



nayd

“CHANGING PROFILES”

*a research project into the participation
of 10-14 year olds in youth theatre in
Ireland.*

conducted by Karen O' Shea

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Methodology	3
3. Information from Membership Forms	4
4. Information from Questionnaires	5
5. Responses to Questionnaire	6
6. Analysis of Findings	22
7. Recommendations	24
8. Conclusion	27
9. Consultations	28
10. Questionnaires	29
11. Sample Questionnaire	30

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Introduction

A youth theatre is a group of people together who play games, have fun, do plays, make friends, always have a laugh, are always active and up to stuff and enjoy every minute of it!

Charlotte O'Connell (13) Physically Phishy Youth Theatre, Cork.

A youth theatre is 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... Youth drama workshops and productions explore themes which are particularly relevant to young people's lives.

12, The Irish Youth Theatre Handbook. (NAYD, 2001)

'The Changing Face of Childhood' was the title of the keynote address delivered by Professor Áine Hyland at the NAYD International Conference in Cork, November 2002. This heralded a period of exploration into the changing profiles of youth theatre in Ireland and the resulting necessary changes in practice. In Youth Drama Ireland, Emelie FitzGibbon, Artistic Director of Graffiti Educational Theatre Company, acknowledged the growing number of 'junior' youth theatres but also highlighted the new debate regarding the age at which childhood ends and adolescence or 'youth' begins. Traditionally, youth theatres had put this age at 14, welcoming those aged 14- 22, yet delegates at the International Conference had put the changeover anywhere between 9 - 14 years. As FitzGibbon stated, this is;

...a huge range by anyone's standards and one which is very difficult to handle in educational, social and personal terms... The world of the junior youth theatre is different from that of the senior. Its rhythms are gentler and shorter and, while expectations are high and performance levels terrific, extra care needs to be taken in monitoring the exposure of performance and the kind of performance which is appropriate. In exploring themes of 'relevance' to this age, what do we need to take into consideration? [And] Where are the collections of plays suitable for this 'new' age group?

FitzGibbon, Emelie. '*Changing Profiles: Changing Practice*'. Youth Drama Ireland (2002)

The questions continued at the 2004 A.G.M., when the Motion for Debate, that NAYD would address the younger age profile of youth theatres, was proposed. With much support from

youth theatre leaders, members and board representatives the motion was carried. A working group was formed and research into this area began in May 2005, during preparations for the European Children's Theatre Encounter. The Encounter was hosted by NAYD as part of the Cork 2005: European Capital of Culture celebrations and involved 140 young people, aged between 11-14 years from countries all over Europe, 20 of them from Ireland. The research was to investigate the actual figures on the current age profile of youth theatres in Ireland and from this to assess whether NAYD was serving the 10-14 age group appropriately. Focus points in this research were practice, repertoire and welfare. In an attempt to be representational, three youth theatres were selected as case studies to illustrate current practice in these focus areas.

Research Brief:

1. Research and compile the actual figures on the age profile of youth theatres in Ireland.
2. NAYD needs to find out if they are –
 - Serving the 10-14 years age group
 - Serving them appropriately
 - What sort of training those dealing with this age group might welcome
 - How they might best be included in the NAYD national programme.

Key Questions:

1. What is different with regard to **practice** in youth theatre for this age group?
2. What is different with regard to **welfare** in youth theatre for this age group?
3. How is the **repertoire** sourced at present?
4. Are the younger age groups being **integrated** or do they have their own group?
5. What, if any, **impact** is this younger age group having on the youth theatres as a whole?

Methodology

The actual figures on the age profile of youth theatres in Ireland were compiled in two stages. In January 2005, the NAYD membership renewal form was updated to include a more detailed breakdown of age groups and gender balance within youth theatres. Information from these forms identified 30 (64%) of the 47 member youth theatres as serving the 10-14 yrs. age group. These youth theatres were placed in cluster groups around the country, with a view to conducting site visits of representative youth theatres from each cluster. A questionnaire focusing on the key questions of the research project was forwarded by post and email to the relevant youth theatres in September 2005. These questionnaires were followed up by emails and phone calls. There was an **83%** response to these questionnaires, highlighting the investment and interest of youth theatre leaders in this research.

Site visits were conducted to a number of representative youth theatres including:

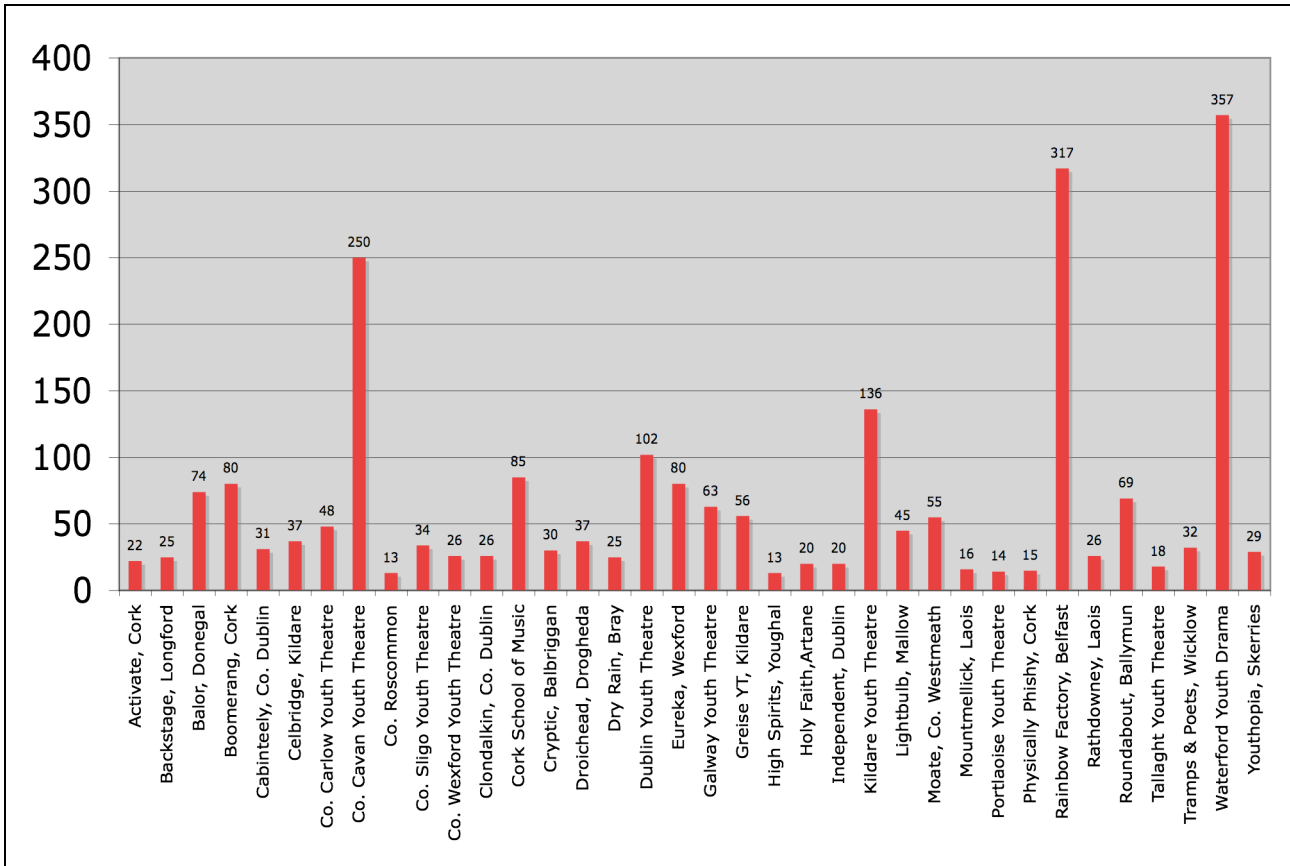
1. Portlaoise Youth Theatre
2. Rathdowney Youth Theatre, Co. Laois
3. Waterford Youth Arts
4. Greise Young Players, Co. Kildare
5. Rainbow Factory, Belfast.
6. Balor D.C.A Group, Co. Donegal.
7. Physically Phishy Youth Theatre, Cork.
8. Backstage Youth Theatre, Longford.

