

Executive Summary

Chapter 1

Introduction

Aim and Scope of the Study

Centre Stage +20 was undertaken by Youth Theatre Ireland 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. Centre Stage +20 is the third national study of youth theatre undertaken by Youth Theatre Ireland. It builds on two previous studies, Centre Stage (1997 – 1998) and Centre Stage +10 (2007– 2009).

The research process aimed to examine the state of current Irish youth theatre and the changes which have taken place in the last 10 years, under four general headings:

- Youth theatre structures, funding and resources;
- Youth theatre practice and programming;
- Youth theatre members and leaders;
- Outcomes of participation in youth theatre.

Process and Methodology

The Centre Stage +20 research project was undertaken between November 2017 and September 2019 and the findings presented in this report refer specifically to this research period. The following methodologies were used:

- Youth Theatre Census Week;
- Research workshops with youth theatre members;
- Questionnaires for youth theatre members and leaders;
- Youth Theatre questionnaires;
- Desk-based research;
- Case studies;
- A sample of written statements from youth theatre members.

Participants

- 55 youth theatres are counted as participants in Centre Stage +20.
- 614 young people participated directly through questionnaires and a further 103 young people participated in Research Workshops.

Chapter 2

Youth Theatre Models and Structures

Youth Theatre Provision and Location

Youth theatre provision in Ireland has grown slowly and steadily over the past two decades. Provision has expanded through the creation of new youth theatres and through increased capacity in existing youth theatres. Centre Stage +20 presents the following picture of youth theatre provision:

- 55 youth theatres are operating in 24 out of the 26 counties in Ireland;
- 2,663 youth theatre members regularly engage in youth theatre activities;
- One youth theatre is operating per 11,314 young people aged 10–19 in the country;
- Counties Cavan, Kildare, Laois, Leitrim and Longford have the highest levels of youth theatre provision;
- Per capita, Dublin is the most under-served region in the country. Westmeath and Offaly are the only counties with no youth theatre provision.

Centre Stage +20 highlights the continued growth of provision in regional towns and rural areas, and the decline of provision in cities:

- Youth theatres based in large Irish towns account for 44% of all youth theatres in the country.

- 80% of all new youth theatres established in the past 10 years are in rural areas and large towns.
- Only 18% of youth theatres are based in cities. The development of provision in cities has stagnated with only one urban youth theatre being established in the past decade.

Targeted development projects (in partnership with other agencies and organisations including Local Authority Arts Offices and ETBs) are necessary to ensure the creation of new youth theatres in areas where there is low provision.

Youth Theatre Models

Since Centre Stage +10 in 2009, the sector has continued to see evolution within youth theatre models. Of the 55 Centre Stage +20 youth theatres:

- 38% are autonomous youth theatres (self-governing entities with a voluntary board or committee).

Volunteerism is active within autonomous youth theatres and they have been particularly impacted by changes in regulatory compliance, policy change and funder requirements over the past 10 years.

- 51% are run by a parent organisation as part of their service provision for young people.

The range of these 'parent organisations' is a key change in the past 10 years. There is now a greater variety of parent organisations running youth theatres and no individual type of parent organisation is dominant in the sector. In this category, there has been a marked decline in the number of youth theatres run directly by Local Authority Arts Offices, the model that showed the most growth a decade ago.

- 11% are run in a partnership model of provision.

A key emerging trend in youth theatre models is the growth of the partnership model. This model is characterised by a formal resource and responsibility sharing arrangement between different organisations including Local Authority Arts Offices, autonomous youth theatres, arts centres and other local organisations or agencies.

The research concludes that no individual model of youth theatre provision is the ideal model and youth theatres can thrive in a range of settings.

Youth Theatre Structures

There is a balanced distribution of small, medium and large youth theatres in the sector, with Centre Stage +20 recording:

- 35% of youth theatres are 'small' (20 members or less);
- 33% of youth theatres are medium' (21 to 50 members);
- 33% of youth theatres are 'large' (51 members or more).

Over half of all youth theatres (55%) operate multiple groups for young people (e.g., groups for particular age ranges), offering them different workshops, projects and productions.

