YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND

Youth Theatre Ireland Strategic Plan 2026 — 2030

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland Programme

An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

the arts council an chomhairle ealaíon
funding theatre

Achievements 2020 — 2025

Over the lifetime of our previous strategic plan, Youth Theatre Ireland strengthened the youth theatre movement through investment, advocacy, training, artistic development and direct support to young people and youth theatres across Ireland.

Over 375,000 unique engagements in youth theatre

Over 200 youth theatre productions

Artistic Development

- Empower Youth Theatre Encounter
- Pathways to Professionalism programme delivered 6 times
- Development of youth voices programme 'Soundboard'
- Two National Youth Theatre productions
- Youth Theatre Island (2025 — 2027), a Shared Island youth theatre programme
- Five Young Critics programmes
- Five National Festival of Youth Theatres
- **Six Youth Theatre Practice Symposiums**
  - 2025 Finding Your Authentic Voice
  - 2024 Developing Sustainable Practice in Youth Theatre
  - 2023 Building an International Stage
  - 2022 Supporting Inclusion In Youth Theatre
  - 2021 Back in the Room – A Youth Theatre Practice Symposium
  - 2020 Youth Theatre @ 40
- Grow the Playshare (a compendium of plays written by, for and with young people) collection to over 140 plays
- Five Playshare Showcases
- 'Go See Youth Theatre!' bursary scheme
- Youth Theatre Partnership
- Climate Action Training 2025 & Resource Development
- ARTiculate and ARTiculate Brief playwriting programmes

Youth Theatre Development

12 new Youth Theatres supported and developed to become Affiliated Youth Theatres

- Ballyfermot YT, Dublin
- Castletownbere YT, Cork
- Cloughjordan Circus Club, Tipperary
- D.15 YT, Dublin
- DLR Mill YT, Dublin
- FunHouse YT, Offaly
- Macnas Spectacle YT, Galway
- New Stage YT, Mayo
- Snapped YT, Tipperary
- Shout Out YT, Kerry
- TMACC-YP, Cork
- Wonder YT, Cavan

Networking and Advocacy

- Successfully advocated for increased funding for youth theatre groups.
- Diversified income for Youth Theatre Ireland
- National Recruitment Campaign
- Focus on access & inclusion
- Rainbow Award with BelongTo
- Youth Theatre Roadshow
- Youth Theatre Connects
- Youth Theatre Tuesdays to connect the sector during COVID 19 and beyond
- Attended 100's of youth theatre productions
- Increased shared island work
- Intermission Podcast
- Development of the Youth Theatre Facilitators Directory

Training

- Five 'Leading On...' residential CPD programmes for youth theatre leaders
- Drama Facilitation Training Course — Over 150 new youth theatre facilitators received accredited training
- Staff training and development to increase expertise in the organisation
- Circulated the acclaimed 'Laying the Foundations' facilitation practice book
- Child Protection Awareness Programme training for staff and leaders

Support

- Developed and circulated essential Covid 19 guidance for groups
- Processed over 3000 Garda Vetting Applications
- Youth Theatre access bursaries
- Youth Theatre Support Scheme
- Over €200,000 of funding directly to youth theatre groups
- Developed and Employee Assistance Programme for all leaders
- Policies — Artist Pay, Sustainability, Child Protection, Equality Diversity and Inclusion
- Local and national wellbeing resources

Youth Theatre Ireland has increased organisational income by 30.6%, enabling greater investment in youth theatre development, training, support services and national programmes

Over €3.8 million invested in youth theatre practice

Over 1,750 leaders around Ireland delivering youth theatre.

Advocated for increased funding for Youth Theatre Groups

Diversified income for Youth Theatre Ireland

National recruitment campaign post-Covid

Networking



Increased shared island work

Increased focus on access and inclusion

Youth Theatre Tuesdays to connect the sector during Covid 19 and beyond

I Heart Youth Theatre day to raise awareness

Youth Theatre connects and Youth Theatre Ireland Roadshow

Training



Five Leading On Residentials

Drama Facilitators Training — over 150 new youth drama facilitators

Staff training and development

Child Protection Awareness Programme Training

Circulated the acclaimed 'Laying The Foundations' guide to drama practice

CPD for staff and leaders

Support



Over the last five years, we have had the privilege of witnessing something remarkable.