The researcher's aims for each visit were to:

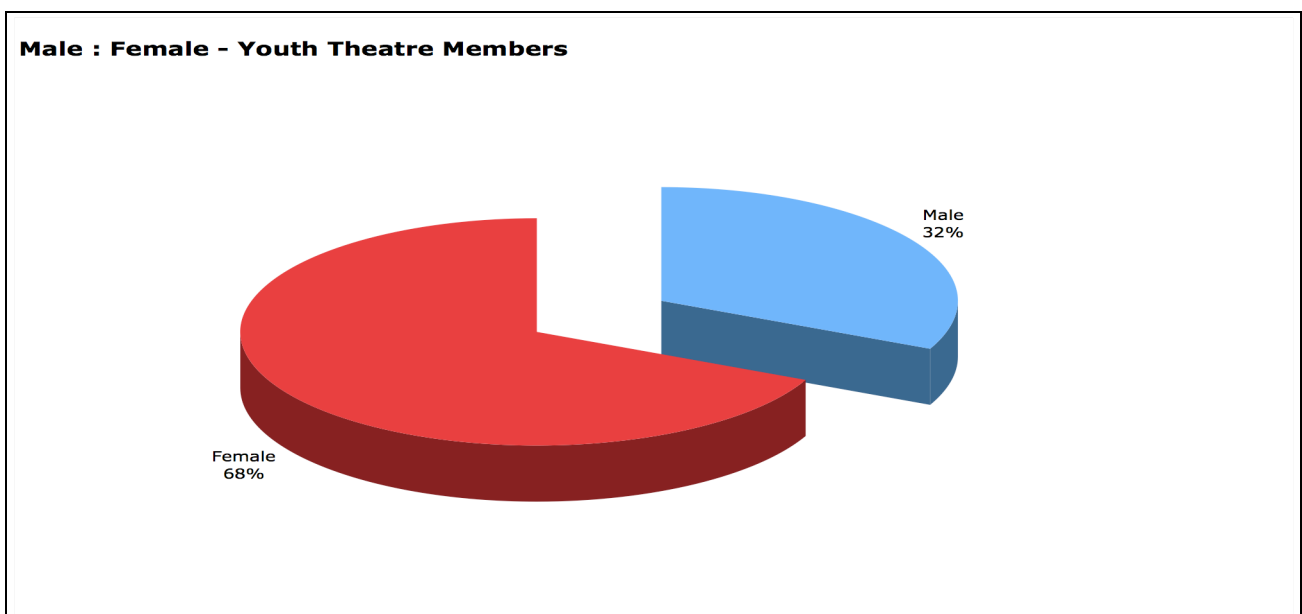
- (a) Conduct individual discussions with leader(s) of the selected youth theatre.
- (b) Conduct discussions with members of selected youth theatre aged between 10-14 yrs.
- (c) Observe a weekly workshop of this selected youth theatre.

Furthermore, a number of experts in the sector were consulted, including educational psychologists, drama/theatre-in-education professionals, arts officers and youth arts officers. During discussions with the youth theatre members, the young people were asked to describe, as if to a friend, what they did in workshop and why they would recommend joining their youth theatre. The resulting answers are quoted throughout this research and provide an insight into the mindset of this age group and their perception of youth theatre.

Information from Membership Forms 2005

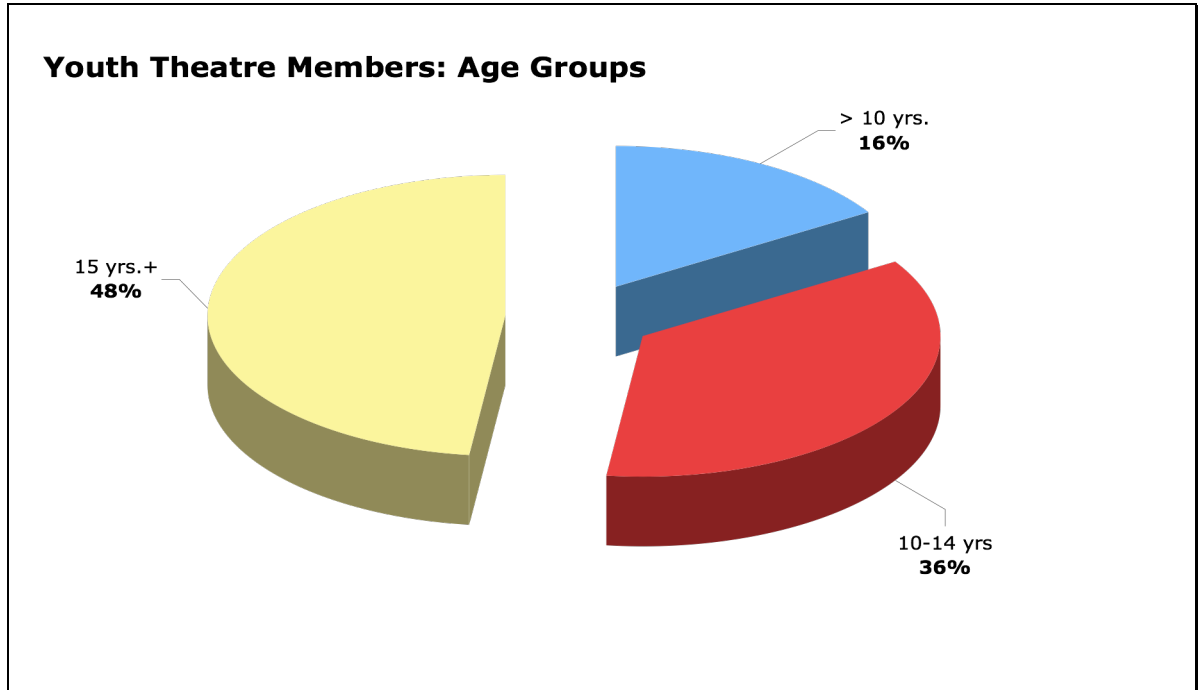


This chart displays all NAYD-Affiliated Youth Theatres and their respective number of members.

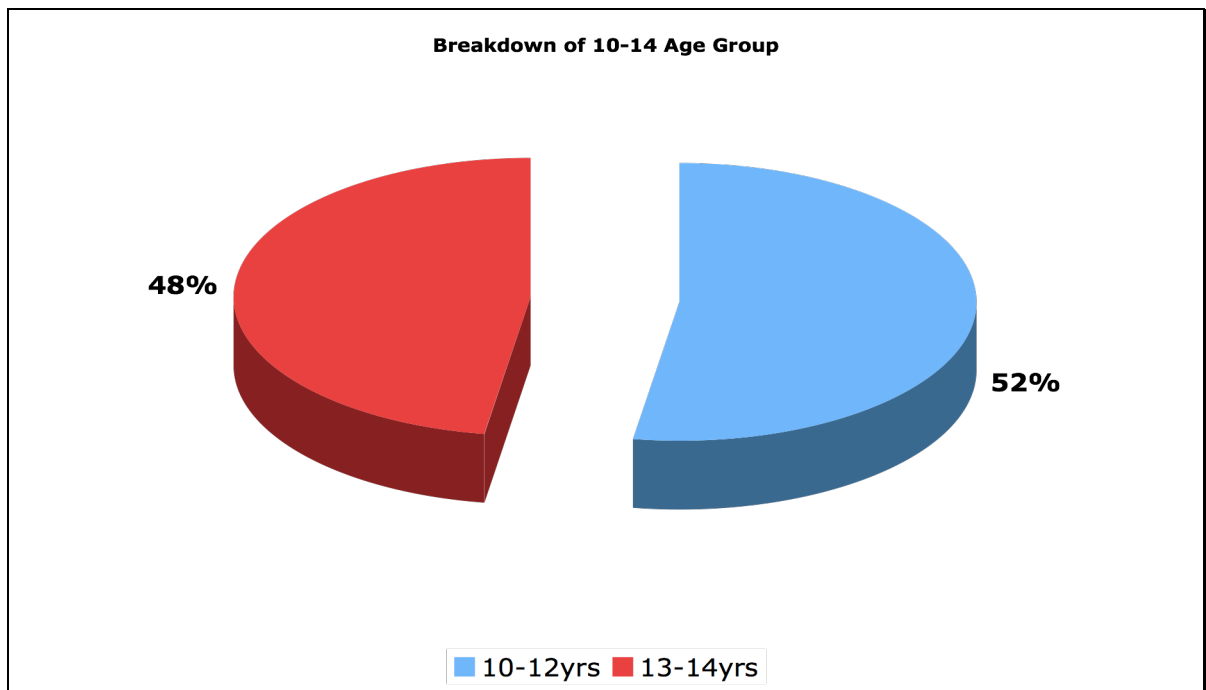


This chart reflects the current gender breakdown in all NAYD-affiliated youth theatres. All age groups have been included.