A key finding of the research is the almost complete collapse of the model of multi-centre youth theatres. The evidence demonstrates that it is difficult to sustain multi-centre youth theatres or multiple youth theatres run by the same parent organisation. Local organisations and agencies interested in this model of provision should explore the associated challenges before pursuing its development.

The research concludes that youth participation in decision-making is well supported within youth theatre structures, and youth theatres manage at least one informal or formal youth participation structure. Young people are 'members' of their youth theatre, and their opinions, interests and needs are at the heart of youth theatre's decision-making processes.

Policy and Regulatory Compliance

The management of youth theatres has changed utterly since the first Centre Stage report in 1998. Youth theatres now operate in a complex legislative, regulatory and policy environment, and youth theatre leaders cite the additional burden of legislative/regulatory compliance and the reporting requirements of funders as the biggest change in youth theatre management and practice over the past 10 years. The context they work in has been influenced by:

- Developments in child safeguarding and garda vetting;

- The regulation of charities and the creation of governance standards;
- Reforms in company law and data protection;
- The creation of national standards in youth work;
- Policy and programme developments in the arts and youth work sectors;
- Increased reporting requirements from funders.

Youth theatres need significant levels of support to help them meet new reporting and compliance requirements and this impacts on the type and level of development supports Youth Theatre Ireland needs to offer.

Developments in this area have added significantly to the workload of over-stretched youth theatre leaders, and with many reporting 'burn-out', this poses a threat to the ongoing sustainability of youth theatre. Streamlining the duplicated reporting demands that different agencies and bodies make of youth theatres would help decrease the workload without decreasing accountability and transparency.

Local, National and International Relationships

Youth theatres are more connected with local organisations, agencies and individuals than ever before and are becoming skilled advocates for their own work. Half of all youth theatres are now in contact with three or four different local organisations, agencies and types of individuals each week, an increase of 33%. Also at a local level, youth theatres are engaging with an estimated audience of 33,112 people.

Larger and better-resourced youth theatres are networking at a national level and a third of participating Centre Stage +20 youth theatres have engaged in projects with an international dimension.

The research findings shows a high demand for the services of Youth Theatre Ireland and youth theatres have a higher level of contact with the national organisation than they did 10 years ago. During Census Week 2017, 67% of the 43 participating youth theatres were in contact with Youth Theatre Ireland, a significant growth from the 36% reported during Census Week 2007.

Sustainability

The growing age of individual youth theatres indicates that the sustainability of youth theatre has improved. The average age of a Centre Stage +20 youth theatre is 15.7 years old, an increase of six years since Centre Stage +10. The largest cohort of youth theatres are aged between 11 and 30 (65%) and the oldest youth theatre is Dublin Youth Theatre (42 years old).

The research identifies factors that contribute to sustainability:

- Funding targeted at core youth theatre activities;
- Adequate levels of human resources and funding;
- Skilled facilitators and good youth theatre practice;
- Local and national supports;
- Acknowledgement of the capacity limitations of youth theatres;
- Consistency of people, resources and environment.

Chapter 3

Youth Theatre Funding And Resources

Centre Stage +20 presents a picture of a youth theatre sector that is resourceful and efficient.

Funding Priorities and Challenges

The top funding priority of Centre Stage +20 Youth Theatres is funding for regular youth theatre leaders/facilitators, with two-thirds of leaders ranking it as their number one priority.

Funding challenges reported by the youth theatre sector include:

- **Core funding:** Accessing core funding to support the regular costs of running a youth theatre (regular youth theatre facilitators, venue rental, insurance and aspects of annual programming) is the key funding challenge reported by youth theatre leaders.
- **Capacity issues with youth arts funding:** It can be challenging for existing youth theatres to

increase their income from grants, but it is increasingly challenging for new youth theatres to receive grants from over-subscribed schemes which are supporting other regular recipients to deliver quality work;

- **Funding which suits the 'Parent Organisation' youth theatre model:** Parent organisations of youth theatres often struggle to access funding for their youth theatre programme as part of their own core funding and their model renders them ineligible to access some other youth arts grants;
- **Fair payment:** Youth theatres were concerned about the ongoing challenge to pay regular youth theatre facilitators as well as guest practitioners, directors, designers, etc. a fair rate of pay.