Across Ireland, thousands of young people have stepped into youth theatre spaces and found opportunities to create, collaborate, challenge themselves and connect with others. They have written plays, performed on stages, developed new skills, built lasting friendships and discovered confidence in their own voices. In communities large and small, youth theatres have continued to provide creative, supportive and welcoming spaces where young people can thrive.

That success belongs first and foremost to the young people themselves. It also belongs to the leaders, volunteers, artists, parents, boards, partner organisations and supporters who make youth theatre possible every day. Together, they have built a vibrant and resilient movement that continues to grow, evolve and inspire.

Like many people involved in youth theatre, both of us have seen first-hand the difference it can make in a young person's life. We have watched young people discover talents they did not know they had, develop a stronger sense of themselves and the world around them, and find a community in which they feel they belong. These experiences continually remind us why youth theatre matters.

As we look towards 2030 and the 50th anniversary of Youth Theatre Ireland, we do so with optimism and determination. The quality and ambition of work being created across the country are exceptional. Young people continue to demonstrate extraordinary creativity, insight and generosity. Youth theatre leaders continue to sustain their groups with skill, dedication and imagination.

Yet the continued existence and growth of the youth theatre sector cannot be taken for granted.

Too many young people still face barriers to participation. Too many communities have no local youth theatre. Many existing groups are meeting increasing demand while managing rising costs, limited infrastructure, inadequate spaces and a dependence on voluntary leadership. The artistic, personal and social contribution of youth theatre is still not sufficiently understood, recognised or resourced.

This matters because youth theatre is a vital part of Ireland's artistic, cultural and youth infrastructure. It gives young people the space to create, take risks, work collectively and make their voices heard. These opportunities should not depend on geography, income, personal circumstances or chance.

This Strategic Plan is our commitment to decisive progress. It sets out how Youth Theatre Ireland will strengthen the youth theatre movement, champion young people's voices, expand access, build ambitious partnerships, lead best practice and secure greater recognition and investment for the sector. It also renews our commitment to the artistic quality and integrity that make youth theatre such a powerful and distinctive practice.

The vision set out in this plan is ambitious, but it is rooted in something we see every day: the talent, creativity and potential of young people, and the transformative possibilities created when they are given the space and support to make theatre together.

Realising this vision will require collective action. It will require commitment from government, funders, cultural and youth organisations, local partners and the youth theatre community itself. We invite you to join us in ensuring that more young people, in more communities, can experience all that youth theatre makes possible.

Julie O'Leary — *Chairperson*

Eoghan Doyle — *Director*

CONTEXT

Youth Theatre Ireland's vision is **'to empower young people through youth theatre'** and **'to provide access to youth theatre to every young person in Ireland.'** Our mission is 'to support the social, personal and artistic development of young people through youth theatre.' These commitments guide this strategy and have renewed importance in a changing society.

Young people are growing up in an increasingly digital world. Technology offers new ways to communicate, learn and create, but many young people also experience isolation, social pressure and unequal access to creative and community life. In this environment, opportunities to meet in person, build relationships and create something collectively have become increasingly valuable.

Youth theatre offers young people a distinctive, collective and in-person creative experience. It enables young people to write, devise, rehearse, perform, produce and critically engage with theatre. It brings together the values of artistic practice and youth work, placing young people's creativity, welfare, agency and participation at its centre.

Young people are not just passive participants in a youth theatre programme. They help to shape it. They make artistic choices, contribute their ideas, encounter different perspectives and take shared responsibility for the work they create. Through this process, they can develop as artists, collaborators and active citizens.

