and work during school holidays**
  Young people from rural backgrounds were again most likely to be working during school holidays or doing occasional work such as work for parents, a family business or babysitting. 44.27% of young people who did occasional work or worked during the school holidays were from rural backgrounds with 20.61% coming from villages and 23.66% coming from the countryside.

  The majority of young people who worked during school holidays were aged between 15 and 17, with 64.10% of young people falling between these ages. The majority of young people (85.87%) who worked occasionally fell between a wider age range of 13 and 17.

- **Full-time work and the unemployed**
  Two-thirds of the young people who were unemployed were based in large towns or cities. Two-thirds of the young people who were working full-time were also based in large towns or cities. The remaining young people who worked full-time were resident in villages or the countryside.

  The majority of this group were aged 18 or over but one-third of young people who reported full-time work were aged 16 and 17. There is an equal amount of male and female members working full-time and two-thirds of the young people who were unemployed were male.
Table 5.7 Employment background of Youth Theatre Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All locations</th>
<th>In education and not working</th>
<th>Work during school holidays</th>
<th>Work occasionally*</th>
<th>Work part-time 1 to 10 hours per week</th>
<th>Work part-time 11 to 20 hours per week</th>
<th>Work full-time (aged 16 and over)</th>
<th>Unemployed (aged 16 and over)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>195**</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>58***</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Town</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 14</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures are based on 426 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.
* eg work for parents / family business or babysitting
** Two young people who were in education and not working did not indicate their area of residence and one did not indicate their age.
***Two young people who worked one to 10 hours per week did not indicate their age.

5.1.7 Leisure Interests

Leisure time activities comprise between 40–50% of an adolescent’s life. The Cork Institute of Technology research on behalf of the National Children’s Office into young people’s leisure time found that most young people are engaged in a broad range of activities:

- 88% reported some involvement in sport;
- nearly two-thirds (65%) reported one or more hobbies;
- nearly one-third (32%) participated in one or more community clubs or groups (e.g., youth clubs/groups).

Youth theatre members are interested in several art forms as well as other leisure interests and sports. Youth theatre members were asked to indicate their interest in specific leisure activities that focused on the arts and sports as part of the ‘12 and over’ questionnaire. Figure 5.8 shows that the most popular activities were listening to music, watching films, reading, playing music and watching TV. Youth theatre leaders reflected that their members were likely to have many different hobbies and that a good proportion of them had busy schedules of after-school activities that ran throughout the week.

Some youth theatre leaders stated that their youth theatre attracted the non-sporty young people from their area. 31.61% of young people who completed the questionnaires were active in team sports and 26.46% were interested in individual sports compared with 88% of young people at a national level having some involvement with sport. Some youth theatre leaders reported high levels of participation in GAA sports (especially amongst male youth theatre members) and specific individual sports. 

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10 de Róisteand, Dr. Áine and Dinneen, Joan, Executive Summary - Young People’s Views about Opportunities, Barriers and Supports to Recreation and Leisure, A research report by Cork Institute of Technology on behalf of the National Children’s Office, 2005, p5
11 de Róisteand, Dr. Áine and Dinneen, Joan, Executive Summary - Young People’s Views about Opportunities, Barriers and Supports to Recreation and Leisure, A research report by Cork Institute of Technology on behalf of the National Children’s Office, 2005, p5

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126 All locations 195** 39 92 58*** 22 12 9
City 44 6 17 9 6 5 1
Large Town 60 5 18 10 0 3 5
Small Town 31 5 22 10 8 0 1
Village 25 9 18 10 3 3 1
Countryside 33 14 17 19 5 1 1
Female 109 20 89 37 15 6 3
Male 86 19 23 21 7 6 6
Age 12 20 0 7 0 0 0 0
Age 13 38 4 13 2 0 0 0
Age 14 41 4 11 6 0 0 0
Age 15 37 8 14 7 1 0 0
Age 16 26 11 28 15 8 1 0
Age 17 17 6 13 18 5 3 0
Age 18 9 3 4 4 2 1 2
Age 19 4 1 1 0 5 3 3
Age 20 1 2 1 3 1 2 0
Age 21 1 0 0 0 0 1 3
Age 22 0 0 0 1 0 0 0
Age 23 0 0 0 0 0 1 1
It is worth noting that 23.77% of members who completed questionnaires took part in drama activities other than their youth theatres. Youth theatre members and leaders commented on this trend of young people being involved with speech and drama classes, stage schools and summer ‘drama camps’ as well as their youth theatre. Participation in youth theatre and a different type of drama activity are not mutually exclusive and some young people move very fluidly between these different types of drama experiences.
5.1.8 Career Aspirations

As part of the Centre Stage +10 Questionnaires, youth theatre members aged 12 and over were asked what they planned to do in the future. Some members had not decided on one career option and registered an interest in a few different career paths. 31.98% of youth theatre members who completed questionnaires were interested in being an actor in the future while a further 20.27% of members aspired to work within theatre. 22.32% registered a general interest in work within the arts sector.

In Centre Stage, 30% of members aspired to a career in the theatre with about 13% of members expressing an interest in the arts as a career.

Though youth theatre members were primarily interested in work within the world of theatre and the arts they also reported a strong interest in other sectors. Careers mentioned in the ‘Other’ category included:

- Zoology / Veterinarian;
- Interior design;
- A trade / Mechanic / Furniture maker;
- Law;
- Architecture / Engineering / Construction;
- Social work;
- Military;
- Hairdresser;
- Computer programmer / physicist;
- Travel;
- Chef;
- Inventor;
- Service work.

5.1.9 Family Background

• INTEREST IN THE ARTS

In Centre Stage, 66% of youth theatre members reported that at least one family member was active or interested in the arts. In Centre Stage +10, 56.5% of youth theatre members reported that at least one family member was interested in the arts. The past 10 years have seen a 10% drop in the interest levels of family members in the arts even though general levels of interest in the arts nationally have grown due to increased levels of government investment in the arts. The Arts Council report ‘The Public and the Arts’ noted a 2% overall rise in attendance at arts related activities and that participation in different art forms had increased overall by 18% between 1994 and 2006. The data produced by the Centre Stage +10 questionnaires indicate that 43.5% of youth theatre...
members are the first in their family to show an active interest in the arts. Youth theatre can therefore be seen as a highly effective way of engaging young people in the arts for the first time and also their families through their participation as audience members at youth theatre performances.

Of the 380 youth theatre members who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10, 16.32% reported one or more family members who work professionally in the arts. These statistics are remarkably similar to ten years ago where one in six members (16.67%) reported that a family member worked professionally in the arts.

In Centre Stage, the statistics around family involvement in the arts varied from region to region due to unequal access to the arts. Centre Stage also found that the higher profile youth theatres had a higher proportion of young people whose family members worked professionally in the arts. Table 5.8 shows that regional issues over access to the arts have decreased slightly but youth theatres with strong public profiles are still attracting a higher percentage of young people whose family members are interested in the arts.
Table 5.8 Family Background in the Arts, by Youth Theatre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Theatre</th>
<th>Number of Family Members working professionally in the Arts</th>
<th>Number of YT Members with Family Members interested in the Arts</th>
<th>Percentage of YT Members with Family Members interested in the Arts</th>
<th>Number of Total Family Members interested in the Arts</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin Youth Theatre</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>61.29%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Sligo Youth Theatre</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39.13%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare Youth Theatre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57.89%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan County Youth Drama</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Town / Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Craft Youth Theatre</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford Youth Arts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activate Youth Theatre</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim Youth Theatre - Manorhamilton</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>85.71%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCAC Youth Theatre</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Limerick YT - Abbeyfeale</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70.59%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na Cossán</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>City / Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celbridge Youth Drama</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightbulb Youth Theatre</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41.48%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo YT - Ballina</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.67%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backstage Youth Theatre Group</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griese Youth Theatre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portumna Youth Theatre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundabout Youth Theatre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Carlow Youth Theatre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.36%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically Phisy Youth Theatre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo YT - Castlebar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portlaoise Youth Theatre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim Youth Theatre - Carrick-on-Shannon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.36%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinteely Youth Theatre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rathdowney Youth Theatre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim Youth Theatre - Carrigallen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures are based on 380 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.
**Figures are based on 400 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.
***Number of youth theatre members with family members interested in the arts expressed as a percentage of the total questionnaires received from each youth theatre.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF MEMBERS

Youth theatre members were asked, as part of the ‘12 and over’ questionnaire, to list the type of jobs that their parents or guardians had held. Their responses were coded in line with socio-economic classification used by the Central Statistics Office. The classification aims to bring together persons with similar social and economic status on the basis of the level of skill or educational attainment required. Youth theatre members were not asked to indicate their level of household income and in defining socio-economic group, no attempt is made to rank groups in order of socio-economic importance. Many members listed a variety of different occupations for their household, in these situations they were assigned to the socio-economic group of what appeared to be the principal earner in the family.

Figure 5.11 compares the socio-economic background of the Irish population with the socio-economic background of the youth theatre members who completed questionnaires.
Figure 5.11 indicates that a large percentage of youth theatre members are from the C group (Lower Professional) and the D group (Non-manual) and that these socio-economic groups are highly represented in youth theatre membership.

- Lower Professionals include teachers, nurses, technicians, actors, writers, information officers;
- Non-manual includes chefs, waiters, bar staff, childminders, office staff, civil service staff and sales assistants.

Group B (Higher Professionals) is also very prominent in youth theatre membership. Youth theatre members from a Group A background (Employers and Managers) are roughly in proportion to the national percentage.

- Higher Professionals include chemists, barristers, engineers, dentists, doctors, vets, social workers, higher education professionals;
- Employers and Managers include managers within local government, shops, construction, banks, Garda Síochána, hotels as well as publicans, librarians, B&B owners.

The remaining socio-economic groups were under-represented in the membership that was surveyed through the ‘12 and over’ questionnaires. Figure 5.11 indicates that the increase in members from rural areas has not brought about an inclusion of members from a farming and agricultural background. It appears that young people from the E (Manual skilled), F (Semi-Skilled), G (Unskilled) and H (Own account workers) are under-represented in youth theatre membership. The inclusion of young people from these socio-economic groups remains an issue for Irish youth theatre.

- Manual skilled included bricklayers, plumbers, goldsmiths, TV engineers, mechanics, tailors, printers, butchers, bakers, bus and train drivers;
- Semi-skilled included assemble line workers, storekeepers, roofers, gardener, security guards, care assistants, postal workers, kitchen porters;
- Unskilled included cleaners, road construction workers, labourers, goods porters, car park attendants;
- Own account workers included plasterers, painters, carpenters, bakers, butchers, gardeners who were self-employed.

Figure 5.11: Comparison of the Socio-Economic Background of Youth Theatre Members with the Irish Population, %

Figures are based on 355 youth theatre members who completed ‘12 and over’ questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 and figures from the 2006 Census.
5.2 Participation in Youth Theatre - Members

Young people’s participation in youth theatre is explored under the following headings:

5.2.1 Length of Membership
5.2.2 Reasons for Joining Youth Theatre
5.2.3 Reasons for Staying in Youth Theatre
5.2.4 Barriers to Participation
5.2.5 Method of Transport to Youth Theatre Activities

5.2.1 Length of Membership

Young people are members of their youth theatre for an average of 2.3 years, according to the members questionnaires. Of the 431 youth theatre members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires, 43% were in their first year of membership. Figure 5.12 indicates that these membership levels are reduced almost by half in the second year of membership and again by almost a half in the third year. The statistics are very similar to those produced in Centre Stage where 46% of members were in their first year of membership and the average age of first year youth theatre members in both studies was 15. The statistics indicate that members who really commit to their youth theatre during the second and third year of membership are staying longer than they did 10 years ago:

- Young people who had been youth theatre members for four or more years were only 13% of the total membership in Centre Stage and 23% of the membership in Centre Stage +10.

Other factors that may have contributed to this extension in the length of membership is the increase in the average age of youth theatres and the continued expansion of the youth theatre age range through sub-groups for the under 12s and the over 18s.

The average age for young people with two to three years of membership and four or more years of membership was actually just 16, the same average as the Centre Stage report. This would indicate that there is a small section of experienced members who are joining at a very young age and growing up within their youth theatre. This is supported by the extended age range served by the youth theatres where these experienced young people are members: Griese Youth Theatre, Cavan County Youth Drama, Waterford Youth Arts, Co. Sligo Youth Theatre, Kildare Youth Theatre, Stagecraft Youth Theatre, WCAC Youth Theatre. All these youth theatres have sub-groups for children under the age of 12.

![Figure 5.12 Length of Membership](image)
5.2.2 Reasons for Joining Youth Theatre

Youth theatre members aged 12 and over were asked to rank their top five reasons for joining youth theatre. Combining the scores, it is clear that young people join youth theatre, primarily, to act. Nearly half of the 404 youth theatre members who completed questionnaires (46.29%) expressed an interest in being an actor and reported that this contributed to their decision to join. While the majority of members (61.14%) recorded a desire to be in plays as a major reason for joining, a significant number were still very interested in the drama workshop process. 43.07% wanted to learn more about drama and 29.46% wanted to do more drama workshops.

Young people are also joining youth theatre to have fun and for social networking. 60.89% of young people felt that youth theatre would be fun, although only 34 young people ranked fun as their top reason for joining. Young people were attracted by the idea that they might meet new people who had similar interests to them. 39.60% of young people registered an interest in meeting new people while 29.95% mentioned a desire to meet people with similar interests to them. However, only 29 young people recorded either of these as their top reason for joining. Factors related to drama and theatre tended to rank more highly in young people’s reasons for joining youth theatre because opportunities to meet new people and have fun could also be accessed through other activities such as sport or youth clubs.

Young people aged 12 and over tend to make an independent decision to join youth theatre rather than being influenced by parents or friends. The influence of parents in the young person’s decision making was reported by only 3.22% while friends were at the slightly higher rate of 14.60%. Only two young people listed their parents as the top reason they joined youth theatre, while seven young people listed their friends as the top reason they joined.

![Figure 5.13 Reasons for Joining Youth Theatre: 12 and over](image-url)

Figures are based on 404 youth theatre members who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.
Youth theatre members aged under 12 were asked an open question “Why did you join your youth theatre?” on their questionnaire. Their responses are collated in Figure 5.14.

Some members listed more than one reason for joining in their answer, 253 youth theatre members recorded 355 reasons why they joined youth theatre. Half of those reasons (50.42%) did not mention anything to do with acting, drama or plays but focused instead on fun, making friends, the influence of family and friends, doing something new or the personality of the facilitator. An interest in drama and theatre featured more significantly with the older age group where 58.39% of the reasons given by members were drama or theatre related.

The under-12 age group were keen to have fun in youth theatre and mentioned an enjoyment or love of drama and acting. Youth theatre leaders echoed this in interviews when they described how important the ‘fun’ factor was in retaining children of this age year after year.

Members aged under 12 are less likely to make an independent decision to join youth theatre. 5.14% of youth theatre members aged 11 and under joined youth theatre because of their parents, while 8.70% joined youth theatre because a friend or family member joined first. These responses do not demonstrate a significant difference in the level of influence that parents and friends have on the decision to join a youth theatre compared to the older age group. However, youth theatre leaders report that parents of this 9–12 age group make the highest level of enquiries about joining youth theatre on behalf of their children and reported that children often joined in small groups of friends or because another family member was already participating. Youth theatre leaders considered these factors of more importance than the questionnaires indicated.

5.2.3 Reasons for Staying in Youth Theatre

Young people may join youth theatre to act and be in plays but they keep attending on a weekly basis because of the people who are there, the atmosphere they create together and how it makes them feel.
Youth theatre members who attended the Member Workshops as part of Centre Stage +10 were asked to respond to the question “Why do you keep coming back to youth theatre every week?”. Youth theatre members felt that they were continually learning through the workshops and had developed a real love of acting. They were enjoying the projects and plays that they were working on together. They felt that once they had committed to the youth theatre and to a rehearsal process that people were counting on them to attend on a regular basis.

“You never know what is going to happen because we always get different workshops and it’s just good fun to be able to learn new stuff” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

“I like the play we’re working on.” – Co. Limerick Youth Theatre Member – Lough Gur

“Because I love it and if you make a commitment to a show then you have to obviously attend for rehearsals but also it’s good craic.” – Independent Youth Theatre Member

The vast majority of youth theatre members really valued the other people who were in the youth theatre, their relationships and the sense of being part of a group. The expectation of fun and having ‘a laugh together’ encouraged young people back to youth theatre activities each week. Members returned to be with friends and because of the sense of happiness and belonging that the group dynamic offered them.

“It’s the one time of the week that you’re always smiling. Nothing gets you down because you’re with everyone, doing what you love and having fun and learning new stuff and like... I think we got lucky with our drama teacher.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

“It’s really fun and it’s given me a lot of confidence” – Waterford Youth Arts Member

“It’s fun and my friends are there” – Stradbally Youth Theatre Member

“You can do whatever you want because nobody thinks you’re weird” – Waterford Youth Arts Member

Youth theatre members aged under 12 were asked an open question “What’s the best thing about your youth theatre?” on their questionnaire. Some members listed more than one aspect of youth theatre, with 228 members listing 306 things that they liked. Their responses are collated in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Reasons for Staying in Youth Theatre: under 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“What’s the best thing about your youth theatre?”</th>
<th>Number of YT members</th>
<th>Percentage of YT Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having fun/It’s fun</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>32.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting people and making friends/Being with your friends</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>28.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing a show/The plays</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher/Facilitator</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people there/The people are nice to me</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like being on stage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning new things/Learning about drama</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sketches/The little acts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s cool</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures are based on 228 youth theatre members aged under 12.

This age group reported that their favourite things about youth theatre were having fun (32.89%), making new friends and being with friends (28.51%). These were the main factors that kept these members coming back each week and represented 45.75% of all the things they liked about youth theatre. The people who are present in the youth theatre are important to members with 4.82% specifically mentioning the facilitator and a further 3.51% mentioning youth theatre people in general.
This age group did show a love of performance with 17.11% of members listing the performance of plays, 1.75% listing a love of being on stage and a further 1.75% listing the performance of scenes within a workshop setting. The group seemed to prefer the experience of participating in a workshop as 12.72% reported enjoying the games, 12.72% enjoying acting, 3.51% enjoying drama in general and a further 1.75% who appreciated learning about drama.

Of 228 members who completed questionnaires in this age range, 79.39% liked everything about their youth theatre. The most common issues that the remaining 20.61% disliked were (listed in order of unpopularity):
- Specific games or activities;
- A specific play or production;
- The behaviour of other members in the group;
- Members of the opposite gender in the group;
- Rules on what you can bring into the workshop;
- The workshop space itself;
- Losing at games;
- The age range or size of the group.

5.2.4 Barriers to Participation

The majority of youth theatre members who completed questionnaires for members aged 12 and over find it easy to take part in youth theatre activities and do not report any factors that make participation difficult.

The 166 youth theatre members who experienced difficulties in participating, reported school work and exams as the single biggest factor with 71.27% of these members selecting this category. Work commitments, family and holiday commitments as well as transport also figured significantly in their responses while 13.81% of young people mentioned pressure from parents or the cost of participation as an important barrier for them.