Information from Questionnaires



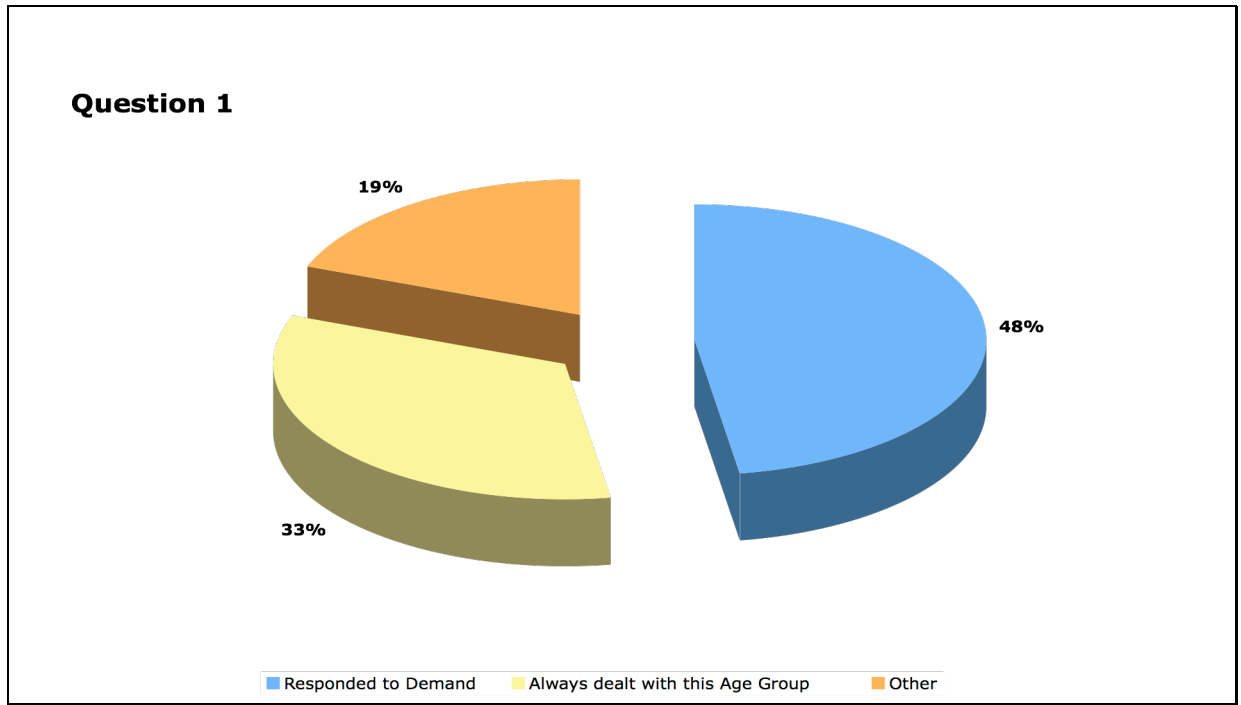
This chart reflects the current breakdown of age groups in all NAYD-affiliated youth theatres.



This chart gives a further breakdown of the 10-14 age group within these youth theatres.

Responses to Questionnaire

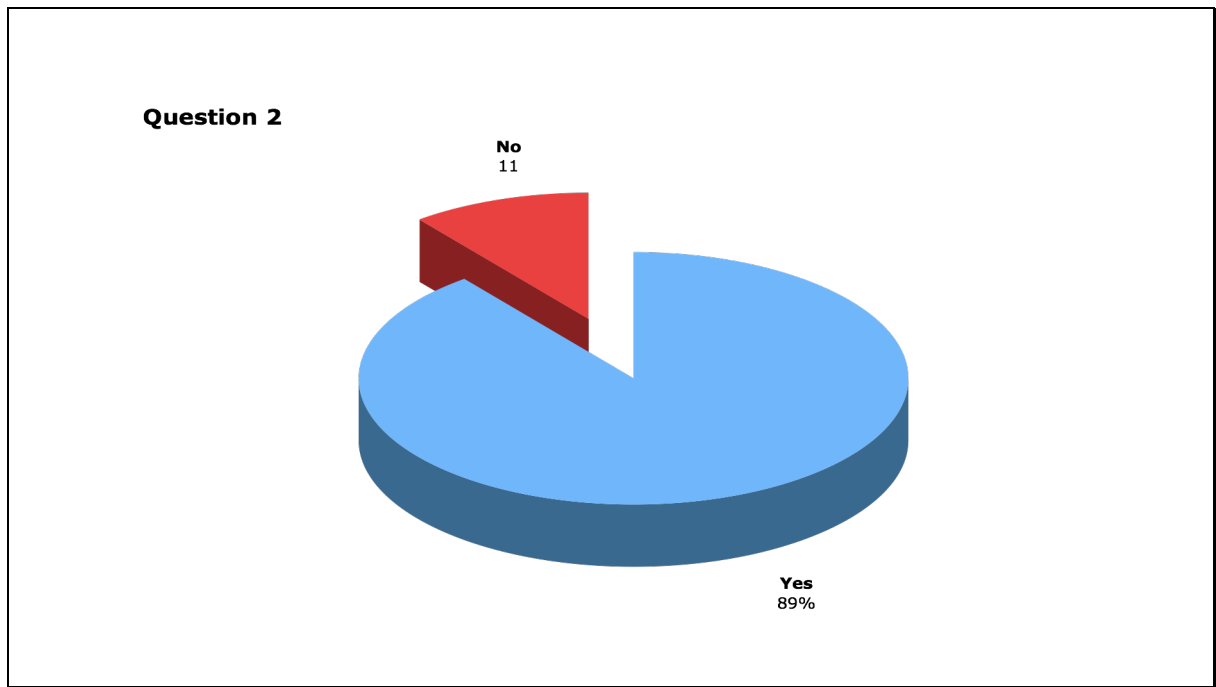
1. *Have you always dealt with this age group (10-14yrs) or did you respond to demand?*



While the majority of youth theatres responded to a demand for youth theatre provision from the younger age group *after* the establishment of their youth theatre, 33% of those currently serving this age group had always done so.

Others (19%) had a variety of answers; some had created new groups to cater for this younger age group on a trial basis, a number catered for secondary school students (12+) only, others had started with the 12+ category and had been forced to lower the age range to increase numbers.

2. *With regard to the aims of your youth theatre, do the same aims apply to all age groups?*

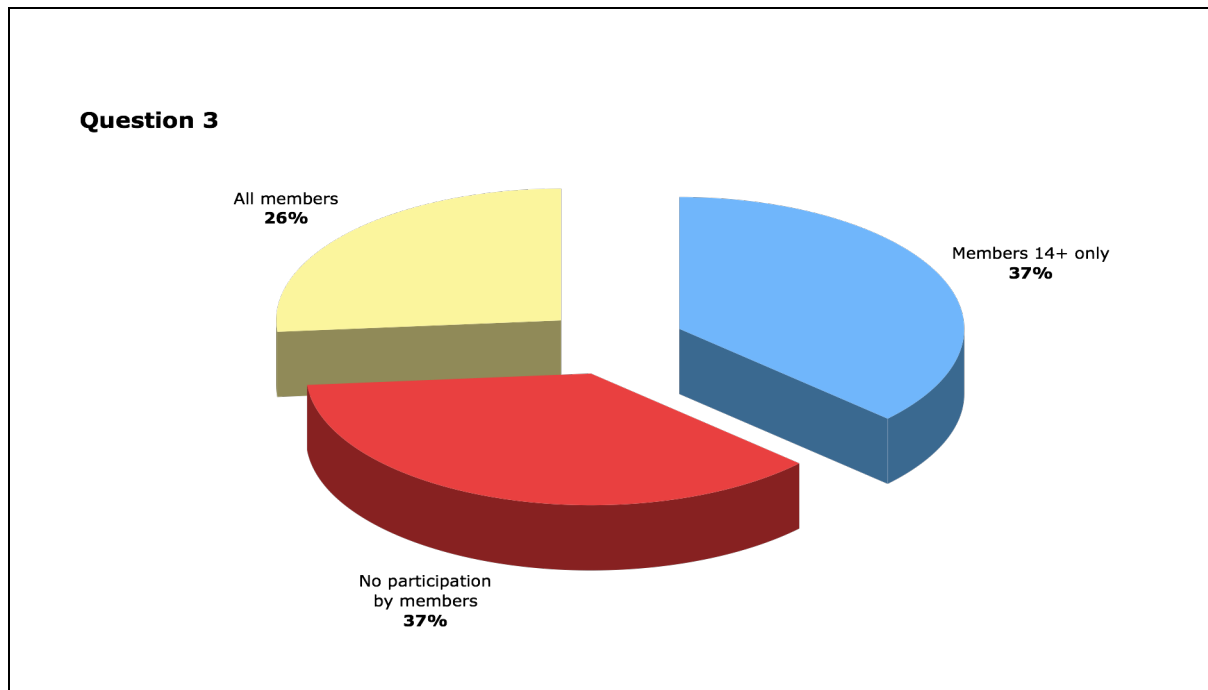


While 89% agreed that the aims of their youth theatre applied to all age groups, many of them prefaced this by saying that some adjustments were necessary for the younger age group:

‘Yes- the same aims apply, though we acknowledge the difference in approach and the need for more support and structure for this age group.’