Income

Twenty-nine youth theatres recorded a combined income of €791,972. Averaged and applied across the whole sector, this indicates that youth theatres have a combined estimated income of €1,502,016 annually. However, income levels vary:

- 41% of youth theatres report income levels under €10,000;
- 31% of youth theatres report income levels of between €10,001 and €20,000;
- 10% of youth theatres report income levels between €20,001 and €50,000 while a further 17% report income levels of over €50,001.

Local, national and international grants account for 65% of total income with the most significant funders of youth theatres being the Arts Council of Ireland, Local Authority Arts Offices, Education and Training Boards and the Erasmus + programme of the European Union. Youth Theatres also generate income through box office receipts, fundraising and membership fees.

Membership fees are a key source of unrestricted income for youth theatres and 94% of youth theatres charge a membership fee. The average annual membership fee is €147 and 90% of youth theatres offer bursaries or discounted memberships to ensure accessibility for young people who are unable to pay. The average annual fee amounts to €4.90 per week (in a typical 30-week youth theatre year) and young people generally pay per term, but are offered a range of payment options, including a 'weekly subs' choice.

Core funding opportunities that suit a variety of youth theatre models are key to the sustainable development of youth theatre. The sector is in critical need of funding opportunities that match youth theatres' key areas of expenditure and support their core activities with youth theatre members. Currently, there is a deficit of open grant opportunities which support the viability of the type of excellent youth arts programmes and organisations that funders want.

Expenditure

The key expenditure areas reported by youth theatres support the funding priorities they recorded. The single biggest item of expenditure is regular youth theatre leaders (youth theatre facilitators, Artistic Directors, administrators, etc.) who account for 39% of overall expenditure. It is clear from the research that youth theatres would benefit most from funding schemes that can support the cost of engaging youth theatre leaders on a consistent basis.

Venues

On the whole, youth theatres are satisfied with their venues, though some have urgent challenges which need to be addressed. There is some evidence to suggest that venues make a considerable, yet un-measured, in-kind contribution to youth theatres.

- Arts Centres are the most popular venue for youth theatre activities (34% of youth theatres) with youth theatres reporting their own 'youth theatre space' as the next most common (27%) and community centres as the third (20%).
- Nearly a third of youth theatres (31%) are benefitting from the stability provided by their parent organisation's lease or ownership of a suitable venue, while a further 37% are still renting their venue on a casual or weekly basis.

Human Resources

The 55 Centre Stage +20 youth theatres report a total of 530 leaders who contribute to the running of their groups, an average of 9.6 leaders per youth theatre.

Human resources have had to expand within youth theatres to cope with changes in management and governance requirements and practice. Nearly a quarter of leaders are now described as board and committee members and 60% of leaders are working on a voluntary basis. The training and support needs of these voluntary leaders need to be taken into account by Youth Theatre Ireland and other bodies when planning development, training and programme activities.

Centre Stage +20 demonstrates that frontline work with young people and behind-the-scenes administration is delivered by a complex mixture of paid leaders, voluntary leaders and paid leaders donating additional voluntary hours. Paid youth theatre leaders are central to the provision of youth theatre having engaged in 55% of all activities in Census Week even though they represent 40% of youth theatre leaders.

Chapter 4

Youth Theatre Practice

There is a strong, shared understanding of youth theatre practice within the sector and youth theatres are offering a varied programme of artistic and non-artistic activities.

Youth Theatre Practice

Centre Stage +20 updates the definition of youth theatre. The sector describes youth theatre as:

A drama group for young people that offers a year-round programme of activities including a workshop programme and performance experiences. The young people are 'members' of the youth theatre and collaborate with skilled, professional and voluntary leaders to create theatre that is uniquely relevant to the experience and character of the group. Youth Theatre is open to all young people. It is run on a not-for-profit basis, takes place outside of school and young people actively choose to take part. Youth theatre is about the development and empowerment of its membership both as theatre makers and as people.