Other factors that members mentioned were disability and illness, sporting commitments, commitments to other leisure interests and friends, the behaviour of other young people in the group, a lack of confidence communicating in English and the scheduling of the weekly workshop.
5.2.5 Method of Transport to Youth Theatre Activities

More than half of youth theatre members aged 12 and over rely on family members to take them to youth theatre activities. Parents or other family members bring 54% of members to youth theatre by car. This indicates that family support is vital to enable over half the youth theatre members to participate in youth theatre.

Some youth theatre members are able to get to youth theatre activities independently, as 32% of members who completed questionnaires walk, drive or cycle, while a further 13% rely on public transport. Young people living in large towns or cities were more likely to walk and use public transport while those living in rural areas were more likely to get a lift from family members or drive themselves.
The majority of youth theatre members (78.62% of 421 members who completed questionnaires) live within 20 minutes of their youth theatre. Youth theatre members based in small and large towns were able to get to their youth theatres the quickest, with 26.37% members reaching their youth theatre within 10 minutes. The youth theatre members who took between 11 and 30 minutes were from an even mixture of rural and urban backgrounds. The 8.79% of members who needed 31 to 60 minutes to travel to youth theatre were reasonably evenly split between rural/small town locations and large towns or cities. The members who took more than 60 minutes to reach youth theatre were all from rural backgrounds. All members who took 40 minutes or more to travel were aged 15 and over.

The cycle of youth theatre members becoming the next generation of youth theatre leaders is not only key to the ethos of youth theatre but also to the sustainability of youth theatre. It is best practice within youth theatre to provide members with opportunities for progression so that young people can keep building skills and participating in experiences that are appropriate and challenging. The role of the senior member can be seen as a progression route for a youth theatre member who is interested in developing their skills with a view to becoming a youth theatre leader or accessing further theatre or youth work training or employment.

This cycle has become a tradition in some of the older youth theatres who have witnessed a few generations of senior members becoming leaders and is an emerging trend for some youth theatres who have just seen their first generation of senior members develop. Senior members are experienced youth theatre members who take on extra leadership, facilitation, administration or production responsibilities within their youth theatre.

- Senior Members are active in 25 of the 45 youth theatres that participated in Centre Stage +10. The youth theatres that did not have senior members were generally working with a younger age group, were set in a rural location or were new youth theatres;
- Thirty senior members were involved in activities for 11 different youth theatres in Census Week. They were helping to facilitate workshops, working on productions and helping with administrative tasks and planning. Senior members were working on a voluntary basis although some youth theatres gave token payments to senior members for their assistance with the facilitation of younger groups.
It can be difficult to encourage the development of the senior member role within some youth theatres. It is particularly difficult in youth theatres set in a rural location where the vast majority of members leave at 18 and move to urban centres for education, training or work. It is also challenging within youth theatres that attract a younger age group and have one main workshop group. These youth theatre members can outgrow the youth theatre in later teenage years and tend to leave rather than take on the responsibilities of a senior member. Youth theatres which serve a younger age group generally have multiple groups that allow a member to progress through each age group and continue working with their peers.

Senior Members can be found in the majority of youth theatre models. The development of senior members is a very strong tradition within the autonomous youth theatre model. The smaller autonomous youth theatres which are run by volunteers rely on the cycle of senior members becoming the next generation of youth theatre leaders. This cycle makes the smaller autonomous youth theatre sustainable.

• TRAINING

The training of senior members can be quite informal. Youth theatre leaders commented that senior members usually identify themselves by voluntarily taking on a leadership role within the group of members or volunteering themselves for extra tasks and responsibilities. Some youth theatres will encourage this idea of leadership from within the membership through the creation of member representatives. These roles often involve leading feedback sessions with the rest of the membership and reporting to a youth theatre leader or possibly to a board. They may also involve responsibility for organising social events for the members. Senior members within smaller autonomous youth theatres have an opportunity to increase their administrative and leadership tasks by becoming involved at a governance level.

Senior members are often keen to assist with the facilitation of workshops and the directing of productions within their groups. Senior members experience workshops as part of their regular youth theatre activities and this participation forms the basis of their understanding of facilitation. Some senior members make the leap straight from participation to facilitation and these members often start by facilitating the younger groups of their youth theatres. Other youth theatres prefer to build skills slowly and may offer experiences where youth theatre leaders:

• explain to members within the workshop setting why they are doing particular exercises and discuss the workshop plan and the progression between the activities with interested members after the workshops;
• work with senior members on particular workshop activities and then ask them to lead a warm-up or another contained activity within the workshop;
• ask senior members to assist or lead smaller groups working on task-orientated activities;
• build these facilitation experiences to a level where a senior member is comfortable to co-facilitate with another leader;
• work with a senior member to develop workshop plans which the senior member delivers by themselves.

Senior members who are interested in directing can go through similar processes of participation as actors, observation and co-directing until they feel confident enough to direct themselves. Some youth theatres run one-act festivals where members can act, write and direct their own short plays. Youth theatre leaders state that these types of experiences are invaluable for building confidence, leadership skills and artistic skills and are important for a senior member who is developing his/her own artistic voice and style.

Once senior members reach 18, some of them begin to participate in NAYD’s training programme for youth theatre leaders. Co. Carlow Youth Theatre and Roundabout Youth Theatre are currently offering formal qualifications for senior members within their youth theatres. Senior Members from Roundabout Youth Theatre can access a FETAC accredited course in Youth Work run by the Training and Development Officer for the Ballymun Regional Youth Resource. Co. Carlow Youth Theatre was also creating a FETAC accredited course for senior members.
Chapter 6: Youth Theatre Leaders
This chapter explores the profile and participation of youth theatre leaders. Youth theatre leaders have developed a sophisticated vocabulary to describe their roles within the last 10 years, ranging from ‘Assistant Facilitator’ to ‘Artistic Director’. The term ‘Youth Theatre Leader’ has been chosen to encompass all adults who work on a paid or voluntary basis in a youth theatre and hold responsibility for a range of different artistic, administrative and welfare roles.

The profile and participation of youth theatre leaders is explored under the following headings:

6.1 Youth Theatre Leader Profile
6.2 Participation in Youth Theatre - Leaders

The profile of youth theatre leaders is explored under the following headings:

6.1.1 Age and Gender
6.1.2 Training and Employment History
6.1.3 Why are leaders involved in youth theatre?

6.1.1 Age and Gender

The average age of a youth theatre leader is 35. The oldest youth theatre leader who returned a questionnaire was 67, while the youngest was 18.

The age of youth theatre leaders has changed little over the last 10 years, as can be seen in Figure 6.1. The age ranges are selected for comparative purposes with data from Centre Stage. It should be noted that Centre Stage recognised leaders under the age of 18 and this is no longer common practice. Some youth theatre members do begin to take on extra leadership responsibilities below the age of 18 and they are termed ‘Senior Members’ for the purposes of this report.

Figure 6.1 Age of Youth Theatre Leaders

![Figure 6.1 Age of Youth Theatre Leaders](image-url)

Figures are based on 52 youth theatre leaders who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 and 89 youth theatre leaders who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage.
The questionnaire data shows that the majority of youth theatre leaders are aged over 26. Of the 52 youth theatre leaders who responded to this question:

- 5.77% of leaders were aged between 18 and 20;
- 36.54% of leaders were aged in their 20s;
- 21.15% of leaders were aged in their 30s;
- 21.15% of leaders were aged in their 40s;
- 15.39% of leaders were aged 50 or over.

Nearly two-thirds of the leaders who returned questionnaires were female. The ratio between male and female leaders is almost identical to that between male and female youth theatre members. 62.50% of leaders who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 were female and 37.50% were male. The 21 male leaders who completed questionnaires were clustered in their twenties and early thirties, with 71.43% of male leaders aged under 35. The female leaders who completed questionnaires demonstrated an even spread across all age groups.

There is a six year gap between the average age for women (37 years old) and men (31 years old). This difference is generated by the number of female leaders who begin working with youth theatres (either on a professional or voluntary basis) in their forties and fifties. Of the 17 female leaders who were aged 40 or over, 10 had less than five years of youth theatre experience.

6.1.2 Training and Employment History

Youth theatre leaders come from a variety of backgrounds and the skills they have developed have come from a combination of professional experiences and involvement in voluntary and amateur work.

Leaders have worked professionally in theatre, the arts, youth work and the youth arts sectors. They have also worked professionally in educational settings as teachers in primary, secondary and community schools as well as being drama tutors with local VECs. Leaders who completed questionnaires also worked professionally in a variety of different roles including a laboratory technician, a florist, a banker, an auctioneer, a pharmacist, a painter, a chef and a shop assistant.

Many leaders are very active in voluntary work and amateur theatre work in their local areas. They listed voluntary work on international exchanges, work with the local community groups, adult literacy groups, local youth work organisations, readers groups and the scouts. Some leaders are also active as board members and organisers within their local community for other local youth groups or arts groups. Leaders also mentioned that they had directed and facilitated on a voluntary basis for many different groups, to gain experience and contribute to their local community.

Youth theatre leaders were asked through the leader questionnaire where they felt they had acquired the skills that they regularly use with their youth theatre.

Of the 50 youth theatre leaders who responded to the question:

- 42% of leaders mentioned a qualification in drama or theatre from a local college or university;
- 42% leaders mentioned general theatre experience;
- 30% of leaders mentioned informal training;
- 14% of leaders mentioned a qualification in youth work or youth arts;
- 14% of leaders specifically mentioned the youth theatre where they were a member;
- 12% leaders mentioned their amateur theatre experience;
- 6% of leaders mentioned life skills;
- 4% of leaders mentioned a speech and drama qualification.

Leaders also mentioned training and study in child protection, first aid, counselling, dramatherapy, dance, sound engineering and music technology. Two leaders specifically mentioned the ArtsTrain course run by NAYD. ArtsTrain graduates are working or have recently worked as Youth Drama Officers, Artistic Directors, Drama Facilitators and freelance facilitators / directors at Clondalkin Youth Theatre, Co. Carlow Youth Theatre, Dry Rain Youth Theatre, Dublin Youth Theatre, Galway Youth Theatre, Greise Youth Theatre, Kildare Youth Theatre, Portlaoise Youth Theatre, Rathdowney Youth Theatre, Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre, Roundabout Youth Theatre, Tallaght Youth Theatre and Youthsopia Youth Theatre as well as two other youth theatres not included in the research.
There has been a rise in the number of youth theatre leaders who have acquired qualifications in areas directly related to youth theatre such as drama and theatre, youth work and youth arts. Drama and Theatre Studies courses run by Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and local colleges proved very popular with leaders as did the Certificate in Youth Arts offered by NUI Maynooth and delivered by the National Youth Council of Ireland. There has been an increase in the variety of drama and theatre related courses offered in Ireland over the last 10 years and leaders are currently far less likely to have a qualification in speech and drama. Of the 89 leaders who completed questionnaires in Centre Stage, 13.48% had attained diplomas in speech and drama in comparison with 4% of Centre Stage +10 leaders.

Leaders value the skills they have built through participation in amateur theatre and other types of theatre experiences, including their membership of a youth theatre when they were younger. They also placed importance on non-formal training that they had received in youth work, youth arts, child protection as well as drama courses organised by the Drama League of Ireland and youth theatre leader courses organised by NAYD.

6.1.3 Why are Leaders involved in Youth Theatre?

Youth theatre leaders were asked to rank 10 statements in their questionnaire to ascertain their reasons for being involved in youth theatre. The statements were taken from the original Centre Stage leader questionnaire to allow for the comparison of information. Combining the scores, it is clear that leaders are motivated to work in youth theatre by a strong commitment to young people and a keen interest in their artistic, personal and social development.

Table 6.1 Leaders Reasons for Involvement in Youth Theatre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why are you involved in youth theatre?</th>
<th>% of Overall Vote</th>
<th>Top Ranked Reason: % of Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 I enjoy working with young people</td>
<td>14.90%</td>
<td>34.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I find being involved with the theatrical/aesthetic development of young people very satisfying</td>
<td>13.81%</td>
<td>26.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 I find being involved with the personal and social development of young people very satisfying</td>
<td>13.18%</td>
<td>11.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 I believe that involvement in youth theatre empowers young people to participate more fully in society</td>
<td>11.99%</td>
<td>11.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I like the sense of community in the youth theatre</td>
<td>9.81%</td>
<td>3.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 I find I work more creatively with youth theatres</td>
<td>8.46%</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 I get valuable experience that helps me build my chosen career</td>
<td>7.01%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 I enjoy the company of other youth theatre leaders</td>
<td>6.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 I make contacts with people who can help me improve my work/career opportunities</td>
<td>4.79%</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 It’s work, I need the money</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures are based on the 52 youth theatre leaders who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

The ranking of these statements is almost identical to the order that youth theatre leaders agreed on 10 years ago as part of Centre Stage. Leaders are still becoming involved in youth theatre for exactly the same reasons as before; working with young people and being involved in their artistic and personal development.

The five leaders who ranked ‘I get valuable experience that helps me build my chosen career’ and ‘I make contacts with people who can help me improve my work/career opportunities’ were all at the beginning of their careers in youth theatre. They were aged between 19 and 31, with an average age of 23. Four of these leaders are working with youth theatres where they used to be members themselves.

6.2 Participation in Youth Theatre - Leaders

Leaders’ participation in youth theatre is explored under the following headings:

6.2.1 Leadership Experience
6.2.1 Leadership Experience

The vast majority of youth theatre leaders work with one youth theatre at a time and often one youth theatre throughout their life. They are a very committed group of people who remain dedicated to the young people in their area for long periods of time. There has always been an exchange of freelance facilitators between youth theatres for workshops and projects but some youth theatre leaders are now working on a regular basis with more than one youth theatre. Leader questionnaires indicate that nearly one in five youth theatre leaders are working on a regular basis with more than one youth theatre.

Ten youth theatre leaders were working with more than one youth theatre:

- 9 leaders worked with 2 youth theatres;
- 1 leader worked with 3 youth theatres.

Nine of the 56 youth theatre leaders had worked previously for a different youth theatre. Five of these youth theatre leaders had worked in youth theatres outside the county where they were currently working. It is unclear from the data gathered whether this is due to the migration of leaders within the country or whether it indicates that leaders are building youth theatre careers and moving to youth theatres that offer employment with wider responsibilities. One youth theatre leader had previously worked with three different youth theatres in two different counties.

These youth theatre leaders do not form a majority but they do make up a significant group within the core staff of youth theatres around the country. The employment history of these leaders is indicative of the professionalisation of youth theatre and the youth drama facilitator.

Youth theatre leaders show considerable commitment to their youth theatres and remain working with groups for a very long period of time:

- The maximum time working with a youth theatre was 27 years;
- The minimum time working with a youth theatre was 2 months;
- The average time working with a youth theatre was 4 years, 10 months;
- The total time for all 56 leaders was 295 years, 1 month.

On average youth theatre leaders have spent less time overall with their second or third youth theatres. The
average time working with a second youth theatre was two years 10 months, in comparison with five years, one month for a first or only youth theatre. However, one youth theatre leader had worked for six years with their second youth theatre.

6.2.2 Previous Membership of a Youth Theatre

Of the 56 leaders who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10, 42.86% were previously a member of a youth theatre. The first two recorded youth theatres started in Dublin and Carrick-on-Suir in 1977. This time-scale has allowed generations of youth theatre members to grow up, come through the ranks and become youth theatre leaders. The oldest leader who declared previous membership of a youth theatre was 49.

Greater numbers of youth theatres began to develop across Ireland from the nineties onward, allowing better access to youth theatre activity in more urban and rural areas. Looking more closely at this generation of leaders who were members from the 1990s onwards, 73.33% of the 30 youth theatre leaders aged under 35 were previously members of a youth theatre. These statistics illustrate the significance of the cycle of youth theatre members becoming youth theatre leaders. Many youth theatre leaders attribute a quantity of their training to their own personal experience of youth theatre as a young person. 28.57% of those who completed questionnaires are leaders in the same youth theatre where they were previously a member, highlighting their strong commitment not only to their youth theatre but to the young people from the area where they themselves grew up.

Greater numbers of youth theatres began to develop across Ireland from the nineties onward, allowing better access to youth theatre activity in more urban and rural areas. Looking more closely at this generation of leaders who were members from the 1990s onwards, 73.33% of the 30 youth theatre leaders aged under 35 were previously members of a youth theatre. These statistics illustrate the significance of the cycle of youth theatre members becoming youth theatre leaders. Many youth theatre leaders attribute a quantity of their training to their own personal experience of youth theatre as a young person. 28.57% of those who completed questionnaires are leaders in the same youth theatre where they were previously a member, highlighting their strong commitment not only to their youth theatre but to the young people from the area where they themselves grew up.

6.2.3 Work Patterns

The job of the youth theatre leader does not run according to a typical nine to five, Monday to Friday schedule. The schedule of the youth theatre leader is built around the times of the week when young people are available to participate and when the youth theatre can access their regular workshop space. This means that youth theatre leaders work a significant amount of anti-social hours including evenings, weekends and holidays. Figure 6.4 shows the weekly work pattern for youth theatre leaders during Census week.
Youth theatre leaders run weekly workshops, rehearsals and other activities involving young people on every day of the week. Saturday is still the most popular day for artistic activities involving young people. Youth theatre leaders also use every day of the week to complete administration, planning and fundraising tasks by themselves. Voluntary leaders and youth theatre leaders who work as professional freelance drama facilitators are most likely to be doing administration at the weekends.

The data gathered from Census Week activity logs for Figure 6.4 shows that youth theatre leaders spend nearly half their time working by themselves or with other adults. Of the 607 hours of youth theatre activity that were logged during Census Week, 308 hours (50.74%) involved only leaders. There is no data to compare this ratio with youth theatres from Centre Stage but youth theatre leaders reflected in their interviews that the level of administration work related to youth theatre has increased over the past 10 years.

- 143 hours were spent by leaders on administration tasks;
- 57 hours were spent on artistic planning;
- 108 hours were spent by leaders on other types of activities;
- 272 and a half hours were spent on artistic activities involving young people;
- 26 and a half hours were spent on other types of activities involving young people.

There is great variation in the number of hours that youth theatre leaders spend on youth theatre activities, reflecting the different responsibilities of each leader. During Census Week, 181 leaders completed 607 hours of activities, creating an average of 3.35 hours per leader. There can be a significant difference between the maximum and minimum time spent per month by each youth theatre leader due to the increased levels of work leading up to productions, events or trips and this trend underlines the need for a fluid working pattern for youth theatre leaders.

Table 6.2 Average Time spent working on Youth Theatre Activities per month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Time spent working on youth theatre activities per month</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum hours per month</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum hours per month</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours per month</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures are based on 39 youth theatres that completed an activity log during Census Week as part of Centre Stage +10.
Average minimum hours per month | 21.7
Average maximum hours per month | 32.6
Sum total of average hours per month | 1564.5

* Figures are based on 54 youth theatre leaders who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 and held 63 different roles.

6.2.4 Youth Theatre Roles

Traditionally, youth theatre leaders have carried out multiple tasks within their youth theatres. They have acquired the skills necessary to balance different types of artistic, welfare and administrative tasks. The traditional dominance of the autonomous model of youth theatre run by voluntary leaders meant that youth theatre leaders were also generally balancing the requirements of the youth theatre with their own professional work.