Play is central to this experience. Research into play and brain development indicates that playful activity can support learning, flexible thinking, problem-solving, emotional regulation and social understanding. Youth theatre brings these elements together through imaginative, embodied and collaborative activity, creating rich conditions for the development of young minds.

This strategy recognises the wider youth work, youth arts and public-policy environment in which Youth Theatre Ireland operates. Its development and delivery are informed by relevant national frameworks, including *Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023—2028;* the *Arts in Education Charter;* the *Creative Youth Plan 2023—2027*, the Arts Council's *Growing with the Arts: Policy for Children and Young People's Arts and Making Great Art Work: Arts Council Strategy (2016–2025).*

Together, these frameworks establish a rights-based foundation for our work. They affirm young people's right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and to have a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their experiences. However, recognising these rights is not enough. They must be realised through sustained, inclusive and high-quality creative opportunities in the communities where young people live.

Access remains uneven. Some communities have no local youth theatre, meaning that the opportunity to participate is still determined too often by geography and circumstance. Existing groups face increasing costs, inadequate spaces, limited organisational capacity and barriers that prevent some young people from participating. The specialist expertise required to deliver youth theatre is not always recognised, and the sector needs stronger evidence and sustained investment to meet demand and fulfil its potential.

The case for action is therefore clear. Every young person should have the opportunity to participate in ambitious, inclusive and high-quality youth theatre. Every youth theatre should have access to the leadership, resources, infrastructure and investment required to thrive. Young people must have a meaningful voice not only in the work they create, but in the decisions that shape their artistic experiences.

The goals and commitments that follow set out the action Youth Theatre Ireland will lead to strengthen, expand and sustain youth theatre nationally.

Photo: Alan King.

WHAT IS YOUTH THEATRE?

Youth Theatre in Ireland is a unique blend of Artistic Practice and Youth Work.

At its core, youth theatre champions the voice and creativity of young people, using group or ensemble approaches to deliver workshops and stage productions by, for, and with young people.

Youth Theatre was born out of a collaborative drama process and the desire by educators and artists to create a space that encourages the artistic, personal, and social development of young people equally.

Each youth theatre is unique, and its identity is forged by the membership and their local community.

Youth theatres serve as both a community where young people can meet like-minded creatives, other young people, a space for young theatre artists to hone their craft and an important opportunity for young people to see beyond their own horizons.

Youth Theatre at a glance:

Youth Theatres...

- Are open to all young people aged 12+ regardless of their gender, background, race, sexuality, religion, ability, or economic situation.
- Have young people's voice at the centre of their work
- Value equally the artistic, personal, and social development of the young people they work with and serve as a space for artistic and collaborative expression.
- Offer a year-round programme of fun, challenging and exciting activities including drama workshops and annual productions.
- Take place outside of formal education through voluntary participation.
- Are not-for-profit organisations.
- Adhere to the Youth Theatre Ireland affiliation criteria which includes: welfare / child protection policies, appropriate insurance policies, are non-competitive, have an artistic vision and plan, have suitable management structure.

Youth Theatres are safe and supportive spaces for young people.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND AFFILIATED MEMBERS