The features of youth theatre practice were ranked by members and leaders in the following order:

1. Provides a safe and supportive space for young people to express themselves;
2. Supports the personal, social and artistic development of young people;
3. Provides an atmosphere of enjoyment and fun;
4. Explores skills, ideas and stories relevant to the young people in membership;
5. Young people are members of the youth theatre and help make decisions about their youth theatre;
6. Uses ensemble theatre approaches where members learn, explore and create as a group;
7. Young people have collaborative working relationships with leaders;
8. Provides opportunities for young people to progress;
9. Provides an annual programme which balances workshops, rehearsals, performance opportunities and other experiences;
10. Aspires to high artistic standards;
11. Young people choose to take part;
12. Encourages commitment and hard work;
13. Is facilitated by skilled youth theatre leaders;
14. Is a not-for-profit: youth theatre is not a commercial activity;
15. Is open to all young people aged 12 upwards.

Members and leaders rank 'fun', 'inclusion' and 'respect' as the most important values underpinning the ethos of youth theatre. Youth theatres are described as a safe and supportive space where young people can discover theatre, express themselves, take creative risks and realise their potential.

Programming

Youth theatres are planning annual programmes which result in high levels of activity and an increased range of creative opportunities stretched right throughout the youth theatre year. In 2019, members have increased opportunities to experience youth theatre activities which will impact on their artistic, personal and social development:

- Youth theatres align their programming with the academic year. However, only 26% of Centre Stage +20 youth theatres report taking a complete break from activities during the summer months.

- Saturdays remain the most popular day for youth theatre activities, but 66% of activities are spread evenly across weekday evenings. Sunday is the least popular day for youth theatre activities.
- Centre Stage +20 youth theatres are delivering an estimated combined weekly total of 538 hours of youth theatre provision.

Youth theatres are planning at a more strategic level in 2019. A majority of youth theatres are now developing annual plans (65%) in a collaborative manner to provide direction for leaders and members, to assess the level of resources and funding required on an annual basis and to build the best possible artistic programmes for members.

Youth Theatre Activities

Youth theatres are programming a wide range of challenging artistic activities with members to support their development and create unique theatre work that is responding to the ideas, imagination and experience of members.

Workshops

The principle of the workshop as the central methodology of youth theatre practice is upheld by the Centre Stage +20 research.

- Workshops feature in the annual programmes of all Centre Stage +20 youth theatres and rank as the most common youth theatre experience reported by members.
- Workshops explore: group and theatre skills development; specialist skills, theatre techniques and genres; devising; exploratory work and process drama; specialist practice and other art forms.

Productions and Projects

- Youth theatres are exploring a wide range of theatre practices and production styles in their work, including: scripted texts and adaptations; devised plays; new writing by playwrights that develop from collaborations with young people; and new writing by young people.
- Youth theatre productions are experimenting with staging possibilities such as site-specific work and promenade performances as well as venue-based productions.
- Youth theatre productions of all types are developed collaboratively with members so that young people's ideas, interpretation and stories are central to the production process.

Attending Youth Theatre and Professional Productions

- A majority of youth theatres are programming trips to youth theatre productions and professional theatre productions on an annual basis.
- Youth theatres are increasingly programming post-show discussions and young critics events to enhance members' experience of theatre productions and their understanding of the production process, as well as developing their critical voice.

Festivals, Exchanges and International Work

- Over half of youth theatre members (55%) have met someone from another youth theatre and 48% have travelled with their youth theatre, either within their county, within Ireland or within Europe.
- A third of Centre Stage +20 youth theatres have engaged in international projects over the past three years, including youth exchanges and initiatives; north / south projects; international projects and festivals; 'NT Connections'; and international projects with a training focus.

Other Elements of Practice

The majority of youth theatres (81%) are using active **recruitment** strategies to encourage young people from a range of backgrounds to join youth theatre. The most popular youth theatre recruitment strategies involve the distribution of information through social media (78%), websites (38%) and posters/flyers in the local community (44%), as well as asking members to bring friends (56%). Active recruitment strategies are essential in promoting diversity within the membership.