As part of Centre Stage +10, youth theatre leaders were asked to indicate what type of activities were involved in each role which they carried out for different youth theatres. 56 youth theatre leaders provided information on 66 different youth theatre roles and this data is collated in Figure 6.5.

The questionnaires prove that the majority of youth theatre leaders are still involved in many different areas of responsibility but it also reveals a small group of leaders who specialise within the youth theatre, focusing on one or two tasks such as facilitation, directing, board member duties or technical theatre.

Figure 6.5 demonstrates that a high percentage of youth theatre roles involve multiple types of activities:
- 14 youth theatre roles involved between 10 and 12 types of activity;
- 17 youth theatre roles involved between 6 or 9 types of activity;
- 15 youth theatre roles involved 4 or 5 types of activity;
- 11 youth theatre roles involved 2 or 3 types of activity (generally a combination of 1 or 2 artistic duties with an administrative duty with 3 youth theatre roles being purely administrative);
- 8 youth theatre roles involved only 1 type of activity (7 involved facilitation and 1 involved directing).
The data for youth theatre leader roles which focus on a small number of activities illustrates two distinct types of specialist roles within the world of the youth theatre.

The first of these roles is purely artistic. The role may involve facilitating weekly drama workshops, directing, technical theatre and some project co-ordination and production work. This role is most commonly found within medium sized autonomous youth theatres which employ facilitators or youth theatres with a parent organisation such as a Local Authority and can often include those at ‘Assistant Facilitator’ level or those at the younger end of the leader age-range spectrum.

The second of these roles is purely administrative. The role may involve board member duties, responsibility for fundraising, welfare or finance and assistance with the organisation of a project or a production. This role is most commonly found within autonomous youth theatres but did appear in one or two other models as well.

It is also worth noting that youth theatre leaders who work with multiple youth theatres adopt different types of roles and activity levels within each youth theatre. These youth theatre leaders will often focus solely on facilitating and directing in the second or third youth theatre that employs them, as administration, welfare and other tasks are the responsibility of somebody else.

In Centre Stage, three quarters of leaders described themselves as ‘in-house leaders’. Other titles that were recorded included ‘teacher’, ‘trainer’, ‘tutor’, ‘group/general leader’, ‘helper to the drama tutor’, ‘youth worker’ and ‘trainer’. Youth theatre leaders were asked in Centre Stage +10 questionnaires to list the title they would give their role within the youth theatre. From the compilation of their responses in Table 6.3, it is clear that youth theatre leaders have developed a wider and more sophisticated vocabulary to describe their work in the last 10 years. They have sought to differentiate between positions within the youth theatre, move away from the all-rounder roles that used to exist and attach a higher status to their work by using titles such as ‘Artistic Director’. The development of these titles is an indication of the professionalisation of the world of youth theatre and the world of arts education and youth arts in general.

Table 6.3  Titles of Youth Theatre Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Number of Youth Theatre Roles</th>
<th>% of Youth Theatre Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Director</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Theatre Director / Acting Director</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader / Director</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader / Facilitator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Director / Facilitator / Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Drama Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-ordinator / Co-ordinator &amp; Facilitator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama Facilitator / Workshop facilitator</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama tutor / Teacher</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator / Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General facilitator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant / Assistant Facilitator</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-facilitator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare and Workshops Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Trainee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set construction &amp; Design, Lighting, Sound Operator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech Dude</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer, general facilitator and car driver</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General all-rounder, fundraising, project development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer and Assistant Facilitator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Chairperson and Welfare Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops facilitator / Administrator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The largest group of youth theatre leaders recorded titles that purely involved ‘facilitation’. These leaders were all paid staff from youth theatres that primarily existed within larger parent organisations. This category of youth theatre leader is a significant development and indicates a growth in the professionalisation of drama facilitation.

- 44.44% of youth theatre leaders recorded titles in this category. The majority of these leaders were from Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres, with the remaining leaders employed by autonomous youth theatres and youth theatres run by professional and amateur theatre companies, youth arts organisations and arts centres.

The second largest group of youth theatre leaders recorded titles that described a leadership role within the youth theatre (such as ‘Artistic Director’, ‘Youth Theatre Director’, ‘Leader’ or ‘Co-ordinator’) and sometimes mixed this leadership role with other artistic responsibilities.

- 26.98% of youth theatre leaders recorded roles in this category. The youth theatre leaders were spread across all models with autonomous youth theatres and those run by professional and amateur theatre companies registering the most. They were also found in youth theatres run by Local Authority Arts Offices, youth services and youth arts organisations (this leader was Artistic Director of the youth arts organisation rather than the youth theatre).

The youth theatre leaders who recorded titles that involved being an assistant, a trainee or a supervisor were generally working within parent organisations such as Local Authority Arts Offices, arts centres or youth arts organisations.

- 14.29% of youth theatre leaders recorded roles in this category. The majority of these leaders worked for Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres but they were also found in an autonomous youth theatre and ones run by an arts centre and a youth arts organisation.

The youth theatre leaders who recorded titles that involved a mix of artistic, board, welfare and technical duties were primarily from autonomous youth theatres.

- 14.29% of youth theatre leaders recorded roles in this category. The majority of these theatre leaders were from autonomous youth theatres.

6.2.5 Voluntary Involvement and Commitment

The past 10 years has seen a large increase in the number of paid positions within youth theatre. The professionalisation of the role of the facilitator, the increase in youth theatres set up by parent organisations such as Local Authority Arts Offices as well as courses like ArtsTrain have all contributed to this increase. This increase in youth theatres run by parent organisations has in turn led to a decrease in levels of volunteerism within youth theatre. Organisations can find it difficult to balance paid leaders and volunteers within one setting and some youth theatres make a commitment to recruit paid staff.

However, the professionalisation of the sector has not eliminated the voluntary contribution of youth theatre leaders. There are elements of volunteer activity within 24 of the 45 youth theatres included in this survey and it is still particularly strong within the autonomous youth theatres. There has been a general sense that levels of volunteering had dropped within Celtic Tiger Ireland but Volunteering Ireland reports that numbers are healthier than ever in their 2006 survey, ‘Hidden Landscape’, which recorded an increase of 4.1%.

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Figure 6.6 Paid and Voluntary Activity of Youth Theatre Leaders

- Voluntary – (28.79%)
- Paid – (60.61%)
- Receive token payment / expenses – (10.61%)

Figures are based on 56 youth theatre leaders who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 and held 66 youth theatre roles.

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1 Established by NAYD in 1999, ArtsTrain is the only dedicated youth drama facilitation training programme in Ireland. The course aims to provide training in drama facilitation practice and methodologies, youth work and youth arts as well as developing an understanding of good youth theatre practice.


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VOLUNTARY LEADERS

Of the 56 leaders who completed questionnaires, 19 worked on a completely voluntary basis for their youth theatre, receiving no payment for any work at all.

- 84.21% of these leaders who worked on a voluntary basis were committed to their youth theatre for the foreseeable future;
- Voluntary leaders were represented in the questionnaires from 10 different youth theatres: Backstage Youth Theatre, Cabinteely Youth Theatre, Celbridge Youth Drama, Griese Youth Theatre, Independent Youth Theatre, Kildare Youth Theatre, Lighblub Youth Theatre, Portumna Youth Theatre, Roundabout Youth Theatre and Waterford Youth Arts;
- Voluntary leaders were represented from six autonomous youth theatres, one Professional Theatre Company Youth Theatre, one Amateur Theatre Company Youth Theatre, one Youth Arts Organisation Youth Theatre and one Youth Services Youth Theatre;
- No voluntary leaders were recorded from any Arts Office youth theatre, although interviews with youth theatre leaders indicate that youth theatres such as Carrigallen Youth Theatre in Leitrim are assisted by a small group of volunteers;
- These voluntary leaders carried out multiple tasks within their youth theatres and on average they were dealing with seven different types of artistic, administration and welfare tasks. The questionnaire data shows that voluntary leaders carry out a wider variety of tasks than leaders who were paid or leaders who received token payment;
- The age range for voluntary leaders was 18 to 67 and the average age was 38.

CASE STUDY: Waterford Youth Arts – combining paid staff and volunteers

Waterford Youth Arts runs its activities through a combination of paid staff and volunteers. A paid drama facilitator runs each drama workshop with the assistance of a volunteer. The volunteers support the facilitators and also satisfy WYA’s child safety policy, which requires two adults in every workshop. WYA requires volunteers to commit to a full term with a particular group and in turn, provides volunteers with training in child safety and first-aid. Previous volunteers have included parents, teachers, youth workers, students and other arts workers. WYA advertises locally and through its website for new volunteers.

“We have some great volunteers who have committed themselves for many years to help with individual workshops – these people are the backbone of our work and ensure that at all times workshops are safe and good fun for all involved.” – Waterford Youth Arts Leader

LEADERS RECEIVING TOKEN PAYMENTS

Seven youth theatre leaders were receiving payment for their work with their youth theatre but felt it was below the standard rate, was irregular, was a token payment or was simply a reimbursement of expenses. In some cases youth theatres arrange special rates for trainee youth theatre leaders or assistants that is below what they would pay a more experienced leader. In some cases youth theatre leaders felt they were being paid a token rate that did not reflect the variety of responsibilities within their role or the hours they worked.

- Four of these leaders were from Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres, two were from autonomous youth theatres and one was from a Professional Theatre Company youth theatre;
- The age range of these leaders was 19 to 45, with leaders clustering between 19 - 26 and 39 - 45;
- These leaders were dealing with an average of 4.6 different types of activity as part of their youth theatre roles.

PAID STAFF

The majority of leaders who completed a questionnaire as part of Centre Stage +10 were paid for working with their youth theatre. There is no data from Centre Stage to allow a comparison with employment conditions within youth theatre 10 years ago but in 1997/1998 a little less than a quarter of youth theatre leaders described themselves as employees.

- Paid leaders were recorded from 21 different youth theatres: Activate Youth Theatre, Cavan Youth Drama, Co. Carlow Youth Theatre, LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon, LYTC Carrigallen, Co. Limerick Youth Theatre - Abbeyfeale, Roscommon County Youth Theatre, Co. Sligo Youth Theatre, Griese Youth Theatre, Kildare Youth Theatre, Lightbulb Youth Theatre, Manorhamilton Youth Theatre [MYTH], Mayo Youth Theatre - Castlebar and Ballina, Na Crossín Youth Theatre, Physically Phishy Youth Theatre, Portlaoise Youth Theatre, Portumna Youth Theatre, Roundabout Youth Theatre, Waterford Youth Arts and West Cork Arts Centre
Youth Theatre;
• Paid leaders were recorded from 10 Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres, four autonomous youth theatres, four Professional Theatre Company youth theatres, one Youth Services youth theatre, one youth theatre run by a Youth Arts Organisation and one run by an Arts Centre;
• These leaders were dealing with an average of 5.75 different types of activity as part of their youth theatre roles. Youth theatre leaders with paid full-time positions carried out the widest variety of tasks amongst this group;
• The age range of paid leaders was 19 to 58 with an average age of 34.

6.2.6 Terms of Paid Employment

Paid employment has increased within youth theatre since Centre Stage. However, the recency of this trend has meant that the development of contracts, job descriptions and standard rates of pay is still an ongoing process for employers within youth theatre.

Two youth theatre leaders described themselves as permanent full-time staff. One of these leaders is the Outreach Officer for Graffiti Theatre Company and runs two youth theatres; Activate Youth Theatre and Physically Phishy Youth Theatre. The other leader is the Artistic Director of Waterford Youth Arts;
• The leaders who described themselves as permanent part-time staff worked for eight different youth theatres. Half worked for Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres while others worked for autonomous youth theatres and those run by parent organisations including a professional theatre company, an arts centre and a local youth service;
• Eight of the 10 leaders who reported they were on a 3-month or 1 year contract worked for Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres. The remaining leaders worked for a youth theatre run by a professional theatre company and one run by a youth arts organisation;
• Nineteen leaders were contracted on a sessional basis for 13 different youth theatres, with 63.16% of these leaders working for 6 different Local Authority Arts Office youth theatres. The remaining youth theatre positions were with autonomous youth theatres and those run by professional theatre companies and youth arts organisations. Leaders who were working with multiple youth theatres were likely to be contracted on a sessional basis for at least one of their roles.
It would be misleading to think leaders who are employed on a sessional basis are not committed to their youth theatres on a long-term basis. These 19 leaders had a sum total of 64 years and two months working with their youth theatres. The longest was eight years and the shortest was two months but the average was three and a half years. It would appear that these leaders are working according to casual employment arrangements and are not under contract.

- **RATES OF PAY**

There is no simple guide to the rates of pay that youth theatre leaders receive and it is further complicated by the lack of job descriptions and contracts explaining what leaders are being paid for.

Youth theatre leaders in permanent part-time or full-time posts are the most likely to have contracts, job descriptions and yearly salaries but these may not solely relate to youth theatre activities and may include other responsibilities within their parent organisation. The vast majority of youth theatre leaders are paid according to weekly, workshop or hourly rates. These rates may apply only to the facilitation of a workshop but often weekly or workshop rates may also include administration and planning. Some youth theatres have devised a selection of different hourly and project rates to suit workshops, administration, youth theatre trips and intensive rehearsals.

Many youth theatres reported trying to adhere to VEC hourly rates but even hourly rates can vary widely depending on the experience or training position of the youth theatre leader and on the ability of the youth theatre to pay.

Youth theatre leaders who completed questionnaires as part of *Centre Stage +10* were asked what their conditions and rates of pay were. Their responses are collated in Table 6.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rates of Pay for Youth Theatre Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Minimum per hour**                  | €10.00  
| **Maximum per hour**                  | €55.00  
| **Average per hour**                  | €37.00  
| **Minimum per workshop**              | €25.00  
| **Maximum per workshop**              | €175.00 |
| **Average workshop**                  | €67.00  
| **Minimum per week**                  | €40.00  
| **Maximum per week**                  | €171.00 |
| **Average per week**                  | €105.00 |
| **Minimum per month**                 | €120.00 |
| **Maximum per month**                 | €2,500.00  
| **Average per month**                 | €1,540.00 |
| **Minimum per year**                  | €1,200.00 |
| **Maximum per year**                  | €40,000.00 |
| **Average per year**                  | €15,600.00 |

There is an element of volunteerism hidden within the employment of the paid youth theatre leader. During *Centre Stage +10* interviews, many youth theatre leaders stated that they were not paid for all the work they did for the youth theatre. They did not feel that the hours they spent on administration and artistic planning were always recognised. Figure 6.8 supports this with 42% of leaders stating that they were not paid for every hour they worked. It is unclear from the data gathered whether employers are underestimating the amount of work that is necessary to plan and run the youth theatre activities, whether there are misunderstandings related to contracts and job descriptions or whether employees are working beyond the boundaries of their role.
Proximity of Leaders to their Youth Theatres

Youth theatre leaders are travelling further than ever to run youth theatre activities. This could be viewed as part of a national trend towards commuting. However, youth theatre leader questionnaires show a reverse of the national trend as leaders from cities are travelling to work in smaller urban and rural areas. Paid employment is the largest factor attracting youth theatre leaders to travel large distances to areas that do not have skilled, local leaders.

Voluntary leaders are most likely to work with a youth theatre that is based close to home, reinforcing the idea that they are committed to the young people in their local area. Leaders who receive token payments for their work are also more likely to work close to home. Some paid youth theatre leaders work close to home and are travelling distances similar to those of the young people attending their youth theatre. This is most likely with paid leaders in urban areas. However, there is a small group of youth theatre leaders who travel large distances to find paid employment in youth theatre. Responses to the Centre Stage +10 leader questionnaires show that leaders are travelling up to 2 hours each way to paid youth theatre employment. They are generally travelling to youth theatres based in more rural counties that do not have a strong tradition of youth drama or possibly professional theatre.

Figure 6.8 If you are a paid leader, do you get paid for every hour that you spend on youth theatre activities?

- Yes – (58%)
- No – (42%)

Figures are based on 35 youth theatre leaders who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 and held 45 paid youth theatre roles.
Youth theatre leaders who travelled 10 minutes or less were composed of 43.75% voluntary leaders, 31.25% paid leaders and 25% were leaders who received token payment;

Youth theatre leaders who travelled between 11 and 30 minutes were composed of 65.22% paid leaders, 26.09% voluntary leaders and 8.70% were leaders who received a token payment;

Youth theatre leaders who travelled between 31 and 50 minutes were composed of 80% paid leaders and 20% voluntary leaders;

Those who travelled for more than 50 minutes were all paid leaders.

---

**Figure 6.9 Length of travel time to youth theatre activities: leaders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Time</th>
<th>Number of Youth Theatre Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 10 minutes</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20 minutes</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30 minutes</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40 minutes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 50 minutes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 60 minutes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 - 90 minutes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 - 120 minutes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures are based on 55 youth theatre leaders who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.
Chapter 7: The Benefits of Participation
Introduction

“Youth theatre means... drama workshops, first class theatre, a social group, an ideas factory, a source of inspiration and entertainment, a place to express yourself, a crowd of lunatics, a stepping stone to greater things, a great thing in its own right.” – Co. Sligo Youth Theatre Member

Participation in youth theatre can lead to a multitude of different personal, social and artistic outcomes. The diversity of outcomes is influenced by the variety and quality of existing youth theatre programmes and by the fact that outcomes are often determined by the needs and interests of each individual youth theatre member. As one member from Dublin Youth Theatre put it, “Youth theatre is meant to be what you need it for.”

However, the common principles and practices that link the youth theatre sector and define its ethos make it possible to distinguish some common benefits of participation. Youth theatre members, leaders and stakeholders identified the following benefits of participation:

- Improved theatre skills;
- Increased appreciation of theatre and the arts;
- Increased creativity;
- Improved workshop skills;
- Progression to third-level drama and theatre training and professional theatre;
- Training in facilitation and direction for senior members and FETAC qualifications;
- Increased levels of confidence and self-esteem;
- Increased numbers of friends and an increased ability to make friends;
- A more developed sense of personal and group identity;
- A sense of belonging;
- Increased self-discipline and commitment;
- Improved abilities to articulate and express feelings and opinions;
- A sense of happiness, fun and well-being;
- Increased levels of activity;
- A sense of personal and group achievement;
- Increased understanding and knowledge of relevant issues;
- Increased ability to take risks and be spontaneous within a safe environment;
- A sense of empowerment;
- A sense of escape and relaxation.

This chapter provides an overview of the impact of participation on youth theatre members. It draws largely on material collected in interviews, member workshops and questionnaires and maintains the integrity of the young people’s voices throughout. The young people who contributed to this study through questionnaires and practical workshops were very positive about their experiences of youth theatre and were committed members of their own groups. The research project did not capture the voices and opinions of any members who may have experienced negative outcomes and the research project did not seek out young people who had decided that youth theatre was not for them. The findings of this chapter should not be viewed as a complete series of outcomes but rather as a discourse on the benefits of participation.

In the Member Workshops, youth theatre members were asked to agree or disagree with the statement “Youth theatre has the potential to completely change your life.” The statement was intentionally provocative to create debate and discussion about the outcomes of participation in youth theatre. From the 111 young people who responded to the statement, only 14.41% disagreed. They opposed it on the basis that for them, youth theatre was about fun or was simply a hobby. They felt that it could change some elements of your life but that it didn’t completely change who you were or what you were going to do with your life.

