HOW TO TALK
ABOUT YOUTH WORK
IN IRELAND

A quick framing guide from NYCI in partnership with

NYCI National Youth Council of Ireland

FRAME WORKS UK

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1 ## START WITH THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF YOUTH WORK

FOR EXAMPLE

"Youth work offers young people the spaces and opportunities to build relationships, explore their identity, develop skills and increase their confidence. It is shaped by the needs of young people, and can take many forms – from clubs and groups to specific projects."

WHY THIS WORKS

Focussing on what youth work can *achieve* makes a compelling and joined up case for *why it matters*. Highlighting the positive impact of youth work also helps to present it as an essential way to support young people and build a strong society – not just a 'nice to have'.

WATCH OUT

START WITH THE WHY, NOT THE WHAT

Defining youth work by the specific activities and forms it takes can become unwieldy. It can also miss the point of why it really matters – what it is 'for' and the difference it makes to young people's lives. So start with the 'why' before you get into the 'what'.

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2 ## EXPLAIN HOW YOUTH WORK SHAPES YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

FOR EXAMPLE

"We are all shaped by opportunities and experiences – and growing up is a critical time of discovery for all of us. Young people need opportunities to experiment – to learn by trial and error. Youth workers can provide the safe spaces and support for them to do that."

WHY THIS WORKS

Explanation helps us show, not just tell, how youth work shapes social, emotional, and identity development. We need to make the connection between the opportunities and experiences offered by youth work and the impact this has on young people's development.

WATCH OUT

DON'T ASSERT WITHOUT EXPLAINING

By explaining rather than just asserting something to be true, we can make sure we're building the understanding we want to. Effective explanation ensures that we're filling in the gaps for people, rather than leaving holes in our story, which might be filled in with assumptions or stereotypes.

3 PAINT A VARIED PICTURE OF YOUTH WORK

- **Use specific examples of opportunities and activities** to bring youth work to life.
- **Use imagery to literally show** the different places, spaces, activities and people involved in youth work.
- **Explain what different types of youth work mean,** and give examples. For example, you could explain what Detached Youth Work is and what makes it unique and important.

WHY THIS WORKS
This can help to build people's understanding of the diverse opportunities on offer for young people, and overcome misconceptions or fixed ideas. It can help to show that youth work is not one size fits all. Remember to still put why youth work matters first.

WATCH OUT

DON'T TRY TO COVER EVERYTHING
Rather than sharing a long list of different types of youth work in one piece of communication, consider focusing on one or two examples well, and working together as an organisation – and as a sector – to paint a varied picture across different pieces of communication.

4 BALANCE URGENCY AND EFFICACY

FOR EXAMPLE

⊗ **INSTEAD OF**
"Our young people are in crisis, and without an increase in funding, we face an impossible task."

⊘ **TRY**
"We know that young people need us, and we are ready to rise to the challenge. With an increase in funding we can…"

WHY THIS WORKS
For people to get behind youth work, they need to believe that change is possible, as well as seeing the need for action. To achieve this, we need to spell out what we can do – solutions that we are advocating for, examples of what works, and how people can get involved or get behind it.

WATCH OUT

DON'T RELY ON CRISIS MESSAGING
Research on framing a wide range of issues shows that crisis framing frequently fails to deliver the hoped for effects. Crisis framing typically leads to one of two things. People either dismiss the claim outright or conclude that the problem is too big or complex to solve, and they are powerless to fix it.

This short guide is for anyone communicating about youth work in Ireland. Find more practical guidance on building understanding of why creating the right spaces and opportunities for young people matters – and to help you make a stronger case for support.

SEE THE FULL TOOLKIT AT

youth.ie/framingyouthwork