All youth theatres are engaged in **evaluating their work**, with informal methods of evaluative discussion (97%) and observation by leaders (84%) proving the most popular. The vast majority of youth theatres (94%) were engaged in **documenting their work**, with taking photographs of youth theatre activities (97%) and archiving poster and programmes (81%) proving the most popular methods.

Youth theatres use many different methods of **communication** with their members, but despite the proliferation of communications technology, members and leaders prefer to communicate directly with each other in person. Face-to-face communication was the preferred method for 67% of members.

Chapter 5

Youth Theatre Members

Youth Theatre Members – Profile

The age profile of youth theatre members remains consistent with the findings from 10 years ago in Centre Stage +10. The average age of the membership remains at 15.5. Nearly half of all youth theatre members are aged 14 to 18 (48%), with a peak in membership levels between the ages of 15 and 17.

Boys and young men continue to be under-represented in the membership at 38% while 58% of members are female. Four percent of members identify as non-binary, transgender or 'other'.

Youth theatre is contributing to the cultural inclusion of rural young people, LGBTI+ young people and young people with a range of disabilities and long-term illnesses:

- The participation of rural young people in youth theatre has continued to grow and now every four out of 10 youth theatre members comes from a rural background (43%).
- Members who openly identify as LGBTI+ within their youth theatre are estimated to form 7% of the membership.
- Significantly, 18% of youth theatre members report a disability, a disability rate 9% higher than the national average. The vast majority (85%) of disabilities reported were: Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Dyspraxia, general learning disabilities and behavioural disorders.

The youth theatre sector still needs to work hard to create a more representative mix of young people in youth theatres. The ethnic diversity levels of the youth theatre membership are currently 2% to 5% behind the national average, with the vast majority of members describing themselves as 'White Irish' (88%) and of Irish nationality (90%). One of the factors which is influencing this trend is the low level of youth theatre provision in Dublin, the county with the richest diversity of young people in the 10 to 19 age range.

Youth theatre members come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Though members from middle class backgrounds account for a small majority, 43% of members now come from socio-economic backgrounds outside the 'ABC' groupings. However, youth theatre members from some working class backgrounds are still under-represented.

The membership profile highlights factors which can impact members' participation in youth theatre and should influence the planning and delivery of appropriate resources and programmes at a local and national level. The level of additional needs within some youth theatre groups has become a resource capacity issue.

Youth Theatre Members – Background

Youth theatre is an effective way of engaging young people in the arts who do not have a family culture of arts participation. Nearly half of all youth theatre members (48%) are the only person in their family to participate in the arts. At the opposite end of the scale, one in five young people in youth theatre has a family member working professionally in the arts.

Youth theatre can be seen as an effective tool in developing artists, audiences and participants in the arts with 91% of youth theatre members wanting to continue their involvement in the arts after youth theatre and 98% of members reporting engagement in at least one other arts activity.

Youth theatre members engage with a range of additional leisure interests alongside youth theatre and other creative activities. Youth theatre members in 2019 are 15% more likely to participate in individual sports and 10% more likely to participate in team sports than they were a decade ago.

The fact that a fifth of youth theatre members are interested in working in youth theatre in the future is a very positive indicator for youth theatre development.

Youth Theatre Members – Participation

The average length of youth theatre membership is continuing to grow, from 1.6 years in Centre Stage (1998) to 2.3 years in Centre Stage +10 (2009) and 2.6 years in 2019. Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires record young people with as much as 13 years of experience.

The top five reasons young people return to youth theatre each week are:

1. They love acting;
2. They are having fun;
3. They love youth theatre workshops;
4. They want to be with their friends in youth theatre;
5. They feel they can be themselves in youth theatre.

Centre Stage +20 presents an insight into barriers to participation experienced by youth theatre members. Members describe a complex narrative of personal factors (other commitments, mental health, etc.), environmental factors (peer pressure, school, family commitments, transport, etc.) and organisational factors (cost of participation, lack of publicity, location of venue, etc.) as barriers to participation.