An overwhelming majority of members, 85.59%, believed that youth theatre did have the potential to completely change your life. They responded:

“It will make it a million times better. Cause you will probably come in here like really on a downer and then you’ll come out so happy. If you spend one year here it’ll be the best year of your life. It’ll just make it better.” – Waterford Youth Arts Member

“It’s already changed my life because I was very shy and I didn’t like meeting new people and just the
few months that I’ve been here I’m a lot more outspoken and I like it here as well. And it’s made a big
difference to my weekends as well.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

“I’m not very academic, right? I don’t do good in school, right? Then it’s like I met some random people
on the street one day and they go “Hey, do you want to go to drama?” and I go “OK”. So I went to drama
and I was like “Oh my god. This is what I’ve been looking for. It’s fantastic”. Cause really... honest to god
I was like... you know it’s something I enjoy. It’s something I’m good at. It has really changed my life be-
cause I actually know what I want to do now.” – Cavan Youth Drama Member

The benefits of participation are explored under the following headings:

7.1 Artistic Benefits of Participation
7.2 Social and Personal Benefits of Participation
7.3 What do Young People Value about Youth Theatre?

7.1 Artistic Benefits of Participation

“Youth theatre is about learning new theatrical skills and developing old ones. Youth theatre, to me, is
about pushing yourself, sometimes just outside your comfort zone in order to learn and produce pieces
of art.”- Manorhamilton Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre members and leaders describe a number of different artistic outcomes of participation in youth
theatre. The artistic benefits are explored under the following headings:

7.1.1 Increase in Theatre Skills
7.1.2 Increase in Appreciation of Theatre and the Arts
7.1.3 Increase in Creativity
7.1.4 Increase in Workshop Skills
7.1.5 Youth Theatre as a Pathway to Professional Theatre

7.1.1 Increase in Theatre Skills

Youth theatre members and leaders believed that participation in youth theatre contribute significantly to the
development of drama and theatre skills. Youth theatre members aged 12 and over were asked to complete the
sentence “Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...” by selecting suitable phrases from a list on the
questionnaire. The phrases relating to drama and theatre skills featured strongly among the choices of the 440
members who completed questionnaires:

• 65% selected “To improve my theatre skills and knowledge”;
• 60% selected “To improve my drama workshop skills”.

Youth theatre leaders were asked “How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?” in their
questionnaires. They were requested to select relevant impacts from a set list or add their own. Again, the impacts
relating to drama and theatre skills featured strongly among the choices of the 56 leaders who completed
questionnaires:

• 85.71% of leaders selected ‘Improves young people’s drama workshop skills’;
• 83.93% of leaders selected ‘Improves young people’s theatre skills and knowledge’.

The development of drama and theatre skills remains central to a young person’s experience of youth theatre.
The opportunity to participate in workshops and productions is the primary reason given for joining a youth
theatre (Chapter 5.2.2) and for a section of youth theatre members, the development of drama and theatre skills
is the principal outcome.

“Youth theatre is a place which helps young people to develop their talents, skills and abilities.”
– Waterford Youth Arts Member

“A safe place to develop artistic skills” – Dublin Youth Theatre Member
“Youth theatre means learning about drama and performing in plays.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

“Youth theatre means a lot to me. I can become better at acting and my other skills when I have people to guide me.” – Celbridge Youth Drama Member

“Youth theatre to me is a chance for young people everywhere to come together and explore the art of performance and all that goes with it e.g., directing, writing...” Waterford Youth Arts Member

In general, youth theatre members describe the growth of drama and theatre skills as part of a balanced package of artistic, personal and social outcomes. The development of drama and theatre skills can also create strong, personal outcomes. Skills development can lead to competence in many different drama and theatre areas and in turn, competence can impact directly on levels of confidence and self-esteem.

7.1.2 Increase in Appreciation of Theatre and the Arts

Youth theatre members generally define the learning that takes place in youth theatre in terms of skills development. However, throughout Centre Stage +10 members also described a growth in their appreciation and understanding of the aesthetics of theatre. Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence “Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...” on the questionnaire:

- 53.18% of members selected ‘To understand and love theatre.’

Leaders were also convinced that this was a strong artistic outcome for young people. Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:

- 87.50% of leaders believed youth theatre ‘Improves young people’s understanding and appreciation of theatre’.

Youth theatre members described this increase in their appreciation and understanding of theatre:

“Youth theatre means a place that can help me discover the true meaning of plays, people and other works of art.” – Celbridge Youth Drama Member

“Being in youth theatre means that I can participate in plays and be able to appreciate other productions more.” – Na Crosaín Youth Theatre Member

“It helps me to open my mind to other art forms. I get used to all types of theatre.” – Cavan Youth Drama Member

Youth theatre members also believed that involvement in youth theatre had increased their interest in other art forms. Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence ‘Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...’ on the questionnaire:

- 56.14% of youth theatre members selected ‘To be more interested in other art forms like dance, film, music or art’.

Leaders commented that this interest in other arts forms was nurtured by the multi-disciplinary nature of theatre. Youth theatre members can experience music, dance, design and other art forms through their engagement in theatre. Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:

- 73.21% of leaders believed that youth theatre ‘Increases young people’s interest in other art forms’.

7.1.3 Increase in Creativity

Youth theatre members and leaders believed passionately in the individual creativity of all participants and proposed that youth theatre was an environment that valued and fostered creativity. Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence ‘Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...’ on the questionnaire:

- 67.05% of young people selected ‘To develop my creative abilities’;
- 12.71% of young people ranked this as the most important impact.

Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:

- 100% of leaders believed that youth theatre ‘Improves young people’s creative abilities’;
- 18% of leaders ranked this as the most important impact.

Youth theatre members recognised a creative impulse in themselves and found that youth theatre exposed
them to environments and challenges that encouraged their creativity to develop. Both members and leaders associate creativity with a strong sense of originality and individualism.

“It’s a place where I can go to develop creatively and learn to express myself and be free in myself.”
– Cavan Youth Drama Member

“It means being happy with your creativity and being the best you can be in theatre.”
– Kildare Youth Theatre Member

“It’s really enjoyable and it’s a great way to express creativity.” – Activate Youth Theatre Member

“Creativity is fundamental to being a human being. Whether it’s baking a cake or whether it’s making a skirt, it is fundamental to the human condition to be creative. And for them to have those little lightbulb moments where they go… woah… this feeling inside me is a new one and it marks me as an individual. I work in youth theatre for that moment. The moment when someone realises that this marks me as a person in the world. And a creative being can go into anything, you know? You can be creative in so many areas as human beings.” – Activate Youth Theatre Leader

7.1.4 Increase in Workshop Skills

Youth theatre members believed that the majority of their drama and theatre skills were developed through the workshop experience. Some members who had experienced different kinds of drama classes felt that the workshop experience was unique to youth theatre. They believed that the workshop experience actively engaged them in the development of skills and provided a rounded experience of drama in a creative, accepting environment. Youth theatre members also valued opportunities to be spontaneous and original through improvisation work and to explore different themes and ideas that were relevant to them.

“Youth theatre gives me an opportunity to do workshops which I did not do in my previous drama training.” – Cabinteely Youth Theatre Member

“Before I started the youth theatre I was doing just normal drama class and I just felt as if I wasn’t getting anything out of it except just my exams and stuff. Then when I came to the youth theatre I was like, you know, I was able to do more… like more acting and more learning about drama than just doing speeches and monologues and stuff. It’s more hands on and stuff.” – Activate Youth Theatre Member

“If it works out that I do theatre, it’s been really invaluable and I’ve learned so many like improvisation skills especially that I couldn’t learn in other kinds of drama groups.” – Co Sligo Youth Theatre Member

“My first ever workshop was… I was very young. I was the youngest in the group and it was very daunting and I remember I was picked first for this imagination thing that you had to make a certain garden, a certain magical place. And I’d only done speech and drama and all this and I was… I did not know what I was doing but ever after that I realised that it’s ok to do stuff in front of people- spontaneous. And that has changed.” – Co. Sligo Youth Theatre Member

“You kind of become more aware of different situations that might occur through improvisation… through drama, you know? Different themes that might come up through improvisation and things like that… being more aware of different issues.” – Co. Roscommon Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre members participate in regular workshops because they enjoy learning new skills, having fun and creating work together. They felt that regular participation was important because on a personal level, you could always improve your skills but also because they felt that the group might need you to be there. Youth theatre members demonstrated attitudes that were marked by an unselfish concern for the development of other members and the wellbeing of the group. Youth theatre members who participated in Member Workshops as part of Centre Stage +10 were asked to respond to the statement ‘Workshops are a waste of time for experienced members.’ 93.55% of members who took part in the workshops disagreed with this statement. Youth theatre members stated:

“You can only get better…” – Cavan Youth Drama Member
“There’s no harm can come of working together every day and keeping skills. If you’re just going over old stuff then you’re still introducing new members and doing new youth theatre stuff for them. It’s always good to keep... and work together as a group rather than somebody drifting in and out whenever there’s different stuff going on.” – Co. Sligo Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre members are also learning workshop facilitation and planning skills while they are workshop participants. This skills development was particularly strong in youth theatres where leaders discussed why they were including activities and included regular feedback throughout the workshop rather than leaving it to the conclusion of the workshop. The development of these specific skills is not a common objective for youth theatres (unless youth theatres are focusing on the training of senior members) but they are often a by-product of good youth theatre practice.

To explore the development in facilitation and planning skills around the country, youth theatre members were asked to create their ideal workshop during Member Workshops. In small groups, youth theatre members were asked to create a good workshop plan that named the activities they would like to include and their reasons for including the activity. Table 7.1 represents a sample of workshop plans created by members in 3 different workshops and shows a range of understanding and skill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Reason for Including Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 Physical shake out</td>
<td>1 [No reason given]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Song</td>
<td>2 Vocal warm-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Zip Zap Boing</td>
<td>3 Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Chair Race</td>
<td>4 Team work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Tableaux</td>
<td>5 Group dynamics, think creatively, focusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 Playback</td>
<td>6 Acting - improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 Improvisation</td>
<td>7 For fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 Song / shake out</td>
<td>8 Wind up, warm down, bond</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 Dodgeball</td>
<td>1 Fun, warm-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Ship Game</td>
<td>2 Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Park Bench Game</td>
<td>3 Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Frank Miller Game</td>
<td>4 Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Imaginary People Party</td>
<td>5 Good for improvisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 Emotion Squares</td>
<td>6 Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 Improvisation</td>
<td>1 Connecting with audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Zip Zap Boing, Change</td>
<td>2 Fun, energy, concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Image scenes</td>
<td>3 Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Popcorn</td>
<td>4 Make sure you’re listening, working together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.1.5 Youth Theatre as a Pathway to Professional Theatre

Youth theatre can provide a pathway for young people who want to work professionally in theatre. A significant percentage of youth theatre members are interested in working professionally as actors or within the theatre sector in general and every year youth theatre members progress to third-level drama courses or actor training programmes. Youth theatre members were asked to indicate their career aspirations through the questionnaire for members aged 12 and over. Of the 439 members who responded:

- 30.98% of members wanted to be an actor;
- 20.27% wanted to work in theatre;
- 19.36% wanted to work in the arts.

Children as young as nine expressed an interest in becoming professional actors. Some young people find that youth theatre clarifies their future ambitions and provides them with an opportunity to work towards their aspiration.

“I love being able to feel like a different person and want to be an actress.” – Rathdowney Youth Theatre Member

“It helps me pursue an acting career and it’s great to meet people.” – Co. Roscommon Youth Theatre Member
“It is a great way to learn more about theatre and to help me with job opportunities in theatre.”
– West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre Member

“I do think that there are some people who just look at theatre and know it’s going to be their life. That’s it. End of story.” – Activate Youth Theatre Leader

“I’ve always been interested in acting and I had never, like, told anyone that I wanted to be an actress but I did secretly want to do it. And just after my... it was a first-year one-act, it was a very small play called ‘Chatroom’ and I played one of the main characters in it. I was really good in it and like people had said it to me and it was kind of after that that I decided to say like.. to confirm that this was what I wanted to do. Because I was always afraid like because I’d seen, you know, like my dad [an actor] and stuff... it is hard, you know? And I know there’s a lot of sort of, kind of... “You want to be an actress, who doesn’t?” sort of thing. It was only after that I went “No this is really what I want to do”. – Dublin Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre leaders believe in providing progression routes for young people who are interested in studying drama and theatre at third level or working in professional theatre. Some youth theatres would consider their programme of activities as ‘training’ in its own right, others advise on the selection of courses or support young people through audition processes. Ireland has recently seen an increase in third-level, academic drama courses but a decrease in practical actor training programmes that fall within the third-level ‘Free fees’ scheme. Within this context, youth theatres remain one of the few financially accessible options for young people who are specifically interested in actor training.

Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence ‘Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...’ on the questionnaire:
- 51.36% of members selected ‘To improve my chance of making a career in the arts’;
- 6.08% of young people selected ‘To improve my chance of making a career in the arts’ as the most important outcome.

Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:
- 76.79% of leaders selected ‘Increases likelihood of young people achieving a career in the arts’.

Though the majority of leaders believed that youth theatre could create pathways into the professional arts sector, they considered it to be one of the lesser outcomes as they rated it number 14 out of 17 possible outcomes.

“Well if you’re going to have a professional career then the place to start is in youth theatre. Cause that’s where you can develop your skills. – Independent Youth Theatre Member

“It is a great way to enter into the ‘theatre world’. If it was not for youth theatre I don’t know how I would have gained access into this field. I love to act and perform and belive youth theatre is a great way for young people to express themselves creatively.” – Rathdowney Youth Theatre Member

“It certainly develops them as artists and that’s something we’re only really seeing now. The very first wave of members we had are finishing up in university. They’re keeping in touch with us so we see what they’re doing and where they are. We’ll do the audition workshops with them if they’re interested. Show them how to do it and just basically talk them through the auditions. And I know that maybe two years previously, there’s no way those members would have dreamed of doing auditions, you know? It gives them the tools to be able to compete for those sought after places.” – Co Wexford Youth Theatre leader

A significant number of youth theatre leaders felt strongly that youth theatre should never be regarded as ‘training’. They believed that individuals could be discreetly supported and encouraged to pursue further theatre training but that it should not be advertised openly as the automatic next step for ‘talented’ youth theatre members. Some leaders and members believed it contradicted the basic purpose of youth theatre and would disrupt the ethos of equality amongst members. Leaders felt that youth theatre should encourage young people to pursue their dreams but that leaders should be careful not to foster unreal expectations that could possibly prove damaging to the young person in the long run.

“We’re not aiming to produce professional actors, you know? If they have the talent, ok they’ll be encouraged through NAYD projects, through the senior group [senior amateur drama group]... but basically they go in there and they have fun. We have fun. They have a bit of craic. It makes them into better people, you know?” – Backstage Youth Theatre Leader
“Youth theatre isn’t just a stepping stone to professional theatre. That’s not what your youth theatre wants. Cause if that’s what your youth theatre wants then it wouldn’t be a youth theatre. It would be a talent agency. That’s not the point of youth theatre. The point is to have an appreciation for drama and theatre. It’s there for you to grow.” – Dublin Youth Theatre Member

“We have something very powerful that we offer young people and [we try to] make sense of how best to use that in the interest of young people, how best we make that effective, how best we make sure that the dreams we offer them are real, achievable dreams – not some fake dream of stardom, but the dream that you might take better control over your life and the direction that your life takes.”

Some youth theatres, such as Roundabout Youth Theatre and Co. Carlow Youth Theatre, provide opportunities for young people to get involved in further training while they are still members. They provide progression for young people through FETAC accredited training as part of their youth theatre programme:

“Youth theatre also gives me the chance to get involved in further training (FETAC) and allows me make decisions and take responsibility as a junior leader.” – Roundabout Youth Theatre Member

7.2 Social and Personal Benefits of Participation

Youth theatre members and leaders describe a rich combination of personal and social outcomes of participation in youth theatre. In the Member Workshops, youth theatre members were asked to agree or disagree with the statement ‘Youth theatre is only about developing theatre skills.’ Of the 111 young people who responded to the statement, 97.30% disagreed. Members believed that their participation in youth theatre resulted in a multitude of personal and social outcomes.

“I think they actually get a little microcosm of life. I think they get a little bit of everything from being in youth theatre. I think it ticks so many boxes for them. I think they get an immediate social life. I think they get a family. I think they learn to trust other kids. I think they get to explore parts of their personality that they can never explore in another setting. I think they get to play at being confident when they’re not confident. I think they get to play at being the creepy guy when actually they’re the cool dude. I think they get to understand so much more about themselves and who they are. And they get to have fun and go places and they get to travel. And that’s just... they get a little microcosm of life. And I know that the kids who are there love it and they give up so much to do it.”
– Co. Limerick Youth Theatre Leader - Lough Gur

“Youth theatre is a place where you can go and if you’re having a bad day it will make you feel better. It’s a place where you feel accepted and although you don’t need to, it’s a place where you can be someone you’re not and have fun at it.” – Celbridge Youth Drama Member

The personal and social benefits are explored under the following headings:

7.2.1 Confidence and Self-Esteem
7.2.2 Making Friends and Building Relationships
7.2.3 Development of Identity
7.2.4 A Sense of Belonging
7.2.5 Self-discipline and Commitment
7.2.6 Improved abilities to use Speech to express Feelings and Opinions
7.2.7 Happiness, Fun and a Sense of Well-being
7.2.8 Being Active
7.2.9 Personal and Group Achievement
7.2.10 Increased Understanding and Knowledge of Relevant Issues
7.2.11 Empowerment
7.2.12 Escape and Relaxation

7.2.1 Confidence and Self-esteem

Confidence is the most commonly cited outcome of participation in youth theatre. Members and leaders believe that youth theatre can lead to significant increases in confidence levels:

Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence ‘Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...’ on the questionnaire:

- 80.45% of members selected ‘To become more confident’;
- 39.50% of members selected ‘To become more confident’ as the most important outcome.

Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:

- 100% of leaders selected ‘Builds young people’s confidence and self-esteem’;
- 56% of leaders selected ‘Builds young people’s confidence and self-esteem’ as the most important outcome.

Youth theatre members and leaders often find it difficult to define confidence or explain how it increases as a result of participation but they know it when they see it or feel it. Some young people equated it with being outgoing, being more vocal or more forward with their opinions. Children as young as 9 listed ‘building confidence’ as an actual activity within their regular youth theatre workshop. Confidence is regarded as a treasured asset. The majority of youth theatre members described confidence that arose from a belief in their own abilities, ideas and judgements. They describe confidence that develops through their youth theatre experiences and its impact on the rest of their lives.

“In school (like before I joined youth theatre) when I’d be reading in class, I couldn’t read. I’d be shaking and my voice would go really weird but now I don’t do that any more.”
– Co. Limerick Youth Theatre Member – Lough Gur

“Before youth theatre I was always afraid of speaking... that someone would ask my opinion and I’d say the wrong thing or they wouldn’t agree with me and I’d just be like “Ok. You’re right”. Even in class if I was asked to read out an essay I wrote myself I just wouldn’t be able to. I’d be “Please don’t ask me. Please don’t ask me” kind of... and kind of when I did my first play with the youth theatre I kind of realised “I can talk and people do kind of listen” and I just kind of got more confidence in speaking and stuff.”
– Lightbulb Youth Theatre Member

“I am more confident and feel better about myself. I also made new friends. I am more mature.”
– Rathdowney Youth Theatre Member

“It is a chance for me to gain confidence in a way I really enjoy!”
– Portlaoise Youth Theatre Member

“You probably can’t tell by now but I’m like probably one of the shyest people who you’ll ever meet if you don’t know me, which is kind of hard! I get quite shy but just youth theatre... one day we were... just plain acting, you know, a regular workshop and just all of a sudden it was like ‘I’m more confident’. [laughs] I felt way better about myself and it was good to like, know that we’re all a group and that we’re like a little family... and that we’re all there for each other. And we are youth theatre and we rock.”
– Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre members describe a confidence that is partnered by a growth in self-esteem. This growth in self-esteem evolves from a belief in their own merit as an individual person.