‘We found that it was difficult to apply many of the aims and ethos of the youth theatre to the younger group, in terms of their ability and level of active participation, however we endeavoured where possible to maintain the core values and process of our youth theatre.’

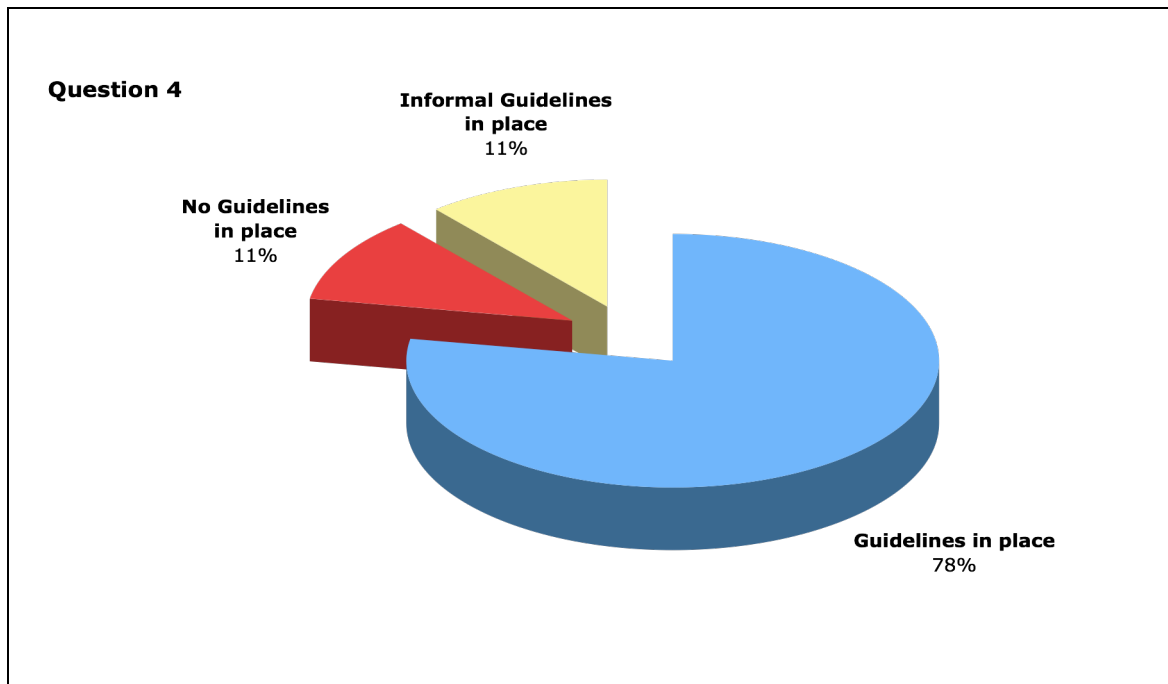
3. *Do your members participate in the running of the youth theatre (Members' Committee, representation at Board level, etc.) and if so does this include the 10-14 years age group?*



It was interesting to discover that 37% of youth theatres have no input from their members regarding the running of the youth theatre. In a number of cases, this was cited as being due to the age of the members (i.e. under 14). By contrast, in other youth theatres the members were represented by both a 'junior' and 'senior' representative at board level.

However, the majority (58%) of youth theatres whose members were invited to take part in the running of their youth theatre required those members to be 14 years or over.

4. *Do you have child protection/welfare guidelines in place? If so, do the same guidelines apply to all members?*



The vast majority (78%) of youth theatres have child protection / welfare guidelines in place. Guidelines apply to all members although youth theatre leaders expressed the need for common sense and flexibility within these guidelines.

‘The same guidelines apply to all members though we need to communicate more often with the parents at this age. We need to know how they travel to our premises and particularly how they travel home.’

‘Generally the rules are the same for everyone to keep things simple. However, when we have attended plays at youth theatre festivals etc, I have had to talk to parents and get them to decide whether their child should attend. This can be very awkward when the older members want to attend performances that are unsuitable for the younger members. I also have a rule that the younger participants’ parents must read the script before rehearsals.’

Those who have no guidelines generally expressed an interest in developing them and hoped that NAYD could help them in doing so. Others (11%) have guidelines in place, but classified them as ‘informal’.

Case Study – Welfare: *Backstage Youth Theatre, Longford*

Established in 1995 by members of Backstage Theatre Group, the local amateur drama group, this is a voluntary youth theatre with a nominal membership fee of €5 per annum to cover insurance costs. Membership is open to secondary school pupils only and 40% of members are in the 12-14 age group. B.T.G. has an arrangement with a local primary school whereby an annual donation to the school fund allows access to classrooms for workshops and rehearsals. B.T.G. also has free use of the Backstage Theatre when it is available and all productions are performed there.

The senior committee has responsibility for the administration of the youth theatre and members of the senior group facilitate the youth theatre workshops. The youth theatre's mission statement is 'to offer an outlet for creative energy and artistic expression through drama and to act as a stepping stone to Backstage Theatre Group', which provides a clear pathway for members who wish to engage further in drama. B.T.G. receives some funding from their local Arts Officer and a number of local groups, e.g. Longford Young Investors Group, but the bulk of their income is from door takings and subscriptions.

Despite many years in existence, Backstage Youth Theatre is a relatively new member of NAYD as they joined in 2005. In order to become members, it was necessary for the committee to draw up a welfare policy, a draft form of which was sent to the Development Officer for suggestions etc. This policy was ratified in October 2005 to be reviewed in October 2007. All parents/guardians and youth theatre members were then required to sign a form stating that they had read, understood and agreed to be bound by the terms of the welfare policy. Furthermore, a new Membership Information Form was developed for existing and future members, which provided youth theatre leaders with contact details of each young person and their parent/guardian. A copy of each of these documents has been included.

Backstage Youth Theatre

Membership Information and Declaration Form

Name _____

Address _____

Date of Birth _____ School _____

Mobile number _____

Parent or guardian name _____

Contact number _____

Declaration by parent/guardian

I have read and understood the welfare statement of Backstage Youth Theatre Group and I agree to my responsibilities.

Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____

Declaration by Youth Group Member

I have read and understood the welfare statement of Backstage Youth Theatre Group and I agree to my responsibilities.

Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____

Backstage Youth Theatre

Welfare Policy

Every Youth Theatre has a duty to protect the Health & Welfare of its members. This responsibility can range from health and safety issues, such as first aid, to handling a disclosure of abuse from a young person. Leaders are in a position of trust for both the young people in the group and their parents or guardians. This document is designed to give leaders advice and support to help deal with some of the welfare issues that may arise in youth theatre.

NAYD (National Association of Youth Drama) recommends that all youth theatre leaders should:

1. Acquire a copy of *Children First*: National guidelines for the protection and welfare of Children. Dept. of Health & Children, 1999.
2. Read and refer to NAYD's welfare guidelines, *Common Sense Is Not So Common*.
3. Obtain a copy of the Child Protection policy for the youth sector by the D.E.S.

As per the NAYD's Health & Safety guidelines the following are applicable and included in Backstage Theatre Youth Group's welfare policy;

1. To have emergency phone numbers at the disposal of members.
2. To have a first aid kit and ideally, someone trained in first aid procedures.
3. To have an accident report book in which details are recorded at the time.
4. To have contact numbers for parents/ guardians/ carers of the young people in the group.
5. To notify parents / guardians / carers of any injury and how it occurred.
6. To have one leader for every four young people as a goal for any overnight stay activities, e.g. trips to festivals.
7. To have parental consent forms signed for any member under 18 participating in any overnight activity or trip away.
8. To make clear to all involved that it is not the leader's responsibility to transport young people to and from rehearsals or youth group theatre meetings. This responsibility lies solely with parents/ guardians.
9. To be insured adequately.
10. To be aware that visits by members to leaders' homes (& vice versa) outside of youth theatre hours may not be covered by insurance.
11. To adopt *Common Sense is Not So Common* and NAYD's charter of members' rights as a step to developing policy in this area.

12. To ensure that all involved with the youth theatre are aware of the rights, welfare policy and rules of that individual youth theatre.
13. To have a balanced and calm approach to all situations that may arise within the youth theatre.