Act Out Youth Theatre
Activate Youth Theatre
An Grianán Youth Theatre
Backstage Youth Theatre
Ballyfermot Youth Theatre
Barnstorm Youth Theatre
Blessington Youth Theatre
Breaking Barriers Theatre Group
Bui Bolg Youth Arts
Cabinteely Youth Theatre
Castletownbere Youth Theatre
Clare Youth Theatre
Cloughjordan Circus Club
County Carlow Youth Theatre
County Limerick Youth Theatre
County Wexford Youth Theatre
D15 Youth Theatre
Dingle Youth Theatre
Dir Mill Youth Theatre Group
Donegal Youth Theatre
Dreamstuff Youth Theatre
Droichead Youth Theatre
Dublin Youth Theatre
Explore Youth Theatre
Fracture & Snapped Youth Theatre
FunHouse Youth Theatre
Galway Community Circus
Giant Wolf Youth Theatre
Glengarriff Youth Theatre Group
Gonzo Youth Theatre
Griese Youth Theatre
Kildare Youth Theatre
Laois Youth Theatre
Leitrim Youth Theatre
Lightbulb Youth Theatre
Limerick Youth Theatre
M.A.D. Youth Theatre
Macnas Spectacle Youth Theatre
Making Waves Youth Theatre
Manorhamilton Youth Theatre
Monaghan Youth Theatre
Mostrim Youth Players
Mountrath Youth Theatre
Mr. Sands Youth Theatre
Nenagh Youth Theatre
New Stage Youth Theatre
PlayActing Youth Theatre
Pod Youth Theatre
Roscommon County Youth Theatre
Rusty Frog Youth Theatre
Shout Out Youth Theatre
Sligo Youth Theatre
Stagecraft Youth Theatre
Theatre Making & Citizenship Cork Young People
UCC Youth Theatre
Waterford Youth Arts
Wexford Artists Community Theatre (WACT)
Wonder Youth Theatre

Photo: Barry Morgan.

WHO ARE YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND?

Established in 1980, we are the national development organisation for youth theatre.

Our mission is to empower young people through youth theatre and to provide access to youth theatre to every young person in Ireland.

Through our work we ensure that young people are enabled to participate in youth drama by promoting the development of sustainable, quality youth theatre provision nationally.

We support, strengthen and advocate for youth theatre across Ireland, working with affiliated members, young people, leaders, artists, funders and partners to ensure youth theatre continues to thrive.

We lead on artistic practice and provide a national youth drama programme for our members.

This programme includes: *The Young Critics Programme*, P*athways to Professionalism*, the *National Youth Theatre* and one of the largest annual gathering of young creatives, *the National Festival of Youth Theatres*.

We support over fifty affiliated youth theatres across the country to reach their artistic ambitions, meet their statutory obligations, offer continuous professional development (CPD) to their staff and volunteers, and support them to grow their youth theatre's offerings.

This is achieved through events, training and resource development such as *Laying the Foundations: a guide to youth drama facilitation*, the Child Protection Awareness Programmes (CPAP), Leading On... and our annual Youth Theatre Practice Symposium.

We deliver accredited training to established and developing leaders on our level six QQI Drama Facilitation Training Course (DFTC).

We also provide support and guidance to stakeholders, establishing and affiliating youth theatres, and maintain our youth theatre Garda Vetting Consortium.

We are a committed team who strongly believe in the power and potential of youth theatre to change the lives of young people in Ireland. We are approachable, knowledgeable, passionate, supportive and we meet people where they are at.

At Youth Theatre Ireland, we champion the values of youth theatre, as these values have helped shaped so many of us working here today.

YOUTH THEATRE MODELS IN IRELAND

Youth theatres are established in communities to increase access to drama, performance, creativity, and the arts, particularly where affordable and inclusive opportunities for young people may not otherwise exist.

Every youth theatre develops within its own local context and responds to the needs of its community. As a result, no two youth theatres are exactly alike.

While every youth theatre is different, most can broadly be described as one, or a combination of the following models:

Independent, Volunteer–Led Youth Theatre
Community or Host Organisation Led Youth Theatre
Arts Organisation Led Youth Theatre.

While these models differ in structure, no one model should be considered the preferred or ideal approach. Each respond to local circumstances and community needs in myriad ways. Across Ireland, successful youth theatres operate within all three models, and many encompass elements of more than one throughout their lifespan.

These models recognise that youth theatres can be organised in diverse ways while sharing the same core purpose: creating safe, creative, youth–centred spaces where young people can participate in theatre, develop skills, build confidence, and connect with others.

None of these models arrive fully formed. Through the development and affiliation process, and with the support of Youth Theatre Ireland, groups develop over time to reach the criteria for affiliation.

It is worth noting that all youth theatres may move between these three models over time or combine elements of multiple models as they respond to changing local needs, opportunities, and resources.