“Building confidence and self-esteem as well and kind of building yourself up as a person through drama.”
– Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

“It helps you develop self-confidence and self-esteem and helps you become a more, you know... a confident and outgoing person.”
– Cavan Youth Drama Member

Self-esteem is promoted in youth theatre through the security that young people find in their relationships with other members and leaders, a sense of belonging, an absence of discrimination or bullying, a sense of purpose, responsibility and achievement as well as their developing competency in drama and theatre. A high level of self-esteem is the sum result of many of the other outcomes of participation.

“We did an improvisation night and it was my first time getting up in front of an audience with absolutely nothing prepared and you don’t mind standing up in front of your youth theatre group cause they’ve all done it before or are going to do it next so it’s grand. But the first time in front of people who’ve never seen it before and it was just kind of an eye-opener and youth theatre just gave you the confidence just to get up and do it.”
– Co. Sligo Youth Theatre Member
Making Friends and Building Relationships

Youth theatre members and leaders also commonly cite an increase in friends and the ability to make friends as an outcome of participation in youth theatre. Members who completed questionnaires gave it a higher overall rating than increased confidence:

Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence ‘Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...’ on the questionnaire:
- 83.41% of members selected ‘To make new friends’;
- 13.26% of members selected ‘To make new friends’ as the most important outcome;
- 48.41% of members selected ‘To get on more easily with lots of different kinds of people’.

Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:
- 94.64% of leaders selected ‘Increases young people’s friendships and ability to make friends’;
- Only 4% of leaders selected this as the most important outcome;
- 87.50% of leaders selected ‘Improves young people’s ability to relate to a wide variety of people’.

Close friendships gain greater significance within the teenage years. Many youth theatre members described a lack of friendships or a complete absence of a social life before they started youth theatre:

“I didn’t really have a social life before I started drama.” – Cavan Youth Drama Member

“This was kind of like before I joined the youth theatre... I’m going to be honest and say that I didn’t have that many mates at school at the time and then em... I joined IYT and I was just thinking “My god, I’ve got so many more friends here than I do in school” and then it made me feel a whole lot better about myself.” – Independent Youth Theatre Member

“The girls who join the youth drama tend to be the ones on the edges of the school. But once they’ve joined, the edges become more crowded, you know? Instead of being apart, they’re all together. They’re from different years and they have something to talk about. They walk along the corridor and they have faces to smile at and it brings them out of themselves - just knowing people who are friendly.” – Celbridge Youth Drama Leader

Young people found that making friends within youth theatre gave them the confidence and ability to make more friends outside of youth theatre:

“Just joining the youth theatre and actually making loads of friends and everything. It gave me a lot more confidence to make friends outside of youth theatre as well.” – Co. Sligo Youth Theatre Member

“When I started out I didn’t, like, know everybody at the youth theatre. There were some people and I didn’t have a clue who they were and then I actually made friends with them and then I was like “Oh my god I can make friends”. So then when I was on holidays, I actually like made loads of friends because I found out that I was able to do it like.” – Lightbulb Youth Theatre Member

A youth theatre can provide opportunities for young people to meet a wide variety of other young people from their local area, particularly if the youth theatre actively recruits members and promotes inclusion. This type of environment can act as a microcosm of the larger community, where young people from different backgrounds engage with each other and are united by a common purpose.

“I think it’s just a bit of an eye-opener for you like... when I first went to youth theatre I was really young so I hadn’t... I was just after starting secondary school and I was just getting used to all the different groups being in the town, like your Shams, your Emos, your whatever and I was just kind of wary of them other groups and like “No you can’t associate with them. No, you can’t be seen with them”. I think members of all those different groups were at the youth theatre so you kind of came together with them and like, it didn’t make a difference or whatever.” – Letterkenny Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatres can also provide opportunities to engage with a wider community of young people through projects, exchanges and festivals. Leaders believed that this was particularly important for some of their members from rural and disadvantaged urban areas where young people’s experiences were often limited to their own immediate surroundings.
“In terms of moving beyond their own community, they can go and perform in a festival and there are young people there from a whole range of other backgrounds, classes, and communities. In terms of broadening young people’s experience beyond their own immediate environments - I think youth theatre is uniquely positioned to do that. People can go there and participate and I think that it opens huge amounts of doors for young people.” – Senior Youth Work Manager, CYC

“I went to the Young Critics in Dublin in October. We met each other on the Friday evening and by the Sunday evening we were like one family and we didn’t want to leave each other and we just... I don’t know I just really... I didn’t know that you can get close to people that quickly.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

Leaders and members felt that youth theatre offered an environment where young people could create different types of relationships with young people of the opposite sex. Young people felt more comfortable being themselves and were therefore able to build real friendships with members of the opposite sex. They were not tied to the same behaviour and friendship patterns that existed in schools where a relationship meant being boyfriend and girlfriend. Youth theatre provided an opportunity for some members to actually meet and work with members of the opposite sex for the first time, as a significant proportion of young people attend single sex schools.

“I think there’s an enormous freedom suddenly given to them in terms of how they look at other people... not as a sexual being, not as a future boyfriend but as a fellow person, another human being in this space, in this world who can create together something out of nothing, you know? I think that’s amazing.” – Activate Youth Theatre Leader

“Youth theatre means I get to meet girls. Real girls.” – Activate Youth Theatre Member

Leaders and members also mentioned the supportive relationship that can exist between the adults and young people in youth theatre outside the more formal settings such as school. They described the impact this relationship can have on how young people communicate with and interact with other adults:

“I think they’re able to deal with adults on a much more straightforward level, you know? Cause the interaction... it’s not a hierarchy in here, you know? And there’s a mutual respect thing that goes on with anybody who’s in a position of power as it were, you know?” – West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre leader

7.2.3 Development of Identity

Adolescence is a time of transformation. Young people experiment with new ways of thinking and behaving and face the overwhelming task of determining who they are and identifying who they would like to be. Members believed that their participation in youth theatre activities revealed new and interesting things about themselves and helped them on that journey of self-discovery.

“You realise new things about yourself that you didn’t know, you know?” – Waterford Youth Arts Member

“You learn about yourself mostly”. – Co Roscommon Youth Theatre Member

“You express yourself and find your, kind of, true person [laughs]” – Co. Roscommon Youth Theatre Member

A leader at Co. Wexford Youth Theatre reported that one young member said “Youth theatre is the one place where I don’t have to act”. Members are clear that youth theatre can provide them with a space where each young person can ‘be themselves’, portraying that unique set of characteristics that constitute his or her own individual personality.

“It is a place to be myself” – Co. Roscommon Youth Theatre Member

“I love youth theatre. I have a completely different group of friends when I go to drama on a Sunday and I love it. I am completely myself and I don’t feel conscious about what other people here think about me.” – Co. Roscommon Youth Theatre Member

“A place to hang out and improve my acting skills. To meet new people. To be myself.” – Backstage Youth Theatre Member
Participation in drama provides unique opportunities for young people to experiment with different ideas, opinions and emotions through the safeguard of role and character. Members are free to reinvent themselves through the roles that they take on in youth theatre and can break free from any roles that are assigned to them within real environments such as school. Members describe exploring characters that are completely different to themselves:

“You can be a person on stage that you’re not off-stage” – Lightbulb Youth Theatre Member

“I moved up from the middle group to the older group this year and like, the change... you wouldn’t even imagine it like. I was... last year in the play I was like this really, really girly, girl and then this year I’m the fella who got stabbed.” – Lightbulb Youth Theatre Member

“It means being able to act like a person who is completely unlike you and you don’t have to worry what people think. It’s a place where you can be completely yourself.” – Cabinteely Youth Theatre

“I love it because when I’m on stage it’s like I’m a different person and it’s so much fun.” – Backstage Youth Theatre Member

Members suggest that youth theatre can provide a framework through which young people ‘grow-up’ and become adults. Youth theatre provides some young people with a way of developing an identity and a role that is independent from home and school. Youth theatre can offer activities that provide increased levels of responsibility and independence, members particularly mentioned festivals and exchanges that involve travel.

“It’s about growing up, a lot of it. Cause a lot of people are there since they’re kids and then when they leave... we’re adults [whispers]” – Celbridge Youth Drama Member

“You get to travel to criticism [NAYD’s Young Critics project], which was unbelievable... to kind of taste adult life.” – Lightbulb Youth Theatre Member

“I think for some young people it’s the moment where they mark themselves as separate from their parents and from another value system. And they can investigate value systems and I think that’s important in your development as a human being.” – Activate Youth Theatre Leader

7.2.4 A Sense of Belonging

Young people’s need to develop their own unique personality is balanced by a need to fit in and belong. Youth theatre members state that they find a powerful sense of belonging within their youth theatre. Youth theatre activities and the other young people help them feel accepted, secure and strong within a non-judgmental environment. This sense of belonging empowers young people to create, to take risks and to make statements about their world. It can also help to give young people the strength to be themselves, an individual within the group.

“Often in youth theatre, the first struggle is to use drama and theatre ritually to help the group see themselves as a community: understand how they might bond, explore the values that they might have, reshape those values to get a sense of belonging, a sense of community – and out of that sense of community comes a sense of power. We know that about young people: that’s the attraction of gangs, that’s the attraction of hanging out with tough other people - it makes you feel powerful. Part of what we’re offering in youth theatre is an opportunity to feel that power in a very different way, as a positive force, as a power to change, as a power to communicate.”

Youth theatre members were asked through questionnaires whether they believed youth theatre helped them to feel accepted and feel that they belonged somewhere. Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence ‘Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...’ on the questionnaire:

• 40% of members selected ‘To feel accepted and feel that I belong somewhere’.

Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:

• 87.50% of leaders selected ‘Increases young people’s sense of belonging and acceptance’.

Interestingly, youth theatre members mentioned this personal outcome more frequently when asked open
questions such as “What does youth theatre mean to you?” as part of the ‘12 and over’ questionnaire and throughout Member Workshop activities. Youth theatre leaders also raised this sense of belonging as a key outcome for their members.

“I think they get a sense of belonging. That’s probably the main thing they get, I would say.”
– Co. Wexford Youth Theatre Leader

When interviewed, Celbridge Youth Drama Leaders mentioned that they had recently spoken to their group about what their youth theatre meant to them. The leaders reported that they spoke about friendships, about the sense of community and the sense of belonging. This last outcome was important to many of the members who had recently moved to Celbridge, a developing town within the Dublin commuter belt:

“They talked about a sense of loneliness. Loads of them said that they had come into Celbridge relatively recently and didn’t know that many people here. But now they know loads of people and didn’t have that sense of loneliness anymore, didn’t feel so isolated.” – Celbridge Youth Drama Leader

Many youth theatre members find it difficult to ‘fit-in’ or find a peer group that they can belong to at school. They describe feeling ‘weird’ or different in comparison to the other young people in school and members describe the relief and excitement of finding out that other youth theatre members were just as ‘weird’ as them and had similar interests and tastes:

“When I went to school.. like I didn’t fit in anywhere and I suffered from depression for around 3 years. Then when I joined Dublin youth theatre everyone was like me- not exactly like me, but everyone was different and like that was the great thing. Everyone liked writing and people liked drama and the same music and stuff. So it was great to, like, to fit in.” – Dublin Youth Theatre Member

“I enjoy meeting people with the same interests. I feel like part of a team and feel liked for what I am.”
– Grie Youth Theatre Member

“Youth theatre is like a family, a herd, a pack... youth drama to me is a community of actors and weird people and it just makes you feel at home with a family you know? Of people just like you and you don’t get judged because everyone’s the same.” – Waterford Youth Arts Member

“To me, youth theatre is a place with people who act as if they want me there and don’t ignore me because I’m different.” – Backstage Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre members describe how the non-judgmental and accepting attitude of members and leaders helps them feel like they belong. This supportive environment is key to enabling young people to feel that they fit-in and it can be promoted through youth drama activities and the facilitation style of the leader as well as through the behaviour of other members.

“Youth theatre is a place that I feel like I can be myself, without worrying about people judging me. It’s a place to make friends while learning about something I love.” – Co. Carlow Youth Theatre Member

“Youth theatre means to me: life. I guess it kind of gave me something to live for because it allowed me to fit in and meet people who like what I like and it allowed for me to be myself and express myself.”
– Co. Roscommon Youth Theatre Member

“This youth theatre lets me express myself through art and to be around people who are open minded and accept anyone.” – Celbridge Youth Drama Member

Members often describe their youth theatre peers as ‘family’ and one Dublin Youth Theatre members referred to her youth theatre as a “home away from home”. The vocabulary that members use to describe this sense of belonging indicates that it is not short-lived or transitory in nature, but a firm relationship structure within their lives. One youth theatre member from Co. Roscommon Youth Theatre described a moment when she realised what her relationship with her youth theatre represented in her life:

“When we finished The Crucible we all sat together and photos were taken and I think I left youth theatre after the performance. Like I left and came back recently. When I was gone, I came across the photos and I think for me it was more or less the realisation that I was at such a big loss because it was ... I was missing something because.. we are like a family, you know? And when you feel like you’ve lost part of your

family. It just makes you feel like you’re missing something of yourself, so... I don’t know for me, it was just the realisation that I did really need this kind of thing and that it was a huge part of my life and a really good motivation.” – Co. Roscommon Youth Theatre Member

A sense of belonging can have invaluable impacts on the self-esteem of young people. Building self-esteem within the group is also essential to enabling each person to see themselves as part of a whole, with something special and worthwhile to contribute to the group. It can give young people a powerful sense of purpose and worth.

“Youth theatre has been the most positive experience for me. It makes me feel useful and that I belong somewhere and I have something to offer.” – Co. Sligo Youth Theatre Member

“Being in youth theatre makes me feel like part of a team, an important part of a team.”
– Giuseppe Youth Theatre Member

“A place to make friends and to feel wanted.” – Waterford Youth Arts Member

**7.2.5 Self-discipline and Commitment**

Youth theatre requires discipline and hard work from members. It also involves high expectations of young people and what they can achieve. Young people’s participation in youth theatre is voluntary and their free choice to commit can increase their investment and create a positive working environment. Young people can learn the value of commitment and self-discipline when their regular attendance and contribution to a common goal results in an achievement they can feel proud of. Increased motivation can also be a key outcome for some young people. Members value opportunities to take on real creative responsibilities where they can contribute their skills and imagination. Where this occurs, members describe an increase in motivation and raised expectations of what they can achieve.

“Like if you’re doing a big production like, you have to be committed and focused and sometimes be... like an adult.” – Dublin Youth Theatre Member

“I live in the country about an hour away and it’s not giving up a few hours every week... or a day every week but it’s giving up the whole day, like. And like a lot of my weekends are taken- but I don’t mind because I like drama.” – Activate Youth Theatre Member

“I think that in an ideal situation the ability to focus and concentrate and follow something over a long period of time – I think that’s really great. I think that’s really important. Putting a lot of long-term effort into something and then maybe having the high... the satisfaction of a performance, you know? That’s a whole process that’s very worthwhile in itself I think. For somebody to put themselves through – in terms of application and focus and sense of self and creativity and achievement.”
– Community Arts Co-ordinator, Leitrim Arts Office

Youth theatre can involve a sense of urgency as members and leaders work towards real deadlines. The challenge of creating and performing an ensemble piece of theatre encourages young people to rely not only on their own resources but also on the commitment and productivity of other members of the group. The theatre process is structured in a way that demands group support as people work together to reach a common goal.

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pressure and so after that you just didn’t want to leave, you just wanted to stay there all night and just
go and do another show, just keep doing shows all night.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

7.2.6  Improved Abilities to use Speech to Express Feelings and Opinions

Youth theatre members believe that participation in youth theatre can improve their communication skills and they make strong connections between the development of confidence and being ‘more talkative’.

Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence ‘Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...’ on the questionnaire:
• 50.23% of members selected ‘To get on better and communicate better with people’.

Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:
• 96.43% of leaders selected ‘Improves young people’s social and communication skills’.

Youth theatre helps young people interact with each other and assists the development of communication skills. Youth theatre members identified ‘communication’ skills as being important rather than vocal skills such as diction, clarity or projection. They value communication because it increases their ability to relate to each other. Members and leaders mentioned communication skills such as non-verbal and verbal communication, active listening, expression of thoughts and feelings, questioning, affirming and communicating without making other people feel ‘wrong’.

“It is a place where I can have a lot of fun but still help me with my communication skills with other people. It helps me think about my future and what I’d like to be when I grow up.”
– Physically Flisy Youth Theatre Member

“It means being able to communicate better with others. Being able to express my feelings and opinions more.” – Cabinteely Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre members argued that work in youth theatre stretches their thinking skills and their use of language as well as their communication skills. Youth drama activities, discussions and feedback sessions as well as Youth Participation structures can provide opportunities for young people to identify and articulate their opinions and express their individuality through language.

“Youth theatre means speaking and expressing my mind, learning new things, making new friends and getting into characters that are totally different to me.” – Portumna Youth Theatre Member

“It means being yourself and expressing yourself” – Portumna Youth Theatre Member

“Youth theatre means getting on well with people, meeting new people, getting a lot more confidence to talk to people and get my opinions across better.” – Cabinteely Youth Theatre Member

“I love youth theatre because I’ve made lots of new friends I wouldn’t have known otherwise. It helped me to become more confident and talkative. youth theatre is so much fun.” – Portlaoise Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre members believed that improved communication skills and confidence impacted on life outside the youth theatre but could also contribute to their ability to make friends within the youth theatre.

“I just enjoy being able to come to it and meet new people from a new town that I moved to. But the part that I enjoy about it most is when we actually sit down and talk about stuff and everybody gives their views and stuff and learns new things from everybody... having discussions like.”
– Letterkenny Youth Theatre Member
7.2.7 Happiness, Fun and a Sense of Well-being

Youth theatre members describe youth theatre as ‘fun’. It is one of the most popular words used to describe youth theatre by members aged 6 to 23. The creation of a ‘fun’ environment is not the primary objective of many youth theatres but its impact on the happiness of members should not be underestimated. Youth theatre members value a place where they can come and ‘have a laugh’, where they can be cheered up, where they can enjoy themselves.

Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence ‘Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...’ on the questionnaire:
• 46.82% of members selected ‘To feel better or happier’.

Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:
• 80.36% of leaders selected ‘Increases young people’s sense of well-being and happiness’.