Nearly two-thirds of members (63%) are now dependent on others to bring them by car to youth theatre activities. Levels of independent travel by youth theatre members have decreased again in the past decade. These statistics illustrate the limited personal mobility of children and young people (particularly outside of cities) and show that family support is key to youth theatre engagement.

The vast majority of youth theatre members (71%) travel 20 minutes or less to get to their youth theatre activities. Youth theatre remains geographically accessible for existing members but travel times have increased, with 8% fewer journeys under 20 minutes.

Chapter 6

Youth Theatre Leaders

Youth Theatre Leaders Profile

As was the case a decade ago, the majority of youth theatre leaders are female (59%), mirroring almost exactly the number of female members. However, the gender ratio is more equal for leaders in the 18 to 25 age group, where 48% report as female. The 18 to 25 age group accounts for a third of all leaders which suggests a youthful leadership profile.

Centre Stage +20 also finds a diverse leadership and 16% of youth theatre leaders come from an ethnically diverse background. Having higher levels of diversity amongst youth theatre leaders has the potential to contribute to a more diverse membership in terms of age, gender and ethnicity/cultural background.

Youth theatre leaders are driven by very altruistic motives to be part of the personal, social and artistic development of young people in their community. The top reason reported by leaders for being involved with youth theatre is *'I believe that youth theatre can have a positive impact on young people's lives'*.

The skills leaders deem necessary to run a youth theatre have been honed through their third-level education (35%), youth theatre membership (32%), Youth Theatre Ireland training courses including ArtsTrain (29%), and other training courses (28%). Leaders are committed to expanding their skills and knowledge and engage in professional development activities on an ongoing basis with 62% taking part in a training course in the past two years.

Leaders' Participation In Youth Theatre

Youth theatre leaders have an estimated combined experience of 2,719 years, including a wide range of Young Leaders, emerging facilitators, experienced board members and expert youth theatre leaders.

Youth theatre plays a successful role in its own renewal and development: nearly half of all youth theatre leaders (49%) have been a member of a youth theatre. A third of all youth theatre leaders work in the youth theatre where they had been a member.

Volunteerism remains a strength of the youth theatre sector: 60% of youth theatre leaders are working

on a voluntary basis, a significant increase from Centre Stage +10. This statistic takes account of the increased number of voluntary committee/ board members involved in running youth theatres who now account for nearly a quarter of all leaders (24%).

While the volunteerism trend is positive, Centre Stage +20 identifies a significant undervaluing of the professional skills of youth theatre leaders in terms of pay and conditions. Only a third of paid leaders who completed Leader Questionnaires felt they were being paid for all the work they did in their youth theatre. The remaining 66% were working additional voluntary hours to ensure they carried out their role effectively, an increase of 24% in a decade. The average payment quoted for facilitating a two-hour workshop was €59 (a decrease of €7 from Centre Stage +10).

While leaders report spending 54% of their time on activities with young people and 46% of their time on management tasks associated with running the youth theatre, they also report that their contracts under-estimate the work-load of a youth theatre leader and under-value the administration work involved. The conditions described have the potential to result in the departure of emerging and experienced leaders from the sector if left unchecked.

Young Leaders

Youth theatres support young people to develop as leaders to provide progression for interested members and to train the next generation of leaders for the youth theatre. This cycle has been central to youth theatre development over the past 20 years. Twelve percent of youth theatre leaders are Young Leaders aged 18 to 25. These Young Leaders are receiving mentorship and training to support them to take on a range of leadership roles within their youth theatre.

Chapter 7

Outcomes of Participation in Youth Theatre

Outcomes of Participation

Centre Stage +20 research indicates a rich spectrum of artistic, creative, personal and social outcomes of participation in youth theatre. The benefits of participation in youth theatre vary depending on the individual needs, interests and situations of young people. Further research is required to deepen the conversation and evidence the impact of youth theatre participation as described by members and leaders.