Independent, Volunteer Led Youth Theatre

Established by local stakeholders, often including parents, artists, and community volunteers, an Independent, Volunteer Led Youth Theatre is run by and for its local community.

It is managed by a voluntary committee or board and operates as an independent organisation with its own legal structure. Facilitators and artists may be paid, but many administrative, governance and support responsibilities are carried out on a voluntary basis.

While the youth theatre may work closely with local partners, it makes its own decisions about governance, programming, and development.

These youth theatres typically rent community or commercial space for workshops and performances and are supported through a mix of participant fees, fundraising, local and national grants, local authority and ETB funding, box office income, and community support.



Community or Host Organisation Led Youth Theatre

A Community or Host Organisation Led Youth Theatre is established by a local organisation with strong roots in the community, such as a Youth Service, Family Resource Centre, Community Development Company, Community Arts Organisation or Amateur Drama Group.

The youth theatre is part of a wider organisation, which provides support in areas such as governance, administration, finance, safeguarding, and facilities. Facilitators and artists are usually contracted and paid, while strategic oversight may be provided through staff teams, management structures, or subcommittees.

Workshops typically take place in community-based facilities provided by the host organisation or through local partnerships.

Funding comes from a mix of participant fees, community development funding, national funding, local authority funding, local and national grants, fundraising, box office income, and community support.

Arts Organisation Led Youth Theatre

An Arts Organisation Led Youth Theatre is established and managed by an arts organisation, such as an Arts Centre, Professional Theatre Company, Cultural Venue, Educational Institution, or Local Authority Arts Office.

The youth theatre forms part of a wider artistic programme and strategy, and sits within the governance, administration, safeguarding, and financial structures of the host organisation. Facilitators and artists are contracted to deliver artistic programmes and, in some cases, administrative and production support.

These youth theatres are often based in dedicated cultural venues with regular access to rehearsal, performance, and technical facilities.

Funding commonly comes from a combination of participant fees, annual National funding, local authority investment, local and national grants, sponsorship, and box office income.



BENEFITS OF YOUTH THEATRE

Youth theatre helps young people understand the world around them.

Youth theatre helps young people find a community of like-minded peers.

Youth theatre teaches valuable life skills.

What our members think:

- Increase your wellbeing and happiness
- Take part in theatre shows
- Improve your acting and performance skills
- Express yourself creatively
- Become a team player
- Be active and have fun
- Meet new people and make new friends
- Develop your creativity
- Decrease anxiety and stress
- Grow your confidence and self-esteem
- Being part of a National Network
- Continued Professional Development and Training



Photo: Marcin Lewandowski.

OUR COMMITMENTS

What are the Commitments underpinning this Plan?

Commitment 1

Elevating the Voice of Young People

Youth Theatre Ireland will continue to ensure that the voice of young people is central and valued in all work and reflects the diversity of youth in contemporary Ireland.

Commitment 2

Support and Development

Youth Theatre Ireland is committed to creating a strategic plan that responds to the needs of Youth Theatre Members, Leaders and Partners.

Commitment 3

Development of meaningful access

Youth Theatre Ireland is committed to continuing to build sustainable, targeted pathways that guarantee young people from all demographics and regions have meaningful opportunities to engage with youth arts.

Commitment 4

Growth and fiscal responsibility

Youth Theatre Ireland is committed to growing the organisation to support more young people to access youth theatre and to maintain a fiscally robust structure to support our work.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Youth Theatre Ireland enters the next five years from a position of strength.

Since 2020, youth theatres across Ireland have demonstrated extraordinary resilience, creativity and commitment to young people.

Despite significant societal, economic and organisational challenges, the Youth Theatre movement has continued to grow, offering life-changing opportunities to thousands of young people in communities throughout the country.

Youth Theatre Ireland has strengthened its role as the national development organisation for Youth Theatre, expanding programmes, increasing investment in the sector, deepening partnerships and advocating for the value of youth theatre at local, national and international level.

During this period, organisational income increased significantly, enabling greater investment in Youth Theatre development, participation, training and artistic programmes.