Fun and happiness contributed significantly to the well-being of youth theatre members:

“Making friends and having a good laugh.” – Waterford Youth Arts Member

“It makes me feel happy.” – Stage Craft Youth Theatre Member

“When I have a bad day at school or something, going to youth theatre makes me feel good about myself and lets me forget everything bad.” – Backstage Youth Theatre Member

“Youth theatre has made me more confident, happier and has helped me to make friends.” – Cavan Youth Drama Member

“A place where you can have fun and feel comfortable being yourself.” – Co. Carlow Youth Theatre Member

Youth theatre members describe feelings of happiness that originate from the creative process as well as from fun environments and friends. Creativity, team work and personal and group achievement can contribute significantly to the well-being of young people:

“In my first year in DYT and... so I was about 14 and it was the first play I’d done. I think it was my first year one-act and it was the feeling of how close you get to the people, particularly in that performance I did. It was like, a dark... we did “4:48 Psychosis” by Sarah Kane which is like, a really dark play. And I was only a baby and we got, like, really close to the people, like, in the cast. And a lot of them were older than me. They were, like 18, 19 and I was only 14 and I don’t know why it affected me so much but I just... cause we were friends, we weren’t just in a cast together, like we were buddies. I remember having a dream when we went home and I was flying in my dream and I’d never had a dream about flying before and I knew it was because I was just so happy at that time, just being in that performance, you know what I mean? And like obviously then in most performances at the end, when it’s over you feel so sad, you actually nearly cry, like. Because you know you’re never going to have that time again, you know what I mean?” – Dublin Youth Theatre Member

7.2.8 Being Active

Youth theatre gives young people something to do. For some youth theatre members a significant outcome may be the opportunity to leave their house at the weekend and get involved with drama and other young people. On another level, youth theatre can help young people become active members within their local community.

“Somewhere to go, something to do, an opportunity to get involved with theatre.”
– Waterford Youth Arts Member

“It can give them something to do and something to focus on in a town that has very little”
– Co Wexford Youth Theatre Leader

“It’s something to do on a Saturday morning instead of sleeping in bed. Its great fun.”
– Na Crosáin Youth Theatre Member
Youth theatre may provide some young people with more positive recreational options and the opportunity to spend time and work with their friends in a safe space.

“Youth theatre gives us a place to meet up with our friends that doesn’t involve going to the pub.”
– Celbridge Youth Drama Member

Becoming active as a youth theatre member may also increase activity levels in other areas of a young person’s life. For example, a Clondalkin Youth Theatre leader mentioned one member who gained confidence in youth theatre and then became interested in debating.

7.2.9 Personal and Group Achievement

Youth theatre is an environment where the celebration of young people and their achievements is encouraged. Young people have the opportunity to perform and also to show appreciation as audience members within workshop and formal performance settings. Having your work shown to others and valued by them generated feelings of pride. Members derived a great deal of pride from the productions that they had created. The final production was theirs. This sense of ownership had been supported through a collaborative creative process. Good youth theatre practice ensures that members have real creative ownership, taking on real responsibilities and tasks throughout the creative process and seeing the project through to its conclusion.

“I enjoy acting and get a sense of fulfillment when I have done a play.”
– Co. Limerick Youth Theatre Member - Abbeyfeale

“When our production was staged I had a great sense of achievement. It takes my mind off school and study.”
– Co. Limerick Youth Theatre Member - Abbeyfeale

“When we did A Matter of Honour... it gave us so much confidence actually like when it was finished because like... we were actually performing it at a youth festival and then... when you had people coming up to you that you didn’t know at all, saying to you “Well done last night”, like it really just gives you a great confidence boost. – Celbridge Youth Drama Member

Members were also proud of what the group as a whole had achieved. The creative process emphasises inclusion and members believed that everyone contributed to the achievement of a good production. Members felt strongly that they worked as part of a team, listening, co-operating and trusting each other.

One Member from Co. Sligo Youth Theatre who took part in a Centre Stage +10 workshop compared a picture of a strong chain to a youth theatre performance and explained his selection by saying “there’s no weakest link. Everyone is pulling together.”

Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence ‘Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...’ on the questionnaire:
• 50.23% of member selected ‘To work better in a team’.

Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:
• 98.21% of leaders selected ‘Increases young people’s ability to work in a team’.

“It’s about group skills as well. You’ve got to learn, you’ve got to be able to work within a group. We learn team-work. We learn listening to other people’s opinions. We learn a lot of stuff other than just theatre skills.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

“Over the last few days before performing we were under serious pressure and stress but everyone, kind of, tried to come together and it was really, really nice to be part of a group. I hadn’t been part of a group like that in years so it was really, really nice.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

7.2.10 Increased Understanding and Knowledge of Relevant Issues

Many youth theatres provide opportunities for young people to explore issues through drama. This may happen through a process-based workshop, discussions or a rehearsal process and is particularly common within youth theatres run by local youth services. Youth theatre members in general did not believe that an increased
understanding of issues that affected them or their local community was a significant outcome of participation. This style of work is not customary in all youth theatres and young people’s lack of experience of this aspect of work may have impacted on the questionnaire statistics. Many leaders and members are reluctant to become involved in issue-based work because they feel it often involves a patronising, didactic message. Some leaders also mentioned that they find the themes and issues that are commonly explored with young people, limited. They preferred to explore a wider selection of what they felt were more ‘challenging’ issues and themes through theatre texts.

Of the 440 youth theatre members who completed the sentence ‘Taking part in youth theatre has helped me to...’ on the questionnaire:

- 16.36% of members selected ‘To know more about issues that affect me and my community’.

Of the 56 leaders who answered the question ‘How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?’ on the questionnaire:

- 78.57% of leaders selected ‘Improves young people’s knowledge of social and personal issues’.

Some members, leaders and stakeholders spoke positively about the benefits of exploring issues that are relevant to young people’s lives. Youth theatre can provide a safe context in which to explore these issues, articulate opinions and imagine and empathise with other people’s situations. Exploration and discussion can empower members to take positive creative actions or take positive actions within their own lives.

“It means to have fun, to be more aware of issues that affect me and people my own age.”  
West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre Member

“It means working on serious issues in a relaxed atmosphere and it helps improve my confidence in sharing ideas.”  
Kildare Youth Theatre Member

“Again it becomes an opportunity for them to explore a whole range of issues; positive issues, negative issues, really broad issues so it can broaden their whole education base. The feeling of empowerment — this is something they can do something about. If they are concerned about something in their community, they can do a piece of drama around it. The piece of drama can highlight the issue or it can become an educational tool that they can be part of and they can use.”  
Senior Youth Work Manager, CYC

7.2.11 Empowerment

Members and leaders believed that youth theatre can give young people a greater sense of authority and assertiveness. This empowerment is nurtured through active Youth Participation structures where young people can give their opinions and contribute to the running of their organisation and where youth theatre leaders respect and value the input of members. Youth theatre can also empower members by offering activities that provide increased levels of responsibility and independence to members.

“To me youth theatre means... being able to contribute my ideas.”  
Cavan Youth Drama Member

“I build my confidence and participate in new things, give my opinion and get involved in making decisions.”  
Co. Carlow Youth Theatre Member

“It gives people the opportunities to be independent and to take on responsibilities and commitments.”  
Dublin Youth Theatre Member

“There is empowerment... and it does develop but I think the empowerment takes longer than the confidence, you know? Somebody has to be in the youth theatre for a good length of time, you know? That power of having a decision followed through and again followed through, you know? It takes a few times before... because obviously it’s a different set-up in the school than out-of-schools, you know? So for them to trust that environment and to trust their decisions takes time”  
West Cork Arts Centre Youth Theatre Leader

7.2.12 Escape and Relaxation

Youth theatre members see youth theatre as a break from other stresses in their lives, particularly academic pressure. Members state that they feel relaxed in youth theatre. The sense of comfort and acceptance that members
experience within the youth theatre environment may also contribute to this sense of relaxation.

“It is a place where I can go to have fun and learn at the same time. It also lets me forget about things like school.” – Physically Phishy Youth Theatre Member

“It means relief from stress, enjoyment, a perfect mixture of work and satisfaction. It enables me to do what I love to do and to meet like-minded people.” – Activate Youth Theatre Member

“Youth theatre is an excellent way of channeling stress. It helps me relax and give me confidence.” – Cavan Youth Drama Member

### 7.3 What do Young People Value about their Youth Theatre?

The young people who participated in the Centre Stage +10 research through questionnaires and workshops were very articulate about the personal, social and artistic outcomes of their participation. They were also asked to express what they valued most about their youth theatre experience. The majority of members valued the group experience and friendship above any other aspect of the youth theatre experience.

Youth theatre members were asked to choose or draw a picture that reminded them of something special about their youth theatre. 112 youth theatre members who participated in Member Workshops chose 116 pictures and explained why they chose their picture. Their explanations highlight the aspects of the youth theatre experience which young people value the most. Young people mentioned a number of different themes or ideas in their responses and these have been collated in Figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1 What do young people value about their youth theatre?**

- Clarified plans for the future
- Respect for each other
- Relaxation
- Something to look forward to
- Inclusion
- Productions
- Inspiration / New ideas / New horizons
- Creativity
- Freedom
- Taking risks / Spontaneity
- Acceptance
- Energy / Acting crazy
- Being yourself / Expressing yourself / Escaping
- Teamwork / Common goal
- Fun
- Shared history and identity / In-jokes
- Developing confidence / Growing-up
- Happiness
- Drama / Drama workshops / Acting
- Friends / Friendship
- Togetherness / Group experience

Figures are based on 112 youth theatre members that participated in Member Workshops as part of Centre Stage +10.
Youth theatre members valued the group experience and friendship above any other aspect of the youth theatre experience. Being with other young people, being part of a group, and working together towards a common goal was central to their enjoyment of youth theatre. They also appeared to value general drama and acting experiences more than their participation in productions. Young people also mentioned some aspects of their youth theatre experience that did not arise in discussions around the outcomes of participation such as ‘energy / acting crazy’, ‘taking risks / spontaneity’, ‘freedom’ and ‘inspiration / new ideas / new horizons’. These features of the youth theatre experience make a significant contribution to young people’s enjoyment of youth theatre.

The main results of this task from the Member Workshop are provided in Table 7.2 and include images chosen by the young people and a selection of explanatory comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Percentage of Vote</th>
<th>Selected Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td><img src="image1" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>9.48%</td>
<td>Because it’s a sense of togetherness. It’s... we’re kind of like a family. We come here on weekends and we’re all together.</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>8.62%</td>
<td>Because we’re all different, but we’re all connected in the same way... or that we’re like... there’s so much history, like. We’re all happy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>7.76%</td>
<td>I chose that one because it’s not just like going to drama, it’s like going to meet up with all your friends and stuff... ‘cause you’re all so close. It’s just good fun.</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>6.90%</td>
<td>This is creativity and spontaneity and it doesn’t matter what colour crayon you are, everyone’s altogether.</td>
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Table 7.2 Main results of Member Workshop Task, ‘Choose or draw a picture that reminds you of something special about your youth theatre’
Mine are crayons and em... I think we’re like this group of crayons because we come together and we’re all... they’re all different and we’re all different people, who have different ways of thinking and everyone just brings all their ideas together and we’re non-toxic...

This one because we’re crazy and we like to jump off sand dunes. It shows that I think we’re all really spontaneous and we’re all, like, friends and we’re all, like, a group, but all take chances and we all, like, have fun with what we do and stuff like that...

For me it just represents the, kind of, feeling of freedom, I suppose, and happiness, and they’re both throwing different shapes and you can show different shapes when you’re acting and they could be, you know... after stealing something dangerous or they could be after just... going out to a party, so it could be anything, like... so it’s just the freedom and stuff.

It’s kind of like, everyone has fun and you, kind of, discover who you really are... but you have fun doing it.

I like this one because it’s like taking risks and doing stuff in drama that you never thought you’d do before, like... really going for a character or something.

I chose this one because for me it represents that I’ve grown a lot since I started, in every aspect of the word and so has everyone I know, really. ‘Cause when everyone started drama, everyone was just, like... everyone that starts drama new is just really closed and eventually they sprout, so....

I picked this because the youth theatre is just a group of young people, but then you can end up growing like a production, doing a big show... out of just a group of people. Em, like, we’re all in it together and we make more friends and become bigger people

I chose this one because we’re strongest when we’re in a group and we all work together

This is a youth theatre performance... there’s no weakest link. Everyone is pulling together. We’re all linked together by the one... drama.

This one, because... the chain represents all the different people, you know? Doing it together and the chain is going up to the sky, showing that the possibilities are endless.

Because there are girls and I go to an all-fellas school, so it’s kind of really crap and then I go to drama and there’s girls there and it’s fun.

They look really confident and they look like characters in our new play. It’s kind of just... girls all together cause it’s mostly girls in our group. And it’s pink.

They just look like they’re having fun and they’re, like, friends... and just like she said... and it just looks like it’s fun.

I picked this because youth theatre just inspires you. It switches on your mind. It gives you ideas and helps you to think of new things, to think of different ways and new ways.

I think it’s just that everyone is so creative and just comes up with new ideas to improve and...

I like the kind of, improvisation... like, thinking on your feet, when we do that... like have you ever seen, ‘Who’s line is it anyway?’ I wish we did more improv. You can’t have enough improv.
Recommendations
This chapter identifies specific recommendations, arising out of the research for NAYD and the youth theatre sector in Ireland.

Chapter 2  Youth Theatre Models and Structures

- Celebrate and promote the diversity of youth theatre models among local and national stakeholders, support agencies and funding organisations;
- Tailor NAYD assistance and supports to suit each specific model and ensure greater sustainability for the sector;
- Support the engagement of the youth sector in youth drama and theatre in Ireland;
- Carry out an audit of youth drama activity in counties where there are currently no youth theatres affiliated to NAYD, and support any existing activity;
- Engage with local youth work and arts agencies to promote the development of youth drama in counties where there is no existing youth drama activity;
- Work with Local Authority Arts Officers and other agencies to develop mechanisms for the sustainability of youth theatre at a local level;
- Encourage parent organisations of youth theatres to embed the youth theatre within their long term development strategies and make youth theatre less vulnerable to staff and policy change.

Chapter 3  Youth Theatre Funding and Resources

- Ensure that youth theatres are identified by VECs, as local youth work providers, are represented on local youth work committees, and supported through local VEC Youth Work Plans;
- Support Local Authority Arts Officers in the development of criteria that will allow all youth theatres to access local supports and funding opportunities from Local Authorities;
- Lobby for the creation of a funding ladder that provides opportunities for youth theatres to move from project specific funding to sustained annual funding, which supports the core activities of the organisation;
- Engage with the Arts Council and national youth work structures to identify progression routes for youth theatre funding;
- Lobby for the acknowledgement of youth theatre funding priorities within appropriate funding programmes, i.e., support for regular youth theatre leaders, space hire and the annual programme;
- Promote the natural alliance that exists between local venues and youth theatres particularly those supported by Local Authorities to broker competitive space and theatre hire rates for youth theatres;
- Work with local venues, professional and amateur theatre companies to encourage the provision of in-kind support to youth theatres through advice, space and theatre hire, administrative support and subsidised tickets;
- Work with the Arts Council to create incentives that encourage collaborative working relationships between youth theatres and local venues / theatre companies.

Chapter 4  Practice and Programming

- Raise awareness of quality youth theatre standards, which were proposed through the Centre Stage +10 project. Advocate for the recognition of these quality standards and the ethos of youth theatre within the assessment / evaluation practices of funders, as well as within the ongoing self-evaluation and artistic planning strategies within youth theatres;
- Support professional companies in their engagement with youth drama and strengthen relationships between these practitioners and local youth theatres to maximise the impact on the artistic quality of youth theatre practice;
- Promote appropriate supports, locally and nationally, to support the regular workshop programme of youth theatres;
- Encourage youth theatres to consider a variety of performance opportunities, including large, public productions, which may involve professional artistic staff, as well as smaller, private performances that allow for more experimental work, or work initiated or directed by youth theatre members.

Chapter 5  Youth Theatre Members

- Work with youth theatres to develop inclusion strategies specific to their own local area and support youth theatres to draw on a more representative mix of young people from their community;
• Develop a practical guide, exploring strategies for the recruitment of new youth theatre members, sharing examples of good practice from around the country. Include a specific section on the recruitment of male youth theatre members;
• Partner with youth work agencies to promote the benefits of participation in non-academic activities to parents and young people, with a particular focus on young people preparing for state exams;
• Develop supports for youth theatres who have built up significant numbers of members aged 18 and over that help to create different models of practice for the transitional years before a young person leaves a youth theatre or becomes a leader.

Chapter 7 The Benefits of Participation

• Disseminate the findings of Chapter 7 (The Benefits of Young People’s Participation in Youth Theatre) to a wider audience, including the arts, youth work and education sectors;
• Carry out further research into the outcomes of young people’s participation in youth theatre, in partnership with academic institutions.
Acknowledgements
Acknowledgements

NAYD wishes to thank all those people who generously contributed to the Centre Stage +10 research process.

Many thanks to all the youth theatre leaders, members and stakeholders who participated in the Centre Stage +10 Census Week, responded to the questionnaires and took part in Member Workshops and interviews. This report is a tribute to their work, energy and commitment to youth theatre.

Thanks to NAYD staff, board members and advisors, particularly Rebecca Bartlett and Caoimhín Corrigan. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Emelie FitzGibbon, NAYD board member and Artistic Director of Graffiti Theatre Company for her advice and editorial assistance.

Many thanks to Professor Sheila Greene, Director of the Children’s Research Centre at Trinity College, Dublin for her advice.

NAYD acknowledges the continued support and funding it receives from the Arts Council and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and also their support and encouragement in carrying out this review and research.
Bibliography
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de Róisteand, Dr Áine and Dinneen, Joan, Executive Summary – Young People’s Views about Opportunities, Barriers and Supports to Recreation and Leisure, A research report by Cork Institute of Technology on behalf of the National Children’s Office, 2005.