A summary of rights & responsibilities from the document entitled *Common Sense is Not So Common*, shall be included as part of the welfare policy for the youth group. To reduce the possibility of any situation of bullying/ conflict/ abuse arising, the Youth Theatre Group should establish the following:

- Clearly defined rules among members
- Clarity in relation to their responsibilities with the group.

While everybody should have the right to freely express themselves and their opinions, a note of caution should be remembered. A universally acceptable code of conduct applicable to any group or society should uphold the following values primarily:

1. Respect yourself and others at all times.
2. Treat others as you would wish them to treat you.
3. Live and let live.

Youth theatre group members have a responsibility to:

- Be reliable and dependable, especially at times close to and during productions.
- Have shared interest and willingness to participate in the positive promotion, organisation and support for the youth theatre.
- Give their best effort to youth theatre productions.
- Enjoy and make the youth theatre enjoyable for others.
- Respect others' personal space, views, and economic, religious, ethnic and social backgrounds.
- Ensure that parents / guardians are aware of venues, times, dates and all relevant information concerning rehearsals and productions, in the interest of safety, awareness, and responsibility.
- Supply signed consent forms to youth theatre leaders to participate in Youth Theatre Group activities in advance of rehearsals or productions or when requested by Group leaders.
- Become familiar with the Health and safety practices and fire exits of the venues for rehearsals and productions.
- Treat with respect the venues for rehearsals and productions.

Youth Theatre Group members have the right to;

- Feel safe at all times.

- Be protected from bullying or violence from others.
- Have your personal property, personal space, and privacy respected.
Inappropriate sexual behaviour towards you by another member, leader/ teacher/ director will not be condoned.
- Voice your needs or concerns appropriately with responsible personnel in the Youth theatre.
- Inform and express your views freely.
- Fully participate in youth theatre group activities while remaining loyal to your responsibilities as a member.
- Be informed of the rules of your youth theatre group.

Date of Ratification: October 2005

Date of Review: October 2007

Parental/Guardian Consent Form

I _____ have read, understand and agree to be bound by the terms set out in the above welfare policy, in the knowledge that it is concerned with my son's/ daughter's welfare.

My contact telephone numbers are:

Date:

Signed:

Youth Theatre Member Consent Form

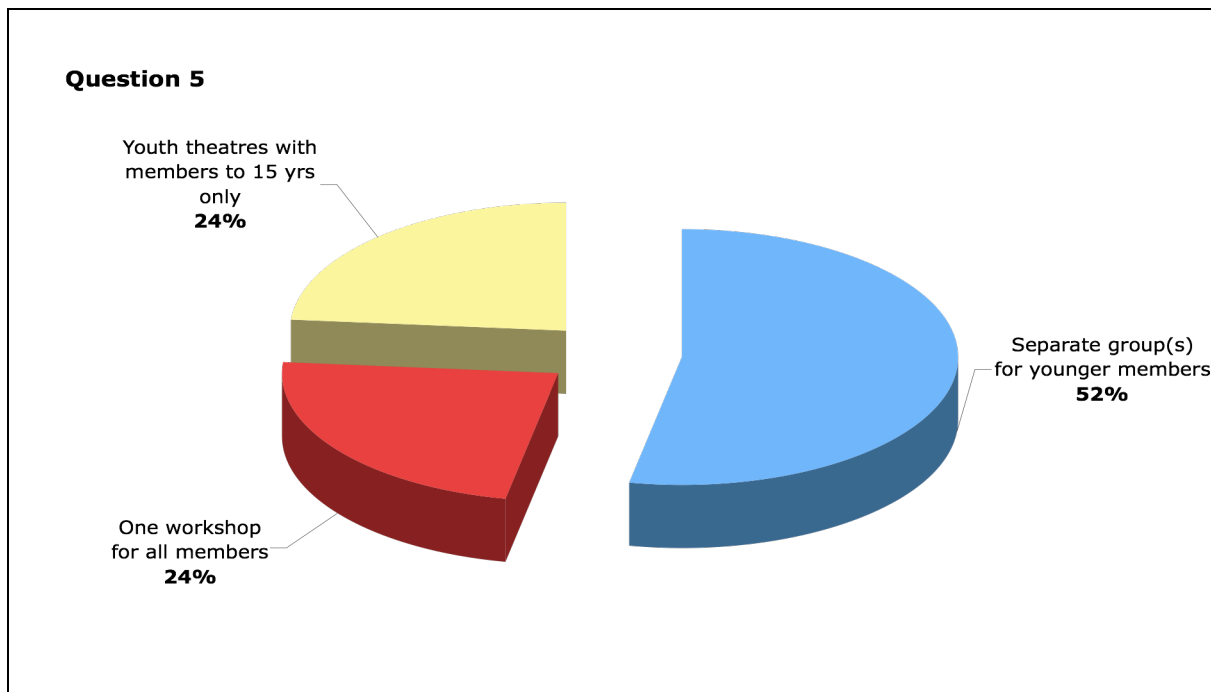
I _____ a member of Backstage Youth Theatre Group, have read understand and agree to be bound by the terms set out in the above Welfare policy, in the knowledge that it concerns my welfare within the youth theatre group.

My contact telephone number is _____

Date:

Signed:

5. *Do all members attend the same workshop or are they divided by age group? If so, please outline how.*



Responses to this question were difficult to quantify and proved the diversity of youth theatre models in Ireland today.

In youth theatres with one workshop for all members, which amounted to over one-fifth of all those serving this age group, the general starting point for members is age 12 or entry into secondary school. Usually, the upper age range for members of these youth theatres does not exceed 17 years.

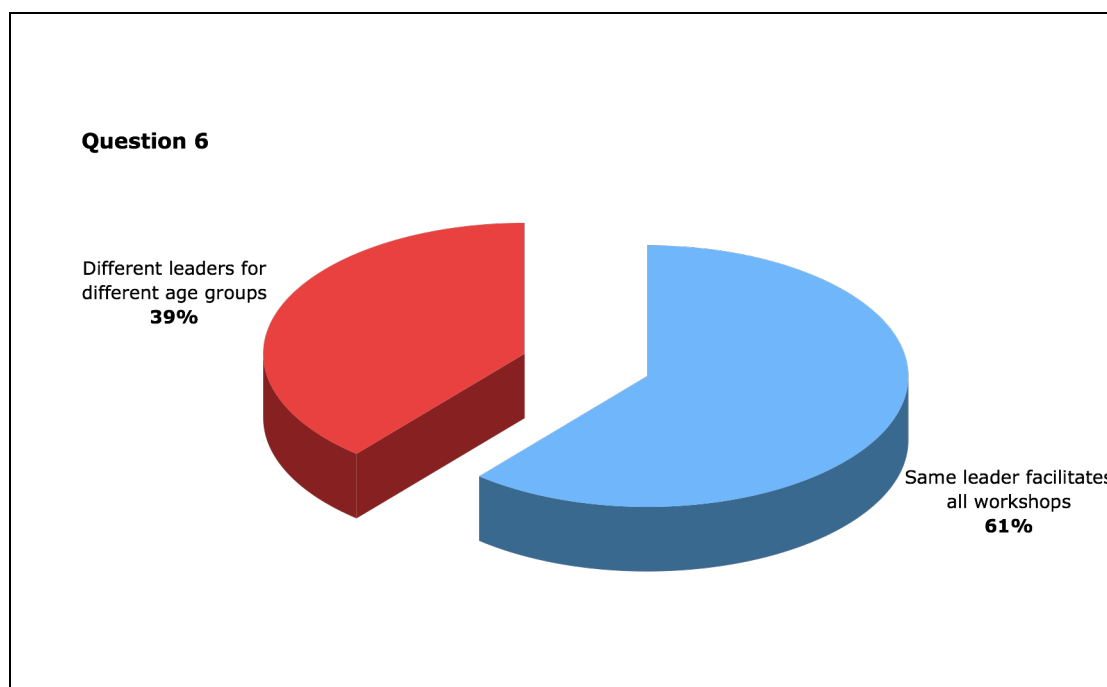
Of the youth theatres whose membership age range does not exceed 15 years, there are a number of models. Half of these have just one workshop group, serving 10-15 year olds. The other half deals with much younger children as well as the 10-14 age group. One such youth theatre has chosen to have under-10 and over-10 years workshop groups.