Youth theatre in Ireland is recognised as a distinctive and valuable practice that brings together the arts and youth work in a way that supports the artistic, personal and social development of young people. This quality youth theatre practice is being delivered by youth theatres and the dedication of the leaders, volunteers, artists and organisations that support them provides a strong foundation for the future.

At the same time, we recognise that the environment in which youth theatre operates continues to evolve. Ireland's young people are growing up in an increasingly diverse society and their needs, experiences and expectations continue to change. Many young people still face barriers that prevent them from accessing youth theatre opportunities. Youth theatres are navigating increasing demands on their resources, rising operational costs, evolving safeguarding requirements, volunteer sustainability challenges and growing expectations around inclusion, accessibility and environmental responsibility.

Rather than viewing these realities as barriers to progress, Youth Theatre Ireland sees them as opportunities for leadership, innovation and growth.

This Strategic Plan has been developed with a clear understanding of both the strengths of our movement and the challenges that lie ahead. By acknowledging the environment in which we operate, we can better support our members, strengthen the sector and work towards a future where every young person in Ireland has the opportunity to participate in youth theatre.

The following considerations have informed our strategic planning process and reflect both the strengths of the youth theatre movement and the realities of the environment in which it operates.

Diversity, Demographics and Lived Experience

Diversity

The youth theatre community is a rich diverse community in terms of neurodiversity, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, disability and sexual identity.

Demographics

Ireland's demographics have been evolving significantly over the past few decades. The population has surpassed 5 million for the first time in 171 years. Our youth population have experienced many notable changes in recent years, with many young people now representing a broad range of cultures and traditions that will contribute significantly to the development of Ireland's cultural landscape moving forward.

Lived Experience

Youth Theatre Ireland acknowledges the constantly evolving needs of young people. It also acknowledges that the many groups that it supports are working with children and young people who may experience the following:

- Have arrived from other places and cultures.
- Experience poverty and/or marginalisation.
- Have a mental health need.
- Have a physical or intellectual disability.

For more information on Youth Theatre Ireland's policies, scan here...



Barriers to Access

Youth Theatre Ireland understands that some young people who would like to access youth theatre are currently unable to do so. Some of these reasons include:

- There is no local youth theatre for the young person to access
- Young people cannot access transport to attend their local youth theatre
- The young person thinks they cannot afford to attend a local youth theatre.
- The young person is concerned that their local youth theatre cannot cater for someone with their specific needs.
- The young person is not confident in speaking English and feels this will prevent them from attending their local youth theatre.
- The young person does not have the support or may have other concerns and responsibilities that taking the time out to do something for themselves, such as joining a Youth Theatre, is just not possible.



Challenges

Youth Theatre Ireland recognises that running a Youth Theatre is a specialist Youth work practice. It requires significant resources and skills on behalf of its leaders and support organisations.

Common Challenges currently facing youth theatres can include:

Organisational Capacity:

- Some youth theatres do not have the capacity or resources to meet local demand.
- The work involved in running a youth theatre can be substantial and difficult to do in a voluntary capacity.
- Some youth theatres experience challenges meeting the needs of their organisations, such as project management, fundraising, and IT work.
- The funding provided to many youth theatres does not adequately meet their requirements.
- Additional personnel are required to support facilitators in delivering drama workshops or play rehearsals.
- For many youth theatres, the spaces that they work from for workshops and rehearsals are inadequate in a variety of ways.

Work outside the workshop space:

- The skills currently required to be a youth theatre leader are significant and are not confined to drama facilitation or theatre direction skills
- For some leaders accessing specific training that is relevant to the needs that they have identified can be challenging.

Succession Planning:

- Many youth theatres face significant challenges when the time comes to replace longstanding volunteers/leaders.

Visibility:

- Outside of the youth theatre sector there is insufficient acknowledgment of the nuances of the work or the expertise required to implement it.
- While it is generally acknowledged that there are significant benefits to young people's participation in youth theatre, the research conducted to date underpinning these assertions has been limited.