Hughes, Jenny and Wilson, Karen, Playing a Part, National Association of Youth Theatres (NAYT), 2003, Darlington (UK), P31


WEBSITES

Ballymun Regional Resource Website, http://www.bryr.ie

Barnstorm Theatre Company Website, http://www.barnstorm.ie

Roscommon Arts Centre Website, http://www.roscommonartscentre.ie
Appendix 1

Further Statistical Information
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<th>Theatre Name</th>
<th>CENSUS WEEK YOUTH THEATRES</th>
<th>MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRES – OVER 12</th>
<th>MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRES – UNDER 12</th>
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| **LOCAL AUTHORITY ARTS OFFICER INTERVIEWS** | Sinead Dowling, Arts Officer for Co. Carlow  
Rosaleen Molloy, Arts Officer for Co. Wexford  
Kate McCarthy, Community Arts Co-ordinator, Co. Leitrim Arts Office  
Siobhan Mulcahy, Arts Officer for Co. Clare  
Rhona McGrath, Acting Arts Officer for Co. Sligo (2008)  
Ann McCarthy, Arts Officer for Co. Mayo  
Kenneth Redmond, Arts Officer for Co. Cavan  
Avril Carr, Arts Education & Development Coordinator, Co. Roscommon Arts Office  
Joan McKernan, Arts Officer for Co. Limerick  
Muireann Ní Chonaill, Arts Officer for Co. Laois |
| **NAYD STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS** | Caoimhín Corrigan, Chairman and Arts Officer for Co. Leitrim  
Orlaith McBride, Director  
Emelie FitzGibbon, Board Member and Artistic Director of Graffiti Theatre Company  
Rebecca Bartlett, ex-Board Member  
John White, ex-Board Member  
Anna Galligan, Youth Theatre Officer  
Alan King, Acting Youth Theatre Officer (2008)  
John Taite, ArtsTrain Coordinator  
Katie Martin, Administrative Officer |
| **YOUTH SECTOR** | Eddie D’Arcy, Youth Work Services Manager, CYC  
Margot Kenny, National Youth Arts Programme Coordinator (2008) |
| **ARTS COUNCIL STAFF** | Gaye Tanham, Head of Young People, Children & Education  
Seona Ní Bhriain, Adviser (Youth arts) |
| **PARTNERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND** | Naomi Conway, Ulster Association for Youth Drama (UAYD)  
Tom Finlay, Team Leader/Artistic Director, The Rainbow Factory (Youth Action Northern Ireland) |
Appendix 2
Census Week Forms
Questionnaires
Interview Templates
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What type of activity was it?</td>
<td>An artistic activity involving members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An artistic planning session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A fundraising activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A social event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An overnight stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A travel activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where did the activity take place?</td>
<td>A theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An arts centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A home / office of YT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the venue suitable for the activity?</td>
<td>Suitable for activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the venue was unsuitable, please explain why:</td>
<td>Too dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too hot / too cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too noisy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too dirty / in bad repair / unsafe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too hot / too cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too wet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too crowded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use this space to briefly describe the activity:

Activity Log 1
How far in advance had the activity been organised?
- 1 day before
- In the last month
- In the last week
- In the last 3 months
- In the last 2 weeks
- More than 3 months ago

Did you plan the content of the artistic activity beforehand?
- No
- Yes, over 1 month ago
- Yes, on the day of the activity
- Yes, during the last week
- Yes, during the last month
- Yes, during the last 3 months

Did members contribute to the planning of the activity?
- Yes
- No

What type of artistic activity was it?
- Weekly drama workshop
- Design/scene, costume, poster, lighting, sound
- Acting workshop
- Improvisation workshop
- Devising workshop
- Performance in a theatre
- Script work
- Street theatre performance
- Technical workshop: Going to a professional theatre production
- Dance/movement workshop
- Writing workshop
- Technical rehearsal
- Making costumes
- Stage management
- Design/scene, costume, light, sound
- Process/lit, sound, costume
- Rehearsal
- Site-specific performance
- Going to a youth theatre production
- Circus skills workshop
- Mask/Commedia dell'arte

Please briefly describe your aims for the activity:

Please describe what took place during the activity. (For example: the key exercises during a workshop, what you did during a rehearsal, what type of production the group saw or performed in)

To what extent were the aims achieved? Please circle a number on the scale:
- Were not achieved
- Were achieved

Was there anything in particular that helped or hindered you and/or the group during the activity?

Please complete this form for any artistic activity that involves members during Census Week

Youth Theatre: Activity Log Number: 200
# CENSUS WEEK QUESTIONNAIRE

**Youth Theatre**

## WAS IT A TYPICAL WEEK?

1. **In your opinion was the level of activity in your youth theatre during census week:**
   - Typical
   - More than usual
   - Less than usual

   If you ticked ‘More than usual’ or ‘Less than usual’, please explain why:

2. **In your opinion were the number of leaders who participated during census week:**
   - Typical
   - More than usual
   - Less than usual

   If you ticked ‘More than usual’ or ‘Less than usual’, please explain why:

3. **In your opinion were the number of members who participated during census week:**
   - Typical
   - More than usual
   - Less than usual

   If you ticked ‘More than usual’ or ‘Less than usual’, please explain why:

## PARTICIPANTS

4. **How many members does your youth theatre have?**
   - Members aged 6–11
   - Members aged 12–13
   - Members aged 14–18
   - Members aged 19–25

5. **How many members in total participated in activities during census week?**
   - Members aged 6–11
   - Members aged 12–13
   - Members aged 14–18
   - Members aged 19–25

## RELATIONSHIPS

6. **During census week, did your youth theatre have any connection with:**
   - A local youth work service
   - The VEC
   - A local school
   - A local arts centre
   - A local community centre
   - A local development organisation
   - A local theatre company
   - A local theatre
   - A local business
   - County/Council Arts Office
   - A local youth centre
   - A local church
   - A local youth group
   - Parents of members
   - General public
   - Local media
   - Other:

7. **Why were you in contact with them?**
   - Partners in a project
   - Rental of space / venue
   - Governance (e.g. board)
   - Parent organisation
   - Advice and support
   - Fundraising
   - Existing funding relationship
   - Marketing / Publicity
   - Audience
   - Recruitment of members
   - Volunteers
   - Other:

8. **In your opinion was your connection with the local community during census week:**
   - Typical
   - More than usual
   - Less than usual

   If you ticked ‘More than usual’ or ‘Less than usual’, please explain why:

9. **Did you have any contact with NAYD during Census Week (excluding Centre Stage +10)?**
   - Yes
   - No

10. **Did you have any contact with another youth theatre during census week?**
    - Yes
    - No
MONEY

11 How much money was spent running the youth theatre during Census Week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>€0</th>
<th>€1 - €50</th>
<th>€51 - €100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€101 - €200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€601 - €800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 Was this level of spending during census week:
Typical | Less than usual | More than usual
If you ticked ‘More than usual’ or ‘less than usual’, please explain why:

13 How much money was spent on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-house Leaders</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Members</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional Volunteers</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board / Committee Members</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff from parent organisation</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside directors</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside facilitators</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other outside staff</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue Hire / Rent / Mortgage</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Costs</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL TOTAL</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EVALUATION AND DOCUMENTATION

14 Was any work evaluated during the census week?
Yes | No

15 What was evaluated?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>A project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>A workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>A rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 Was any work documented during the census week? E.g. photos, videos, written workshop plans
Yes | No

17 What was documented?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>A project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>A workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>A rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I consent to this youth theatre’s census information being held by NAYD for the purpose of the Centre Stage +10 research project. I understand that the information I provide will be analysed by NAYD staff, will be published for the general public in the Centre Stage +10 report, and will be connected to the name of my youth theatre.

Name ................................................................. Positio .................................................................

Signed ................................................................. Date .................................................................
LEADER QUESTIONNAIRE

... your Youth Theatre

1. What youth theatre(s) do you currently work with?

2. How long have you worked with this/these youth theatre(s)?

3. Have you ever worked for another youth theatre? Which one?

4. Have you ever been a member of a youth theatre? Which one?

Please complete questions 5 to 13 for each youth theatre that you work with and then move to question 14.

YOUTH THEATRE 1 NAME:

5. What type of work does your role involve? (✓ as many boxes as you need)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Facilitation</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Fundraising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>Board member duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production work</td>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
<td>Finance management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project planning &amp; co-ordination</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Managing other staff &amp; volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please describe)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. What title would you give your role?

7. Which description best suits your involvement with the youth theatre? (✓ 1 box)

| Voluntary | Paid | Receive token payment/ expenses |

8. If you are a voluntary member of staff, what is your current level of commitment to the youth theatre? (✓ 1 box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For occasional workshops or projects</th>
<th>On an on-going basis for the next 6 months</th>
<th>On an on-going basis for the next 12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For this project only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. If you are a paid member of staff, please describe the conditions of your employment. (✓ 1 box)

| Sessional (per workshop/per project) | ☐ 1 year contract | ☐ Permanent full-time |
| ☐ 3 month contract | ☐ 3 year contract | ☐ Permanent part-time |

10. If you are a paid member of staff, how much are you paid? Please circle the relevant option.

€     per workshop / per week / per month / per project / per year other (please describe)

11. If you are a paid member of staff, do you get paid for every hour that you spend on youth theatre activities? (✓ 1 box)

Yes | No

12. How much time do you spend working for the youth theatre in an average month?

Between ________ hours and ________ hours a month

13. How long does it take you to travel to weekly youth theatre activities?

YOUTH THEATRE 2 NAME:

5. What type of work does your role involve? (✓ as many boxes as you need)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Facilitation</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Fundraising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>Board member duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production work</td>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
<td>Finance management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project planning &amp; co-ordination</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Managing other staff &amp; volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please describe)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. What title would you give your role?

7. Which description best suits your involvement with the youth theatre? (✓ 1 box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voluntary</th>
<th>Paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. If you are a voluntary member of staff, what is your current level of commitment to the youth theatre? (✓ 1 box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For occasional workshops or projects</th>
<th>On an on-going basis for the next 6 months</th>
<th>On an ongoing basis for the next 12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For this project only</td>
<td>For the foreseeable future</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. If you are a paid member of staff, please describe the conditions of your employment. (✓ 1 box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sessional (per workshop/per project)</th>
<th>✓ 1 year contract</th>
<th>Permanent full-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ 3 month contract</td>
<td>Permanent part-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. If you are a paid member of staff, how much are you paid? Please circle the relevant option. (€)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>per workshop / per week / per month / per project / per year other (please describe)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. If you are a paid member of staff, do you get paid for every hour that you spend on youth theatre activities? (✓ 1 box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. How much time do you spend working for the youth theatre in an average month?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Between ________ hours and ________ hours a month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. How long does it take you to travel to weekly youth theatre activities?

14. Why are you involved with youth theatre? Please rank your reasons for being involved in youth theatre from 1 to 10 – marking 1 for the one that is most true of you, 2 for the next etc.

| I enjoy working with young people |
| I find I work more creatively with youth theatres |
| I get valuable experience that helps build my chosen career |
| I make contacts with people who can help me improve my work/career opportunities |
| I enjoy the company of other youth theatre leaders |
| I find being involved with the theatrical/ aesthetic development of young people very satisfying |
| I find begin involved with the personal and social development of young people very satisfying |
| I like the strong sense of community in the youth theatre |
| It’s work, I need the money |
| I believe that involvement in youth theatre empowers young people to participate more fully in society |
... your Background and Training

15 Are you male or female?

16 What age are you?

17 Please outline your professional employment history.

18 Please list any relevant work that you have done on a voluntary/amateur basis.

19 How did you acquire the skills that you regularly use with your youth theatre? Do you have any training / qualification that you feel is relevant?

20 How would you assess your workshop facilitation skills? (if relevant to your work) (✓ 1 box)
   - Beginner
   - Intermediate
   - Advanced

21 How would you assess your directing skills? (if relevant to your work) (✓ 1 box)
   - Beginner
   - Intermediate
   - Advanced

22 What training would help you develop your work in your youth theatre? Please rank your training requirements from 1 to 10 – marking 1 for the training area that you are most interested in, 2 for the next etc.
   - Child protection & welfare
   - Workshop facilitation
   - Acting
   - Improvisation
   - Devising
   - Movement
   - Voice
   - Directing
   - Stage management
   - Technical (lighting, sound)
   - Design
   - Circus skills
   - Street theatre
   - Mask
   - Writing
   - Music
   - Administration
   - Governance (boards etc.)
   - Fundraising
   - Marketing
   - Event management

23 Have you ever taken part in any of these NAYD programmes or events? ✓ any programmes or events that you have taken part in as a youth theatre leader and X any programmes or events that you have taken part in

   - Regional Festival of youth theatres
   - National Festival of Youth Theatres
   - AGM / Conference / Symposium
   - European Youth Theatre Encounter (ECTE)
   - Skills Development Programme
   - Leading On...
   - ArtsTrain
   - Young Critics
   - National Youth Theatre
   - Youth Theatre Forum
   - Stage It
   - Other NAYD project
   - None of these
25. How does participation in youth theatre impact on young people?

Please ✓ all categories that you think are relevant.

- Builds young people’s confidence and self-esteem.
- Improves young people’s creative abilities.
- Increases likelihood of young people achieving academic success.
- Increases young people’s friendships and ability to make friends.
- Increases young people’s ability to work in a team.
- Increases young people’s interest in other art forms.
- Increases young people’s sense of belonging and acceptance.
- Improves young people’s theatre skills and knowledge.
- Improves young people’s social and communication skills.
- Improves young people’s drama workshop skills.
- Increases young people’s sense of well-being and happiness.
- Improves young people’s understanding and appreciation of theatre.
- Improves young people’s knowledge of social and personal issues.
- Improves young people’s knowledge of rights and responsibilities.
- Improves young people’s ability to relate to a wide variety of people.
- Increases likelihood of young people successfully achieving a career in the arts.
- Increases young people’s ability to voice their own opinions and participate in decision making.

Other:

26. Can you look back over the list again and rank the 5 most important impacts?

- marking 1 for the most significant impact, 2 for the second most significant etc.

In 1997/1998 youth theatre leaders in Ireland created the following description of youth drama / youth theatre groups as part of the first Centre Stage project:

A drama group for young people, which offers a year-round programme of activities including a regular programme of drama workshops and the staging of at least one theatre production each year. A youth drama/theatre group draws its adult leaders from the voluntary and/or professional sectors and provides for their training and development. It has at least one, but usually a core group of, ‘in-house’ adult leaders, who offer a stable, skilled and long-term commitment to all aspects of the group’s development. A youth drama/theatre group has its own identity, forged by its members through drama workshop experiences and its interface with the wider community through public performance, participation in youth drama events and links with local groups and agencies.

27. Do you agree with the description?

- Yes
- No

28. Is there anything you would change about the description?

29. Would you like to contribute any further views or opinions on youth theatre to this research project?

If so, please use this space:

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire for Centre Stage +10!

Please return your completed questionnaire to:
Rhona Dunnett, NAYD, 34 Upper Gardiner St., Dublin 1
by Friday, 2nd May

Please note... By returning this questionnaire you are consenting to this information being held by NAYD for the purpose of the Centre Stage +10 research project. The information you provide will be analysed by NAYD staff and will be published for the general public in the Centre Stage +10 report.
### Youth Theatre – structure and history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>What year was your youth theatre set up?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Who set up your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Why was your youth theatre set up?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Has the youth theatre been running continuously since its set-up?</td>
<td>(Yes – go to Q2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>If not, when did the youth theatre stop running activities?</td>
<td>(Prompt: lack of space or funding, leader burn-out, leader or group moved on...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Why do you think the youth theatre stopped running activities during that period?</td>
<td>(Prompt: lack of space or funding, leader burn-out, leader or group moved on...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Thinking about how your youth theatre is structured at the moment, I’m going to show you a list of different youth theatre models and I’d like you to tell me which best applies to you.</td>
<td>(Show Sheet 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Do any other organisations have a direct involvement in your youth theatre?</td>
<td>(Prompt: local arts office, arts centre, a school, a theatre venue, VEC, community centre, professional theatre company, amateur theatre company, youth service, youth arts organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>How is your youth theatre governed?</td>
<td>(Prompt: board, staffing structures...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Looking at this list, do you have a written or informal policy for any of these areas?</td>
<td>(Show Sheet 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Do young people participate in the running of your youth theatre?</td>
<td>(No – go to Q4.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>If yes, how are young people involved?</td>
<td>(Prompt: Members’ Forum, Members on Board, Member Representatives reporting to board, Member representatives reporting to staff/leaders, Evaluation/consultation sessions with members, Informal feedback from members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>If no, is there a specific reason for not involving young people?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Does your youth theatre actively recruit new members?</td>
<td>(No – go to Q5.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>If yes, when and how do you recruit new members?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>If the answer is no, how do you maintain a healthy number of members in your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Do you have a waiting list for your youth theatre?</td>
<td>(No - go to Q6.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>If yes, how many young people are currently on the waiting list?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Does your youth theatre have a relationship with any local groups, organisations or companies?</td>
<td>(Prompt: project partners, venue rental, governance, parent organisation, advice and support, fundraising, marketing/publicity, audience, recruitment of members, volunteers...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Does your youth theatre have a relationship with any national or international groups, organisations or companies?</td>
<td>(Prompt: project partners, venue rental, governance, parent organisation, advice and support, fundraising, marketing/publicity, audience, recruitment of members, volunteers...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>What impact do these relationships have on your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Where do your youth theatre activities take place?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Are these spaces that rented, owned or given free of charge to your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Are you satisfied that these spaces meet the needs of your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Looking back, what do you see as the landmarks in the development of your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>What has helped you sustain the work of the youth theatre over the years?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Has anything ever obstructed the continued work or development of your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer Options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1 How many members does your youth theatre have?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Do separate groups of young people work within your youth theatre?</td>
<td>(No - go to Q 9.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3 If yes, how many different groups work within your youth theatre,</td>
<td>and what is the age range for each group?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4 How long do young people stay in the youth theatre on average?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5 Do you think that your youth theatre membership reflects the mix of</td>
<td>young people in your area?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6 Are there external social or cultural factors that make it</td>
<td>difficult for your young people to participate in youth theatre activities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.7 What do you think young people expect to get out of youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.8 What do you think young people get from their participation in youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1 How many adult leaders do you have in your youth theatre, and what</td>
<td>and what different types of roles do these adult leaders fulfill?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2 How many adult leaders are paid and how many adult leaders</td>
<td>volunteer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 If your adult leaders are paid, what are the current rates of pay</td>
<td>and contract arrangements for your youth theatre leaders?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4 Are there any challenges facing youth theatres in terms of retaining</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or recruiting adult leaders?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1 Do you have senior members in your youth theatre? How many?</td>
<td>(Prompt: senior members are youth theatre members who are beginning to take on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2 How do senior members develop the skills and experience necessary</td>
<td>some of the leader’s responsibilities and are committed on a long-term basis)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3 Have any senior members from your youth theatre gone on to become</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.1 Has the number of volunteer leaders in your youth theatre increased</td>
<td>leaders in their own or any other youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2 If you have noticed a difference in the numbers of volunteer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1 What expertise do you feel adult leaders have in your youth theatre</td>
<td>(Prompt: any expert skill or knowledge, such as a specialist drama or youth work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2 Do you invite freelance facilitators or directors to work with your</td>
<td>skill, administration or production skills)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.3 Do you invite any other adult leaders to work with your youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.4 If you are interested in inviting outside professionals to work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.5 Are there any other reasons why you would invite freelancers to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.1 Do you think the world of the youth theatre is becoming more</td>
<td>(No – go to Q 15.1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.2 If yes, how does the professionalisation of the sector impact on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.1 How do you think your youth theatre membership reflects the mix of</td>
<td>the day-to-day world of the youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.2 If your adult leaders are paid, what are the current rates of pay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.3 If you are interested in inviting outside professionals to work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.4 Are there any other reasons why you would invite freelancers to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.5 If yes, how does the professionalisation of the sector impact on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Programme

15.1 What types of activities does your youth theatre run?
15.2 Does your youth theatre organise social events for members?
15.3 How far in advance do you plan youth theatre activities generally?
15.4 Do you create an annual programme of youth theatre activities?
15.5 What factors influence your choice of youth theatre activities and productions?
15.6 What are the ingredients of a quality youth theatre programme of activities?

16.1 What types of workshops do you run for youth theatre members?
16.2 What types of theatre productions does your youth theatre create?
(Prompt: e.g. theatre based, site-specific, street theatre etc.)
16.3 What material does your youth theatre develop into productions?
(Prompt: scripts, devised work from stories, members’ own ideas, art, newspaper articles etc.)
16.4 Is there any particular theatre style that influences your production work?
(Prompt: Commedia dell’Arte, naturalism etc.)
16.5 Have you ever used new technologies or multi-media in your productions?