As to those youth theatres that have separate groups for younger members, the divisions are many and varied. These divisions have their roots in practicality as much as artistic experience and are best illustrated by example:

Youth Theatre	Age Groups			
Boomerang, Cork	7-11 years	12-17 years	18-25 years	
Cork School of Music	2 nd -4 th class	5 th -6 th class	1 st -2 nd year	3 rd -6 th year
Lightbulb YT, Mallow	11-14 years		15-19 years	
Kildare Youth Theatre	11-13 years	14-16 years	17-25 years	
Co.Sligo Youth Theatre	10-13 years		14-20 years	
Waterford Youth Arts	9-11 years	12-14 years	15-18 years	
Balor D.C.A.	5-8 years	9-12 years	13-18 years	

It became evident that the majority of youth theatres who catered for a wide range of ages were creating age divisions both at age 12 and age 14.

6. Does the same leader facilitate all workshops or do particular leaders deal with different age groups?



It is important to bear in mind that while in 61% of youth theatres the same leader facilitated all workshops, almost a quarter of youth theatres surveyed have only one workshop for all members.

Case Study - Practice: *Waterford Youth Arts*

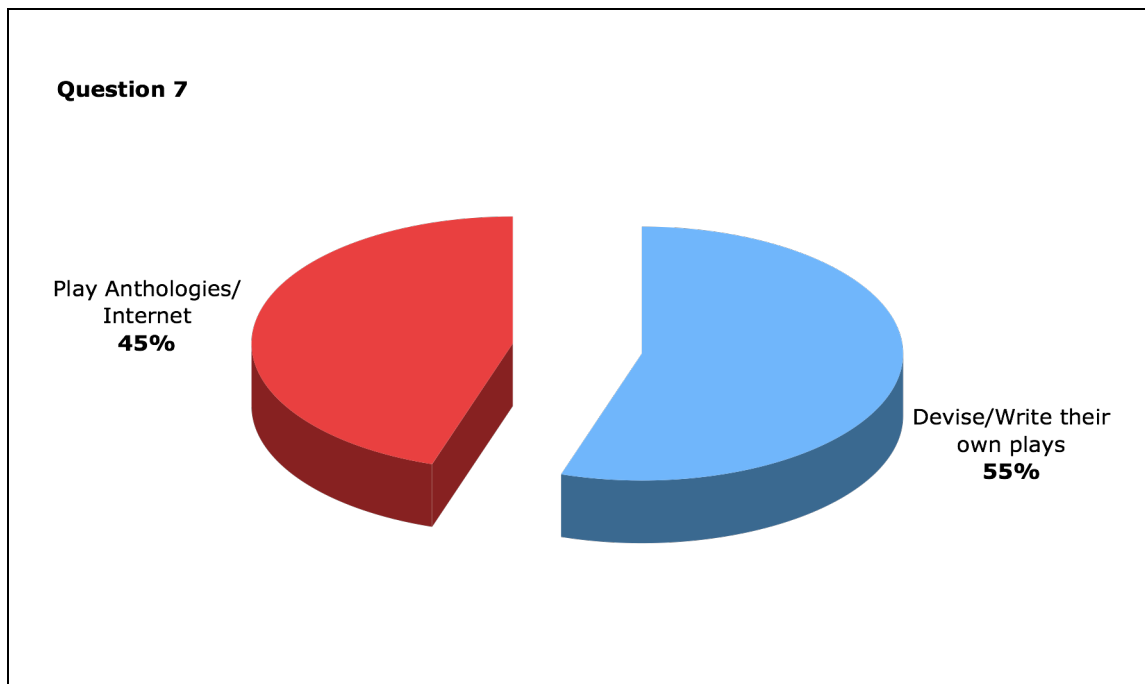
Established in 1985, Waterford Youth Arts has grown from the voluntary efforts of two individuals to a fully structured youth arts organisation with a paid staff. W.Y.A. runs drama, dance, film and creative writing workshops for young people throughout the year. Recently W.Y.A. has relocated to a new premises at The Arch, Barrack St. Its main funders are The Arts Council, The Dept. of Education & Science (via Waterford Youth Committee) and Waterford City Council. They are indirectly funded through various FÁS employment projects and seek private corporate sponsorship for particular projects.

With regard to practice, W.Y.A. has two fulltime positions (Artistic Director and Administrator) and two part-time positions (Office Manager and Dance Development Worker). Freelance drama facilitators, creative writing teachers and film development workers are employed to run workshops. W.Y.A. also employs a number of arts professionals for productions as they believe that this is necessary for the development of youth arts in Ireland.

W.Y.A. began catering for the under-14 age group approximately sixteen years ago. The original age divisions were 10-13 years and 14-19 years, but an organic shift in these divisions occurred and they now rest at 9-11 years / 12-14 years / 15 years and over. Workshops with the 9-11 age group are, by necessity, more ‘instructional’, while the 12-14 age group are given more responsibility for their creative development. There are some opportunities for facilitators to match themselves with a particular age group of their choice, although most facilitators work across the age range, adopting different approaches.

Facilitators of the younger age groups focus mainly on the process as opposed to a particular product, building a solid skills base throughout their workshops. Relevant themes mentioned for this age group were bullying (particularly on mobile phones) making new friends, dealing with cliques, boyfriends and girlfriends. Both drink and drugs had come up as issues but the need for caution around content with this age group was highlighted. W.Y.A. had encountered hesitation from parents over certain issues. Furthermore, it was felt that as all young people mature at their own pace, it was ill-advised to introduce controversial subject matter into workshops too early. Improvisation and poetry writing were seen as useful tools in encouraging the young people to become makers of their own creative experiences.

7. How do you source your repertoire of plays for the 10-14yrs age group at the moment?



55% of youth theatres reported that they either devised their own productions or the leader undertook the writing of new pieces, which were appropriate to the needs of the group. Many had done adaptations of fairytales, myths and legends and plays for older age groups. 45% cited the Internet or play anthologies such as the Shell / BT Connections collection as useful sources of material. In general, it was felt that there was a lack of material for this age group and youth theatres across the board expressed the hope that NAYD could provide some support in this regard.

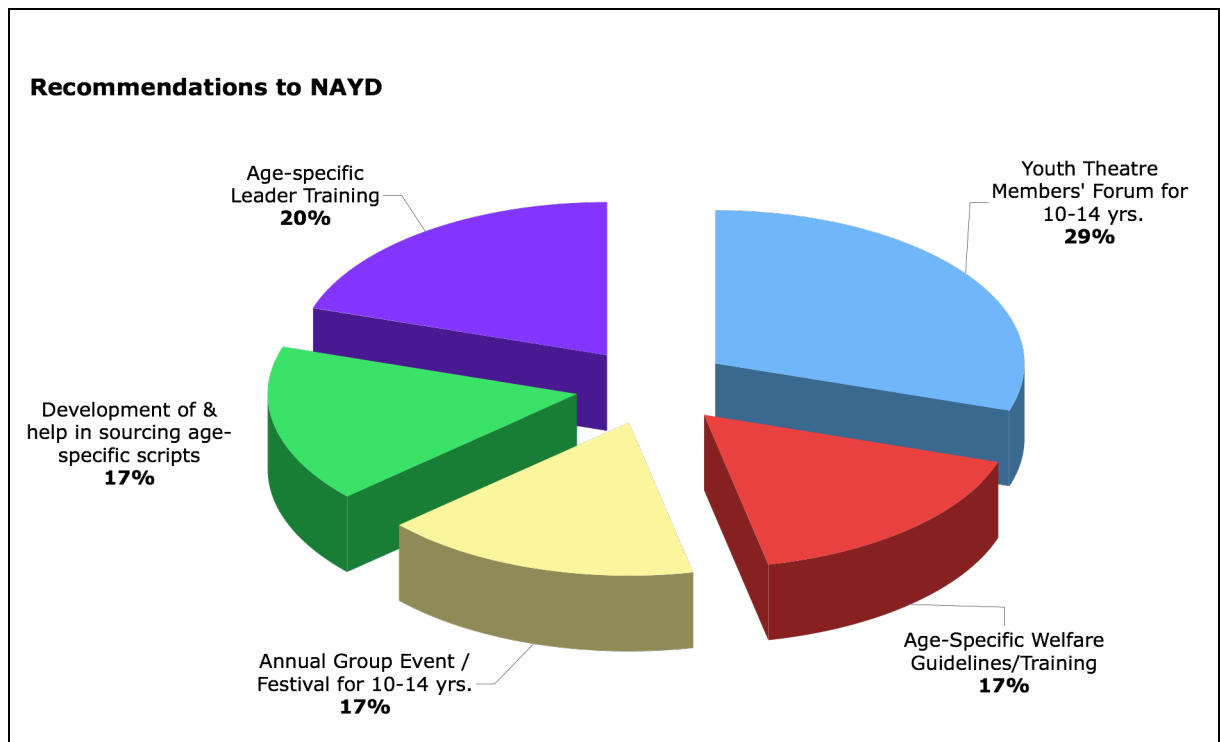
Case Study – Repertoire: *Physically Phishy Youth Theatre, Cork*

Physically Phishy is one of two youth theatres that form part of the range of programmes run by Graffiti Educational Theatre Company, Cork. Activate Youth Theatre was founded in 1994 by Artistic Director Geraldine O’Neill, to provide a youth theatre service for young people aged 15 and over. However, by 2000, the demand for youth theatre provision for the younger age group, particularly those in Graffiti’s local community of Shandon, had grown to such an extent that Physically Phishy, a youth theatre for local 10-14 year olds was established as a co-initiative with the Institute of Dance and Choreography at the Firkin Crane. Physically Phishy were given rehearsal space by the I.C.D. and many of their shows have been performed there. Further funding is provided by Cork City Council and Cork City V. E. C. Graffiti are in the process of moving into new premises, very close to Shandon, which will have adequate space to house Physically Phishy. It is felt that members of both Physically Phishy and Activate will benefit from an increased sense of ownership of their youth theatre, as they will have an opportunity to make the space their own.