Artistic and Creative Outcomes

Youth theatre members rate the artistic and creative outcomes of participation in youth theatre highly. Centre Stage +20 members and leaders reported the following outcomes of participation related to artistic and creative development:

- Improved acting and performance skills;
- Improved theatre and workshop skills;
- Enhanced levels of creativity;
- Increased creative confidence and risk-taking;
- Enhanced ability to work creatively as an ensemble to make theatre;
- Increased knowledge and experience of theatre and the arts;
- Increased interest in other art forms;
- Enhanced ability to express opinions about theatre;
- Improved theatre design or production skills;
- Increased ability to progress to third-level theatre courses or professional theatre;
- Increased opportunities to learn facilitation/ leadership skills and become a Young Leader.

The wide range of resources and programming capabilities within the sector means that not all members have equal opportunities to achieve the same level of artistic and creative outcomes. It is important that the sector, and the Youth Theatre Ireland national programme, works to address inequality of opportunity where it exists and to support all young people to reach their potential.

Social and Personal Outcomes

Youth theatre members and leaders are more likely to prioritise social and personal outcomes when asked what they value about youth theatre participation. Centre Stage +20 members and leaders reported the following outcomes of participation related to personal and social development:

- Increased opportunities and ability to mix with new people and make friends;
- Increased levels of confidence and self-esteem;
- Greater sense of self-identity and self-expression;
- Improved sense of wellbeing and happiness;
- Decreased anxiety and stress levels;
- Improved communication skills;
- Increased levels of activity and involvement;
- Improved teamworking skills;
- Increased ability to express feelings and ideas;
- Increased sense of pride in achievements with other young people;
- Improved sense of acceptance and belonging;
- Increased ability and opportunities to contribute opinions and help make decisions;
- Enhanced ability to take on responsibilities and commitments;
- Greater opportunities to explore issues and stories that matter;
- Enhanced levels of achievement at school and other areas of life.

It is important to support youth theatre members and leaders to discuss, evaluate and communicate these outcomes so they can advocate for their youth theatre as an effective support for the development and empowerment of young people.

Recommendations

This section identifies specific recommendations arising out of the research for Youth Theatre Ireland and the youth theatre sector in Ireland.

Chapter 2

Youth Theatre Models and Structures

- In partnership with other agencies and organisations, establish targeted development projects to improve young people's access to youth theatre in areas of limited provision.
- Support the engagement of professional theatre companies, venues and arts centres in developing and running youth theatres, exploring UK models where this sector plays a leading role in youth theatre delivery.
- Support the engagement of the youth sector in youth theatre through targeted research, training and partnership work.
- Continue to support the emerging partnership model, creating resources and case studies to support the development of best practice.
- Continue to advocate for all models of youth theatre which adhere to the youth theatre ethos promoted by the sector and support their development.
- Continue to support youth theatres (particularly autonomous youth theatres) to meet new regulations and compliance standards through resources, training and one-to-one advice.
- Encourage organisations interested in operating a multi-centre model of youth theatre provision, or in operating many independent youth theatres, to explore the associated challenges before pursuing its development.
- Advocate for the streamlining of reporting demands made by different agencies and bodies to help decrease the administration workload without decreasing accountability or transparency.
- Continue to support youth theatres to become effective advocates for themselves and broaden their networks on a local, national and international level.
- Simplify and streamline the youth theatre set-up process, where possible, to support the emergence of new youth theatres.

Chapter 3

Youth Theatre Funding And Resources

- Advocate for the development of core funding opportunities that suit a variety of youth theatre

models at a local and national level. Youth theatres would benefit most from funding schemes that can support the cost of engaging youth theatre leaders on a consistent basis.

- Advocate for core funding opportunities for youth theatres run by parent organisations to improve their ability to fund youth theatre programmes through their own core funding and reduce exclusion from other youth arts grant opportunities.
- Encourage and support youth theatres to engage with a wide range of grant providers and other methods of generating income to ensure diversification and sustainability.
- Advocate for an equality of access to funding opportunities and consistency in the application of funding criteria and eligibility on a local level.
- Work with local venues, arts centres, ETBs, professional theatre companies, etc. to quantify and encourage the provision of in-kind support to youth theatres through advice, space and theatre hire, administrative support and subsidised tickets.
- Work to address other specific funding priorities and challenges identified by the sector through Centre Stage +20.