Goal 1: Advocacy

Raising the Profile of Youth Theatre

Over the next five years Youth Theatre Ireland will:

1. Further promote the benefits of youth theatre participation to new and existing partners, funders and policy makers.
2. Consistently present youth theatre and its benefits to the wider public in relevant, clear, and accessible ways.
3. Lead the conversation, to encourage local and national partnerships that will support the growth and development of Youth Theatre.
4. Accurately identify and communicate the practical supports and funding that is required to effectively run a youth theatre in Ireland.
5. Continue to raise the profile nationally about youth theatre and its benefits, by disseminating and promoting the work of local youth theatres at a national level and international level.

How will we do this?

- By maintaining and growing our staff, and hiring a Fundraising and Communications Officer to elevate the voice of young people.
- Creating and implementing an active Communications Plan.
- Creating and implementing a fundraising strategy.
- By delivering *Centre Stage +30*, a landmark study into youth theatre participation and using its findings to grow our sector.



Goal 2: Consolidation

Strengthening the work we do

Over the next five years Youth Theatre Ireland will:

1. Lead and develop artistically ambitious national programmes that advance artform development and respond to the identified needs of the youth theatre sector.
2. Innovate, by further developing new initiatives including our all-island youth theatre offerings.
3. Continue to deliver high level training opportunities.
4. Continue to offer tailored advice and support, and develop resources, handbooks, and guidelines for facilitators and Youth Theatre Management.

How will we do this?

- By delivering the first ever all-island National Youth Theatre.
- Supporting groups from the North of Ireland to participate in our artistic programme.
- By continuing to deliver *Leading On...* and other professional development opportunities for leaders.
- By maintaining and growing the offering of our Level 6 QQI course.
- By expanding our *Pathways to Professionalism* programme.
- By upholding our commitment to EDI initiatives designed to dismantle financial and cultural barriers to participation.
- By strengthening the fiscal stability of the organisation through increasing financial reserves.



Goal 3: Local and Regional Development

Strengthening our membership

Over the next five years Youth Theatre Ireland will:

1. Support regional youth theatre networks as recognised hubs for collaboration, artistic development and advocacy.
2. Collaborate with stakeholders to create bespoke Regional Youth Theatre Programmes.
3. Provide regular opportunities for local leaders to share their experiences and identify their support needs.
4. Create opportunities to showcase the achievements of youth theatres and promote awareness of the need for increased support among local and national stakeholders.
5. Support the empowerment of youth theatres and Leaders at local level.

How will we do this?

- Secure additional funding to support regional collaboration.
- Create and support strong Regional Networks.
- Mentor and train leaders in self-advocacy.
- Stage regional Playshare Showcases.
- Run regional Child Protection Awareness Programmes.
- Maintain an online space for connection, dissemination, discussion, and feedback.



Goal 4: Partnership Development

Collaborating for Growth

Over the next five years Youth Theatre Ireland will:

1. Identify partners that Youth Theatre Ireland can work with locally, regionally and nationally to support youth theatre development.
2. Establish strong partnerships with funders, local and national partners.
3. Promoting our open-door policy for organisations who wish to engage with Youth Theatre Ireland.
4. Utilise examples of working partnerships that have achieved strong outcomes for the youth theatre movement's growth.
5. Pilot partnerships that will support the development of Youth Theatre by working with organisations that wish to utilise the skills and expertise of Youth Theatre Ireland.
6. Actively work with funders to create funding pathways for youth theatres.

How will we do this?

- By strengthening our relationship with existing partners.
- By seeking new partners to grow our membership.
- By growing partnerships with other organisations with aligned goals.
- By continuing to grow the European network of Youth Theatres.
- Implement the fundraising strategy to support the financial growth of the organisation.