17.1 Does your youth theatre go to other youth theatre productions?
17.2 What factors encourage and discourage you from seeing another youth theatre’s work?
17.3 Does your youth theatre go to professional theatre productions?
17.4 If so, what type of productions do they see and what age-group are the productions geared towards?
17.5 Does your youth theatre participate in exchanges or festivals in Ireland or abroad?
17.6 What factors encourage and discourage you from taking part in exchanges or festivals?
17.7 What would prevent your youth theatre from participating in NAYD events and what would help your youth theatre to participate in NAYD events?

18.1 Does your youth theatre evaluate its work? [No – go to Q 18.3]
18.2 What have you evaluated in the past, and how have you carried out the evaluation?
18.3 Does your youth theatre document its work?
(Prompt: photos, videos, written workshop plans) [No – go to Q19.1 ]
18.4 What have you documented in the past, and how have you carried out the documentation?

19.1 How would you describe the ethos of your youth theatre?
(Prompt: the fundamental values specific to your youth theatre)
19.2 Do you feel that your youth theatre supports the personal and social development of young people?
19.3 How do you recognise excellence in youth theatre practice?
19.4 Do you see any major challenges facing your youth theatre in terms of practice or programming?

### Funding and Resources

20.1 Would your youth theatre be willing to submit financial accounts for 2007 to show how you were funded and what you spent money on during the past year?
20.2 Was the level of funding your youth theatre received during 2007 typical?
20.3 Has your youth theatre ever had any other significant funders?
20.4 Does your youth theatre benefit from any ‘free’ resources or sponsorship in-kind?
(Prompt: workshop or theatre space, office space or equipment, photocopying or telephone calls, sets or props and costumes)

21.1 Can you look at this list and tell me if your youth theatre needs money to fund any of these specific items? [Show Sheet 3]
21.2 Still looking at List 4, can you prioritise your funding needs, where 1 is the most urgent and 10 is the least urgent?
21.3 Do you find it easy to fund any particular item on the list?
21.4 Do you find it difficult to fund any particular item on the list?
21.5 Do you see any major challenges facing your youth theatre in terms of funding and resources?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Type</th>
<th>Run by a School</th>
<th>Run by an Amateur Theatre Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth, arts, youth arts centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run by a Youth Arts Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run by a Professional Theatre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run by a Local Arts Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run by a Local Youth Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run by a Community Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run by a Voluntary Organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>run by a Voluntary arts organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety policy</td>
<td>Inclusion policy</td>
<td>Artistic policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-competitive policy</td>
<td>Welfare policy</td>
<td>Child Protection policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Participation policy</td>
<td>Recruitment policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sheet 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admin or welfare staff</th>
<th>Freelance directors</th>
<th>Freelance facilitators</th>
<th>Permanent Staff</th>
<th>Specific projects</th>
<th>Workshop space - rental</th>
<th>Theatre space - mortgage</th>
<th>Theatre space - mortgage</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Festivals</th>
<th>Exchanges</th>
<th>Productions</th>
<th>Annual programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Venue improvements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE FOR OVER 12’s

... your Youth Theatre

1. Name of youth theatre:
2. Number of years that you've been a member of your youth theatre:

3. Why did you join your youth theatre?
   Please rank 5 reasons by writing 1 next to the most important one, 2 next to the second most important one etc.
   - To act
   - To learn more about drama
   - Because of my parents
   - I liked drama in school
   - To meet new people
   - For something to do
   - To meet other people with the same interests
   - To do more drama workshops
   - To have fun
   - To try something new
   - Other:

4. What experiences have you had in your youth theatre? (✓ as many boxes as you need)
   - Participating in drama workshops
   - Going to professional theatre productions
   - Participating in international festivals/exchanges/projects
   - Performing in plays
   - Going to youth theatre plays
   - Directing plays
   - Social events
   - Participating in national festivals/exchanges/projects
   - Devising plays
   - Design (set/costume/poster/technical)
   - Writing for youth theatre
   - Participating in street theatre
   - Set construction
   - Participating in local festivals/exchanges/projects
   - Making Costumes
   - Technical (Light/Sound)
   - Youth theatre member meeting/forum
   - Stage Management
   - Other

5. Have you ever taken part in any of these NAYD programmes or events? (✓ as many boxes as you need)
   - Regional Festival of Youth Theatres
   - National Festival of Youth Theatres
   - National Youth Theatre
   - European Youth Theatre Encounter (ECTE)
   - Skills Development Programme
   - Stage It
   - Young Critics
   - Youth Theatre Forum
   - None of these

6. Have you ever travelled with your youth theatre? (✓ as many boxes as you need)
   - No
   - Yes, within my county
   - Yes, within Ireland
   - Yes, within Europe
   - Yes, outside of Europe

7. Have you ever met someone from another youth theatre? (✓1 box)
   - Yes
   - No

8. If you have met members from other youth theatres, how did you meet them? (✓ as many boxes as you need)
   - At an NAYD event
   - At a local / county event
   - Bebo / on the internet
   - At a Connections festival
   - At a youth theatre performance
   - Other
   - Transport to youth theatre
   - Family commitments & holidays
   - School work and exams
   - Pressure from parents
   - Cost of participation
   - Other - Please describe

9. How do you usually travel to your youth theatre?

10. How long does it usually take you?
12. What age are you?

13. Are you male or female?

14. What is your nationality?

15. Which one of these phrases best describes your background? (✓ 1 box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Irish Traveller</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any other white background</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black Irish</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Any other black background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian Irish</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Any other asian background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, including mixed</td>
<td>Other - Please describe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. How would you describe the area you come from? (✓ 1 box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Large Town</th>
<th>Small Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Countryside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. Are you studying or training at the moment? (✓ 1 box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At secondary school</th>
<th>Doing a Post-Leaving Certificate course</th>
<th>At Third Level: full-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doing an apprenticeship</td>
<td>Other training / studies:</td>
<td>At Youth Reach / VTOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Third Level; part-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Do you have any of these qualifications? (✓ as many boxes as you need)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Junior Certificate</th>
<th>Applied or Vocational Leaving Certificate</th>
<th>A diploma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>A degree</td>
<td>A trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A certificate</td>
<td>None of these</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Do you plan to get any of these qualifications? (✓ as many boxes as you need)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Junior Certificate</th>
<th>Applied or Vocational Leaving Certificate</th>
<th>A diploma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>A degree</td>
<td>A trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A certificate</td>
<td>None of these</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Do you work at the moment? (✓ 1 box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Part-time: 1 to 10 hours per week</th>
<th>Work Occasionally (e.g. work for parents/family business or babysitting)</th>
<th>Work Full-time (aged 16 and over)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Part-time: 11 to 20 hours per week</td>
<td>Unemployed (aged 18 and over)</td>
<td>In education and not working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work during school holidays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. What do you like to do in your spare time, other than youth theatre? (✓ as many boxes as you need)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Dance</th>
<th>Circus or Street Art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write</td>
<td>Play music</td>
<td>Irish music, dance or storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make art</td>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>Go to art exhibitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take part in drama groups or classes outside your youth theatre</td>
<td>Watch or make opera</td>
<td>Make films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch films</td>
<td>Team sport</td>
<td>Individual sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. What do you plan to do in the future? (✓ 1 box)

| Be an actor                   | Work in education              | Work in business              |
| Work in theatre               | Work in sports                 | Work in health                |
| Work in the arts              | Work in the sciences           | Work in IT                    |
| Work in the media             | Other                          |                               |
23 Are any other people in your family interested in the arts? If so, how many people?
24 Do any of your family work professionally in the arts? If so, how many people?
25 Please list here the kinds of jobs that your parents or guardians have worked at:

... your Opinions

26 Can you finish this sentence? ‘Taking part in my youth theatre has helped me to...’

Please ✓ any sentence from the list that you feel is true for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>✓ Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To become more confident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop my creative abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To achieve more at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make new friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To work better in a team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be more interested in other art forms like dance, film, music or art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To feel accepted and feel that I belong somewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my theatre skills and knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get on better and communicate better with people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my drama workshop skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To feel better or happier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand and love theatre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know more about issues that affect me and my community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know more about my rights and responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get on more easily with lots of different kinds of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my chance of making a career in the arts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give my own opinions and get involved in making decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27 Can you look back over the list again and rank the 5 sentences that are most true from your experience?
– marking 1 for the most true, 2 for the second most true etc.

28 What does youth theatre mean to you?

29 Would you like to become a youth theatre leader at some stage in the future? ✓ 1 box

| Yes | No | Not sure |

30 Is there anything else that you want to tell us about your experience of youth theatre?

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire for Centre Stage +10!
Please return your completed questionnaire to:
Rhona Dunnott, NAYD, 34 Upper Gardiner St., Dublin 1
by Friday, 2nd May

Please note... By returning this questionnaire you are consenting to your questionnaire information being held by NAYD for the purpose of the Centre Stage +10 research project. The information you provide will be analysed by NAYD staff and will be published for the general public in the Centre Stage +10 report.

Would you like to receive information directly about NAYD projects for young people?
If so, write down your email address and we’ll keep in touch!

Email address..................................................................................................................
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What age are you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a boy or a girl?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the name of your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you join your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kinds of things do you do in your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been on a trip with your youth theatre? Where did you go?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s the best thing about your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything you don’t like about your youth theatre?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MEMBER WORKSHOP

Workshop numbers: 20 participants per workshop
Workshop length: 2 hours (allowing time for sign-in)
Workshop Centres: Dublin (x2) Cavan Waterford Cork Sligo Roscommon Laois
Recording Materials: The workshop will be recorded by dictaphone and video. Specific activities will also be documented through paper records.
Materials: Pens, paper, flip-chart, name tags, resource cards for Section 5 and images and blank sheets of paper for Section 6.

Section 1 - 10 minutes

• Ask all young people to sign-in. Introduce NAYD, the Centre Stage +10 workshop and facilitator.
• Ask the group to form a circle. Run a quick warm-up, including stretches and ice-breaker games such as “Jump, Ha”.
• Still in a circle, ask participants to cross the space and find another place in the circle if they answer, “yes” to any of the following questions. Start the questions simply with, “Anyone who is a girl?” or, “Anyone with brown hair?” before moving on to questions about their participation in youth theatre, for example:
  - Anyone who is a member of a youth theatre for less than one year?
  - Anyone who has taken part in a production?
  - Anyone who walks to youth theatre activities?
  - Anyone who has ever taken part in an exchange with another youth theatre?

Section 2 - 20 minutes

• Ask the participants to walk about the space, taking care not to bump into anybody else, and to fill any empty spaces in the room. Ask participants to listen for your instructions, because you’re going to ask them to move at different speeds around the space. With ten as the fastest speed and one as the slowest speed, call out different numbers to the group and give them a few moments to respond to each instruction.
• Bring the group back to a normal walking pace and explain that you are going to ask them to do something different this time. Ask participants to keep walking slowly around the space and think about how they got to the workshop this morning, what they had for breakfast this morning, what they did yesterday evening, what their favourite present was last Christmas. Take the group back in time and then ask them to think about what they were like and what they were doing before they joined a youth theatre. Ask participants to think about why they wanted to do drama and to come up with one short sentence or phrase to explain their reason. Stop the group and listen to a few responses.

• In the same manner, ask the group to think about the following questions:
  - When you turned up for your very first workshop, what were your expectations of youth theatre?
  - What were your first impressions of the other youth theatre members?
  - Can you think of a word that describes the young people in your youth theatre?
  - Can you think of a word that describes a typical young person in your area?
  - What brings you back to youth theatre every week?
Section 3 - 35 minutes

• Split the group into pairs and ask each pair to take turns describing five activities they did with their youth theatre during the last year (e.g., weekly workshop, theatre trip, production, NAYD event). Ask each pair to report back and record their answers on the flip-chart. Ask the group if there are any other types of youth theatre activities to add to their list.

• Tell the group that we’re going to create a programme of activities for a different youth theatre. What kinds of activities would you include to make sure this youth theatre had a really good year? Explain that we’re going to create a calendar for that youth theatre using one side of the room as September and the other side of the room as August. You can schedule an activity for the youth theatre by stepping onto the calendar and saying what your activity is. Record all suggestions.

• Invite the group to sit down on the floor in front of the flip-chart. Explain that we’re now going to think about all the different types of activities they do within their youth theatre workshops. Ask participants to call out activities, games or exercises that they do during workshops. Write down their suggestions on the flip-chart, and ask participants to describe the activity if it appears that other young people in the group don’t know it.

• Split participants into groups of four/five and give each group paper and pens. Ask each group to design a workshop plan for a two-hour, youth theatre workshop. Explain that they can use activities from the flip-chart or come up with new ones, but that they should write down the activities they would like to include and the reason why they would like to include them. If there’s time, ask groups to present their workshop to the rest of the group.

• Split participants into different groups of four/five. Give each group a set of resource cards, explaining that they represent different kinds of resources that youth theatres might have, such as youth theatre leaders, a workshop space or a wardrobe of costumes. Ask each group to choose the ten resources that they believe every youth theatre should have. When they have chosen their ten resource cards, ask each group to rank them in order of importance, with one being the most important.

**RESOURCE CARDS:**

- A rented workshop space that you share with other people;
- A rented workshop space that is exclusively yours;
- A workshop space that your youth theatre owns;
- A rented theatre space that you can book;
- A theatre space that your youth theatre owns;
- An office with a computer and telephone;
- An area for members to hang out in;
- A library of plays;
- A wardrobe of costumes;
- A store of props and objects for rehearsals / devising;
- Money for productions;
- Money for festivals;
- Money for exchanges;
- Money for social activities;
- Storage space;
- Video equipment;
- Lighting and sound equipment;
- CD player / ipod and speakers;
- A website / a bebo page;
- A minibus;
- A group of committed members;
- A skilled voluntary leader;
- A skilled paid leader;
- A group of helpful voluntary adults / parents;
- Guest directors;
- Guest workshop facilitators;
- Skilled technical staff for productions;
- A well-known actor giving workshops.
Section 5 - 20 minutes

**QUESTION CONTINUUM**

- Ask the group to gather in the centre of the room. Explain that in the next activity, you are going to call out statements about youth theatre and ask them to ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ with the statement. You can only agree or disagree - you cannot be undecided. The statements are designed to provoke debate and discussion. Explain that you can show you agree by walking to one side of the room and you can show that you disagree by walking to the other side of the room. Call out one of the following statements and let the group vote with their feet. Ask a number of people from each side to voice their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing, and allow participants to change sides if they change their minds during the activity. Use a selection of the following statements:
  - Youth theatre is just about fun;
  - Youth theatre is only about developing theatre skills;
  - Workshops are a waste of time for experienced members;
  - The most talented members should be given the best roles in productions;
  - It doesn’t really matter how good youth theatre productions are - they’re only young people after all;
  - It’s easy to make a commitment to your youth theatre;
  - Youth theatre is just a stepping stone to professional theatre;
  - Youth theatre facilitators and directors don’t need to be really skilled – it’s not professional theatre;
  - Youth theatre members should help to make all the decisions in youth theatres;
  - Youth theatre has the potential to completely change your life.

Section 6 - 25 minutes

- Ask the group to form a large circle, seated on the floor. Lay out a selection of images and blank sheets of paper on the floor. Ask participants to choose an image that reminds them of something special about their youth theatre. If they don’t see an image that they would like to choose, then they can draw something themselves using the paper and pens provided. More than one person can choose an image. Once everyone has chosen or drawn an image, ask each person to explain why they selected or drew that particular image.

- Gather up all the images and ask participants to remain sitting in the circle. Ask participants to think about a moment in their youth theatre experience where they felt like that had learned something new, or where they felt that something had changed for them. The facilitator can give examples from his or her own personal youth theatre experience but should take care to provide balanced examples that don’t lead the group in one direction. Ask participants if they would like to volunteer a story about a moment of change they experienced in their youth theatre.

Section 7 - 10 minutes

- Warm-down with the group using activities, which participants had suggested and liked in Section 3.
- Answer any questions that participants might have about Centre Stage +10 or NAYD.
## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW

### YOUTH THEATRE - structure and resources

1.1 What is your connection with youth theatre?

2.1 There are currently many different youth theatre models working around the country. Do you feel that any particular model is thriving at the moment? Are there any models that are declining? (Prompt: voluntary, youth services, arts office, professional theatre company, amateur theatre company, youth arts organisation, arts centre, school, community centre...)

2.2 Youth theatres operate many different kinds of governance systems. What do you feel are the ingredients of a good governance system? (Prompt: board, staffing structures..)

2.3 How have the organisational and governance structures of youth theatre changed in the last 10 years?

2.4 How do relationships with local organisations, groups or companies impact on youth theatres?

2.5 How do relationships with national and international organisations, groups or companies impact on youth theatres?

2.6 Are youth theatres currently facing any common space issues? (Prompt: workshop, theatre or office space...)

2.7 What do you see as the landmarks in the development of an Irish youth theatre?

2.8 What helps youth theatres sustain their work in the long-term?

2.9 What obstructs the continued work or development of a youth theatre?

3.1 Looking at these resource cards - what are the 10 key resources that every youth theatre should have? Can you prioritise them from 1 to 10?

3.2 Are you aware if is it particularly easy or difficult to fund any item on the list?

3.3 Do you see any major challenges facing youth theatres in terms of funding and resources?

3.4 How have the resources and funding available to youth theatres changed in the last 10 years?

### PARTICIPANTS

4.1 How have the typical characteristics of youth theatre members changed over the last 10 years?

4.2 Are youth theatres facing any common issues in the recruitment of new members?

4.3 Do you think that youth theatre membership generally reflects the mix of young people in Ireland?

4.4 Are there any external social or cultural factors that you feel make it difficult for young people to participate in youth theatre activities? (Prompt: work or family commitments, school work, transport...)

4.5 Do you feel the number of senior members in youth theatres has increased or decreased in the last 10 years?

4.6 If you have noticed a difference in the numbers of senior members, what do you think has caused the shift?

5.1 How have the typical characteristics of youth theatre leaders changed over the last 10 years?

5.2 Are there any challenges facing youth theatres relating to the recruitment, retainment, or training of adult leaders?

5.3 Do you feel the number of volunteer leaders working within youth theatre has increased or decreased in the last 10 years?

5.4 If you have noticed a difference in the numbers of volunteer leaders, what do you think has caused the shift?

5.5 Do you think the world of the youth theatre is becoming more professional?

5.6 If yes, how does the professionalisation of the sector impact on the day-to-day world of the youth theatre?

5.7 Where do you think the next generation of youth theatre leaders will come from?
# Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.1</th>
<th>What are the ingredients of a quality youth theatre programme?</th>
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<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>What do you see as the core values of Irish youth theatre?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>How do you think youth theatre supports the personal and social development of young people?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Do you see any relationship between youth theatres and the youth work, educational drama and professional/ amateur theatre sectors? Which sector do you feel youth theatre is closest to?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>How do you recognise excellence in youth theatre practice?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Do you see any challenges facing youth theatres in terms of practice?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>Do you see any challenges facing youth theatres in terms of programming?</td>
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# Impact of Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.1</th>
<th>What do you think young people expect to get out of youth theatre?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>What do you think young people get from their participation in youth theatre?</td>
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Centre Stage +10

A Report on Youth Theatre in Ireland

NAYD
34 Upper Gardiner Street,
Dublin 1,
Ireland
 t  +353 1 878 1301
e  info@nayd.ie
w  www.nayd.ie

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