The leaders of Physically Phishy Youth Theatre see youth drama as a powerful tool for helping the 10-14 age group ‘through the crisis of growing up.’ Their aim is ‘to engage the young people in high-quality, aesthetically-interesting work and to develop the skills and self-confidence of the members through that process.’ It is interesting to note that Physically Phishy is an all-girl youth theatre, despite repeated attempts to recruit boys. Members of Physically Phishy generally graduate to Activate Youth Theatre at age 15.

With regard to repertoire, leaders acknowledged the lack of scripts for this age group. Their solutions included devising and writing their own work, creating adaptations of plays and exploring play anthologies e.g. the BT/Shell Connections collections, for suitable scripts. One of their devised pieces was *Abandon Shandon*, which portrayed the local area’s advantages and disadvantages through the eyes of the young people. Scripts performed to date include *Sparkleshark* by Philip Ridley, performed in 2004. Physically Phishy’s last performance was *The Girl Whose Best Friend Was a Ghost* devised with Kate Kalin and Kate McCarthy, which was performed in a local community garden in summer 2005. *Growing Pains and Gains* is their next project, which is a mixture of their own writing and monologues from *Class Acts: monologues for teenagers* by Clare Dowling and Caroline Williams. (1998, New Island Books)

8. *As you are aware, NAYD is a support, resource and training organization for youth theatre and youth drama in Ireland. With regard to the inclusion of the younger age group within youth theatres, we would like your recommendations for serving this age group appropriately.*



There were two recurring responses here – the provision of age-appropriate leader training and, as one leader put it, ‘the same services as you have for the older ones.’ In general, leaders seemed satisfied with NAYD’s programme but expressed the need for the inclusion of this age group into that programme. There was equal demand (17% each) for age-specific welfare guidelines, an annual group event/festival and help in sourcing age-specific material.

Analysis of Findings

Practice

With regard to practice, the first point to make is that with 64% of NAYD's affiliated youth theatres serving the 10-14 age group, there is clearly a need for NAYD to expand its annual programme to serve them. Within the youth theatres, age divisions are being made at secondary school entry age (12 years) and at Junior Certificate age (14 years), proving the intricate links between the education system and extra-curricular activities. Many leaders and outside consultants expressed doubt as to the wisdom of grouping 10-14 year olds in a workshop. If youth theatre workshops and productions are to explore, as the Irish Youth Theatre Handbook says, '*themes which are particularly relevant to young people's lives*', then it is likely that while there may be common ground between the issues affecting the life of a 10 year old and those affecting the life of a 14 year old, in best practice the approaches and language used in dealing with these issues would be different. A final point to consider with this age group is their lack of autonomy over their own lives. Youth theatre leaders found that young people within this age group cannot be held accountable for non-appearance at workshop or rehearsal as they are usually dependent on parental permission and lifts.

Welfare

With regard to welfare, the needs of this age group are fundamental. As indicated above, the 10-14 age group are still dependent. Leaders interviewed reported incidents of having to wait with a young person alone when a parent was stuck in traffic, or having to give a young person a lift home in an emergency. Incidents such as these call for the aforementioned 'common sense and flexibility' within the guidelines established by the youth theatre. There are further important issues aside from the immediately practical – the health and safety conditions of youth theatre venues and the content of the material being explored in workshop, for example. This age group straddles the divide between primary and secondary school, between childhood and puberty. This era of change in their lives brings curiosity and vulnerability and this must be taken into consideration when dealing with welfare issues.

In November 2005, The Arts Council produced 'Guidelines for the Protection of Children and Young People in the Arts Sector' in draft form. NAYD has also produced a number of welfare documents, all of which are available online at www.youthdrama.ie to youth theatres who are developing welfare policies.

Repertoire

The majority (55%) of youth theatres for this age group were engaged in devising or writing new work for their own groups. This is a healthy situation for new writing for this age group and one that should be capitalized on by future PlayShare publications. See below for some repertoire sources as identified by youth theatre leaders.

www.amazon.com

1. McCaslin, Nellie. Creative Drama in the Classroom and Beyond.
2. Shepard, Aaron. Stories on Stage: Children's Plays for Reader's Theatre: 15 Play Scripts from 15 authors. (Collection includes Roald Dahl's The Twits.)
3. Schaefer, Liza. Plays Around the Year (Grades 1-3)
4. Wray, Rhonda. The Drama of Easter: An anthology of royalty-free Easter Plays for all ages.
5. Shepard, Aaron. Folktales on Stage: Children's Plays for Reader's Theatre (16 play scripts from World Folk and Fairy Tales and Legends, including Asian, African, Middle Eastern, European and Native American.)
6. Daubert, Todd & Nelson, Pauline . Starting with Shakespeare: Successfully Introducing Shakespeare to Children.

www.bakersplays.com

Link to 'youth theatre' for a list of play scripts available. Click on the play title for a summary and any royalty costs. Numerous plays and adaptations available.

www.samuelfrench.com

Link to 'Theatre for Youth' for full-length and short-length plays which indicate the number of characters.

www.stageplays.com

Link to 'Youth Theatre' for categories including Youth Drama / Youth Monologues / Royalty-Free Plays / Theatre in Education / Children's Plays etc.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been informed by the questionnaires forwarded to youth theatre leaders and individual consultations with youth theatre leaders, drama/theatre-in-education professionals, educational psychologists, arts officers and youth arts officers. Recommendations were also gathered from the youth theatre members during site visits. They are presented in categories representing each of the focus areas for this research.

Practice:

1. Leading On – Training programme for youth theatre leaders

Building on the success of this existing initiative, the research recommends the development of a parallel programme of workshops specifically for youth theatre leaders dealing with the younger age group. A needs assessment identifying areas of interest for workshop themes should be conducted in advance with youth theatre leaders.

2. Trainee Leaders' Workshop Day

The research recommends that youth theatres serving a broad age range be encouraged to create opportunities for older members to become trainee leaders. This could be achieved through the development of a Trainee Leaders' Workshop Day where a number of youth theatre leaders share their knowledge with interested members using a variety of methods. Such an initiative could increase the sustainability of youth theatres, while both younger and older members could benefit artistically and socially from such interaction.

3. Group Event / Festival for the younger age group

The research recommends that a regular group event be hosted by NAYD dedicated to the younger age group. This could be achieved through the establishment of one national event or a series of smaller regional events specifically for this age group. Findings suggest that youth theatre members of this age have little sense of belonging to a national network of youth theatres. However, leaders believe that encounters with the work of others could contribute significantly to the artistic development of youth theatre members. Events such as these group events could also increase the profile of NAYD's work with this age group at a national level.

4. Focus Group Weekend

The research recommends that a focus group be created by NAYD to focus on the theory and practice of youth theatre as it relates to this age group. The Irish Youth Theatre Handbook (NAYD, 2001) was a significant record of the wealth of youth theatre theory and practice that had evolved at that point. However, with 64% of NAYD's member youth theatres now serving the 10-14 age group, it is evident that both theory and practice have moved on to include this group.

The research recommends that this focus group have the aim of producing practical materials for youth theatre leaders dealing with this age group.

- A 10-week series of workshops to introduce this age group to the concept of youth theatre. To be published and/or made available on the NAYD website;
- A series of workshops incorporating techniques for beginning devising work with this age group. To be published and/or made available on the NAYD website.

Welfare

There have been significant changes in the area of child welfare protection in recent years. Child protection has become much more visible and valued in society, and this has practical, financial and emotional implications for youth theatres, particularly those serving the younger age group.