Goal 5: Best Practice

Leading Excellence in Youth Theatre Practice

Over the next five years Youth Theatre Ireland will:

1. Uphold the highest standards in child welfare and safeguarding.
2. Maintain our high standards of Artistic programming and Training.
3. Work in partnership with third level institutions to initiate studies that will identify and track the benefits of Youth Theatre.
4. Encourage, support, and train skilled theatre practitioners to work within the youth theatre sector.
5. Continue to support high artistic standards in youth theatre.
6. Continue to champion examples of best practice locally, nationally and internationally across the areas of performance, facilitation, policy, EDI, and sustainability.
7. Continue to create and develop relevant resources that support the delivery of best practice for youth theatres.

How will we do this?

- Conduct an Organisational Review and create an implementation plan based on the review's findings.
- Create a yearly implementation plan to deliver on the goals and actions set out in this Strategic Plan.
- Continue to offer high quality experiences and opportunities for youth theatre leaders such as the Youth Theatre Practice Symposium, Leading On, and Child Protection Training.
- Continue the provision of the Garda Vetting Consortium and Child Protection advice.
- Maintain criteria for youth theatre affiliation and continue to support emerging youth theatres in achieving them.
- Expand the Youth Theatre Facilitators Directory.
- Provide developmental artistic and leadership opportunities to youth theatre members.
- Lead on artistic and safeguarding best practice to ensure youth theatre remains a safe place where young people feel confident to be themselves.

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND TEAM

Youth theatre has transformed the lives of generations of young people in Ireland. This Strategic Plan is our commitment to ensuring that the next generation of young people continue to have access to that same opportunity. Together with our members, leaders, partners, supporters and funders, we will continue to strengthen the youth theatre movement and champion the creativity, voice and potential of young people across Ireland.

Team

Eoghan Doyle — Director

Alan King — Deputy Director

Dave Kelly — National Training Co-Ordinator

Barry Morgan — Special Projects Officer

Rebecca Feely — National Programme Co-Ordinator

Cathal Thornton — Child Protection and Wellbeing Officer

Katie Meehan — Administrator

Board

Julie O'Leary (Chairperson)

Calvin Magee (Company Secretary)

Joanna Mularz (Treasurer)

Annie Hoey

Rebecca Murphy

Maev O'Shea

Thomas Dowling

Trina McCann

Benedetto Di Placido

Core Funders

We would like to acknowledge the continued annual support of the Arts Council of Ireland and the Department of Education and Youth. We also wish to recognise the investment of the Creative Ireland Programme, whose support over the past five years has enabled Youth Theatre Ireland to develop and deliver a range of national and all-island initiatives and programmes.

Strategy Development

Youth Theatre Ireland would like to acknowledge Irma Grothuis, who led the consultation and drafting process for this strategy.

Project funders

The support from the following funders over the past five years have supported Youth Theatre Ireland to deliver our programmes: Creative Ireland, Community Foundation Ireland, Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council. We would also like to acknowledge all of the local and national funders who have supported our affiliated youth theatre groups and leaders.

If after reading this plan, you feel that there is potential for Youth Theatre Ireland to work in meaningful partnership with your group or organisation, in a way that supports both your goals and ours, we'd love to hear from you!

BENEFITS OF YOUTH THEATRE PARTICIPATION

Youth theatre can address so much of what is missing for young people in modern life. **It can enable self-expression and allows young people to talk about feelings.** It can facilitate participants to view the world from a range of perspectives. It can provide a supportive and positive environment. **And it can help young people make friends for life.**

"Best experience of my life" - Youth Theatre Member

"Thank you all for all your help over the last 13 years. Looking forward to more adventures in the future"
— Youth Theatre Leader 2025

"My daughter is a fuller version of herself, because she had a space — an inclusive space — where she could express herself and meet others."
— Parent of youth theatre participant.

"It was so amazing and I have met the best people that I will never forget because I know I will never be judged here because there are people just like me here that understand me and actually get me"
- Youth Theatre Member

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Company Registration No: 191785
Charity Registration No: 20023492

YOUTH THEATRE IRELAND

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme

An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

the arts council an chomhairle ealaíon
funding theatre