Chapter 4

Youth Theatre Practice

- Disseminate the definition, key features and values of youth theatre practice and advocate for their active adoption by all youth theatres, developing youth theatres, stakeholders and the wider community.
- Share and promote examples of strong youth theatre practice and programming within the sector and to the wider arts / youth work fields through publications, events and research.
- Support all youth theatres to be ambitious in their programming and creation of work with young people, so that each youth theatre can reach the creative potential possible within its context and resources.
- Support members from youth theatres with fewer resources and more limited programmes to access a mix of challenging theatre opportunities through the Youth Theatre Ireland programme.
- Continue to support the engagement between professional theatre companies / artists and youth theatres to impact on the artistic quality of youth theatre practice.
- Encourage youth theatres to work with each

other through Youth Theatre Ireland events, attendance at each others' productions and the organisation of their own joint projects/festivals.

- Support youth theatres to develop active recruitment strategies and manage waiting lists to encourage diversity within the membership.
- Support youth theatres to maintain effective communications with their membership and the wider world, staying up-to-date on appropriate communications technology and regulation.

Chapter 5

Youth Theatre Members

- Continue to work with youth theatres to develop marketing, recruitment and inclusion strategies that will create a more diverse youth theatre membership, with a particular focus on socio-economic status, ethnicity and nationality, gender, physical disability and geographic location.
- Develop a partnership-based approach to development work which can pro-actively support the creation of youth theatres in areas rich in diversity.
- Support youth theatres to sustain the engagement and integration of youth theatre members with additional needs through training, resources and one-to-one advice. There is a need for specific supports to assist with the inclusion of: young people who have Autistic Spectrum Disorders or have a range of other developmental or learning disabilities; members with anxiety and mental health difficulties; and transgender or transitioning members.
- Work with youth theatre leaders and members to further investigate the barriers to participation described by young people and identify solutions. Use this information to inform national resources focused on recruitment, communications and marketing, management of membership fees, venue choice and supporting the individual engagement of young people.
- Advocate for core funding or sponsorship for youth theatres which could be used to reduce membership fees or offer an increased number of bursaries to young people.

Chapter 6

Youth Theatre Leaders

- Provide training opportunities to ensure leaders develop the skill set to deliver quality experiences and outcomes for young people, specifically youth theatre facilitation training. Strategically work to replace the previous ArtsTrain course with other accredited and non-accredited courses in youth theatre facilitation.
- Ensure there is a ladder of training and

networking activities offered by Youth Theatre Ireland to challenge and support experienced youth theatre leaders as well as those new to the sector.

- Provide training that is targeted at the key training interests and needs of leaders, and deliver programmes or courses in a way that is accessible to a broad range of leaders (including Young Leaders and volunteers).
- Support volunteer leaders and board members with the specific resources and assistance they need to carry out their roles, including the clarification and streamlining of governance and administration tasks.
- Assist youth theatres to sustain volunteer levels and celebrate volunteers' significant contribution to the sector.
- Advocate for fair payment of youth theatre leaders and the development of contracts which acknowledge a realistic set of roles and responsibilities in relation to the payment offered.
- Advocate for improved working conditions which support youth theatre leaders' ability to sustain their voluntary or professional careers in youth theatre.
- Continue to encourage the development of Young Leaders by: supporting youth theatre mentors; sharing best practice; and providing training opportunities for Young Leaders (with other leaders and as a discrete group).

Chapter 7

Outcomes of Participation in Youth Theatre

- Disseminate the findings of Centre Stage +20 research into the outcomes of participation to a wide audience including the arts, youth work and education sectors.
- Carry out further research to deepen the sector's understanding of these outcomes and evidence the impact of youth theatre participation as described by members and leaders.
- Support youth theatre members and leaders to discuss, evaluate and communicate these outcomes, so that they can advocate for their youth theatre as an effective support for the development and empowerment of young people.