1. Youth Theatre Members' Forum

This existing initiative is the primary service provided by NAYD for its youth theatre members. Currently it serves the 15 years + age group and involves overnight stays in Dublin, with theatre visits, workshops and hostel accommodation. If providing this service for the younger age group, the research recommends:

- That this service be made available to the 12-14 years age group only;
- That the service be made available regionally thus allowing day-long events as opposed to overnight stays;
- That youth theatre members be accompanied by an adult to and from the venue;
- That Welfare Officers have experience of working with this age group;
- That this service be organised independent of a senior Youth Theatre Members' Forum.

2. Welfare Policy / Child Protection Guidelines:

The research has identified a need for guidance among youth theatres with regard to child protection, particularly with regard to the younger age group. With this in mind, the research recommends that:

- Existing NAYD welfare documents be made more visible on the website;
- Age-specific Child Protection workshops be facilitated by NAYD;
- A hard copy of the forthcoming Arts Council ‘Guidelines for the Protection of Children and Young People in the Arts Sector’ be forwarded to each member youth theatre, accompanied by recommendations for their application from NAYD.

3. ‘Find A Facilitator’ Service

This service is currently available on the website but findings indicate that a facilitator’s previous experience with this age group should be specified.

Repertoire

1. PlayShare

Building on the success of this initiative, the research recommends that youth theatre leaders be invited to forward copies of their devised plays for this age group to the NAYD office to expand the current PlayShare collection of scripts. It would also be useful to collect recommendations of other scripts/playwrights that youth theatre leaders have used with success. It is recommended that a list of these plays complete with brief synopses, age range, gender balance, etc., be available on the NAYD website.

2. PlayShare Volume 2

The research recommends that PlayShare Volume 2 be a collection of plays devised by youth theatre leaders for this age group. It is recommended that each play be prefaced by its author with a description of the process and methodologies used by the youth theatre in devising the script. It is also recommended that youth theatres be encouraged to use these scripts as stepping stones in the devising of their own plays, adjusting place names, slang, etc., to gain a sense of ownership of the script, but that the original playwright be acknowledged at all times.

3. NAYD library catalogued on website.

NAYD has an extensive library, which is a valuable resource for youth theatre leaders of all age groups. Findings indicate that youth theatre leaders would be interested in using the NAYD office as a resource centre if the books available were catalogued on the website.

Conclusion

I enjoy drama because I make new friends and learn new games. I also like my teachers Caroline and Wendy. Everyone is friends in my group and I enjoy doing plays.

Aoife Lyons, aged 11. Balor Youth Theatre, Donegal

Interestingly, at this age, youth theatre members usually refer to their workshops as ‘drama’. The notion of ‘youth theatre’ as such tends not to have permeated, as drama for them is everything from drama in the classroom, to the school play, to the Christmas pantomime in the local theatre. Their attitude is generally very positive towards this broad continuum of drama, wherein they feel themselves to play a part. The vocabulary and perceptions of this age group are particularly relevant in a changing climate where drama is soon to form a part of the new primary school curriculum.

Findings indicate that the focus of these younger members is on having fun and making friends. At this age, the concept of ‘cliques’ is coming to the fore and youth theatre members, such as Aoife above, repeatedly mentioned the fact that the whole group were friends as a reason for being there. This feeling of being in a safe environment supports this age group in their eagerness to embrace the moment of the work. Artistically, this age group are conscious of their developing skills and are as engaged by the process as the product, as long as they are having fun.

However, this notion of ‘drama’ does not include an awareness of a network of youth theatres around the country within which multitudes of other 10-14 year olds are engaged in similar activities. With almost two-thirds of its member youth theatres serving this age group, there is a clear need for NAYD to expand its annual programme to include this younger age group, who have embraced the idea of youth theatre and made it their own.

Consultations

In person

1. Caroline Bell Facilitator, Balor D.C.A. Group Youth Theatre, Donegal
2. Ollie Breslin Artistic Director, Waterford Youth Arts
3. Leish Burke Artistic Director, Greise Young Players, Kildare
4. Órla Crossan Balor Developmental Community Arts Group, Donegal
5. Brian Draine Director, Rainbow Factory, Belfast
6. Paul Dowling Artistic Director, Rathdowney Youth Theatre
7. Emelie FitzGibbon Artistic Director, Graffiti Educational Theatre Company, Cork
8. Anna Galligan Development Officer, National Association for Youth Drama
9. Jenny Grangel Facilitator, Waterford Youth Arts
10. Kate Kalin Artistic Director, So Sirius Youth Theatre, Cork
11. Peter Kelly Artistic Director, Portlaoise Youth Theatre
12. Orlaith McBride Director, National Association for Youth Drama
13. Emma McCabe Facilitator, Rainbow Factory, Belfast
14. Paddy O'Dwyer Director, National Educational Psychological Service.
15. Geraldine O'Neill Artistic Director, Physically Phishy & Activate Youth Theatres, Cork
16. Geraldine O'Neill Artistic Director, Cryptic Youth Drama, Dublin

Phone Interviews

1. Muireann Ahearn Education Officer, TEAM Educational Theatre Company, Dublin
2. Sharon Cromwell Artistic Director, Droichead Youth Theatre, Dundalk.
3. Maeve Dupont Dept. of Postgraduate Studies in Education, St. Patrick's College
4. Catherine Kelly Arts Officer, Westmeath County Council
5. Louise Lowe Artistic Director, Roundabout Youth Theatre, Dublin
6. Muireann Ní Chonail Arts Officer, Laois County Council
7. Anne O'Gorman Children & Youth Arts Officer, Draíocht Arts Centre.
8. Joanna Parkes Educational Drama Director, Balor Developmental Community Arts.
9. Nicola Whelan Facilitator, Roundabout Youth Theatre, Dublin

Questionnaires

1. Backstage Youth Theatre, Longford
2. Balor D.C.A. Youth Theatre, Donegal
3. Boomerang Youth Theatre, Cork
4. Border Youth Theatre, Co. Leitrim
5. Cabinteely Youth Theatre, Co. Dublin
6. Clondalkin Youth Theatre, Dublin
7. Co. Carlow Youth Theatre
8. Co. Cavan Youth Drama
9. Co. Sligo Youth Theatre
10. Co. Wexford Youth Theatre
11. Cryptic Youth Theatre, Dublin
12. Cork School of Music Youth Theatre
13. Dry Rain Youth Theatre, Bray Co. Wicklow
14. Droichead Youth Theatre, Drogheda
15. Greise Youth Theatre, Co. Kildare
16. High Spirits Youth Theatre, Youghal Co. Cork
17. Kildare Youth Theatre
18. Lightbulb Youth Theatre, Mallow, Co. Cork
19. Moate Youth Theatre
20. Portlaoise Youth Theatre
21. Physically Phishy Youth Theatre, Cork
22. Rainbow Factory, Belfast
23. Rathdowney Youth Theatre, Co. Laois
24. Roundabout Youth Theatre, Dublin
25. So Sirius Youth Theatre, Cobh, Co. Cork
26. Stage Craft Youth Theatre, Co. Tipperary
27. Tallaght Youth Theatre, Dublin
28. Tramps & Poets Youth Theatre, Tinahely, Co. Wicklow
29. Waterford Youth Drama
30. Youthopia Youth Theatre, Skerries, Co. Dublin

Youth Theatre for Younger Age-groups: Research Project Questionnaire

1. Admin. Information *(please check this information and correct if necessary)*

Youth Theatre Name:		
Location		
Contact Name(s):		
Tel:	Mobile:	Email:

2. Membership Information *(please check this information and correct if necessary)*

Current Membership:		
Male:		
Female:		
> 10 yrs:	10-12 yrs.:	13-14yrs.:
15-19 yrs:	20 + yrs.:	

1. Have you always dealt with this age group (10-14yrs) or did you respond to demand?
2. With regard to the aims of your youth theatre, do the same aims apply to all age groups?
3. Do your members participate in the running of the youth theatre (Members' Committee, representation at Board level etc.) and if so does this include the 10-14yrs. age group?
4. Do you have child protection / welfare guidelines in place? If so, do the same guidelines apply to all members?
5. Do all members attend the same workshop or are they divided by age group? If so, please outline how.
6. Does the same leader facilitate all workshops or do particular leaders deal with different age groups?
7. How do you source your repertoire of plays for the 10-14yrs. age group at the moment?
8. As you are aware, NAYD is a support, resource and training organization for youth theatre and drama in Ireland. With regard to the inclusion of the younger age group within youth theatres, we would like your recommendations for serving this age group appropriately; leader training, welfare guidelines etc.

NAYD appreciates your taking the time to complete this questionnaire.