



# Annual Youth Conference Report

- Longford Comhairle na nÓg 2025
- October 23<sup>rd</sup> at The Longford Arms Hotel



# Introduction

This year, Longford Comhairle na nÓg's Annual Youth Conference took place on October 23<sup>rd</sup> in the Longford Arms Hotel. A total of 72 young people attended on the day with representation from the 9 post-primary schools in Longford and from different local youth services.

The purpose of the Annual Youth Conference is for Longford Comhairle na nÓg to identify youth issues in our local area. Young people attending the conference prioritise issues for Longford Comhairle na nÓg to address in the following year. This year's youth issues are,

1. Exam Stress
2. Transport
3. Youth Facilities

During the Youth Conference, we also reflect and present on the previous years outcomes to keep young people updated on the work Longford Comhairle na nÓg has done. This year's presentation included the Exam Stress Study Packs, the Dreamspace STEM Event, Refurbish Workshop and more!

Finally, the event is an opportunity for new Comhairle members to be recruited. This year, 9 new members joined Longford Comhairle na nÓg.

In summary, the conference's goals and objectives are:

- Identifying youth issues in the local area
- Prioritising issues for the following year
- Presenting the previous year's outcomes
- Recruiting new members



# Conference Planning and Outreach

Planning for the Annual Youth Conference began in May with 'Save The Date' emails being sent to the relevant youth organisations and schools. The previous coordinator had left a list of the relevant contacts and a brief guide on what would be needed to organise an Annual Youth Conference.

Nominations were sought out in early September with deadlines on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Parent Permission forms were shared soon after to the nominations with phone calls to parents that needed support in filling them out.

Outreach involved emailing and calls to schools and youth groups. In emails, we shared last year's Longford Comhairle na nÓg promotional video to give clarity on what Comhairle does, as well as what the Annual Youth Conference structure is for which is getting the voices and opinions of young people heard.

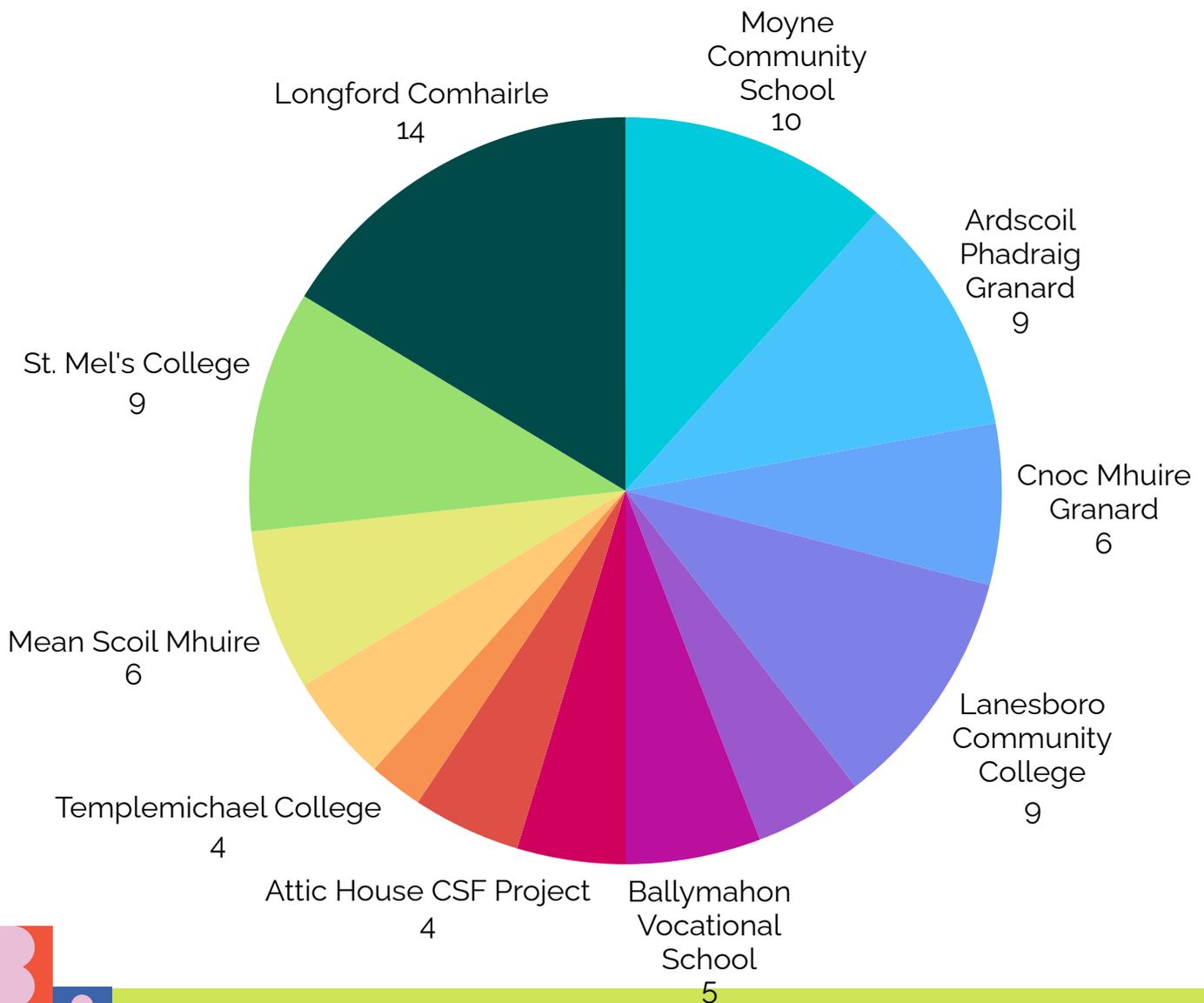
Longford Comhairle na nÓg members prepared for the event by coordinating themselves into different roles such as hosts, workshop facilitators, registration personnel and speakers. In the weeks leading up to the Annual Youth Conference, Comhairle members took part in practice facilitations, practicing their public speaking skills and preparing the relevant resources for World Café Mats, facilitator packs and forming the agenda for the day.



# Total Attendance : 86



- Moyne Community School
- Ardcoil Phadraig Granard
- Cnoc Mhuire Granard
- Lanesboro Community College
- Mercy Secondary School, Ballymahon
- Ballymahon Vocational School
- County Longford Youth Services
- Attic House CSF Project
- LEAP Project
- Templemichael College
- Mean Scoil Mhuire
- St. Mel's College
- Longford Comhairle



# Delegates and Attendee Information

A total of 86 young people attended the event with representation from all nine post-primary schools on the day.

The event was originally planned to have around 90 attendees based on last year's Annual Youth Conference and an earlier outreach but some young people had called in sick on the day.

# Decision-Makers and Services in Attendance

List of decision-makers and community representatives attending the conference.

- Longford County Council Leas Cathaoirleach Niall Gannon
- Longford County Council Staff
- An Garda Siochana
- Foróige
- LEAP Project
- C.Y.P.S.C.

# Event Agenda

- **Registration 09.30 – 10.25**
- **Welcome speech from the MC's 10.25 – 10.35**
- **Opening speech from the Cathaoirleach 10.35 – 10.40**
- **What's Comhairle All About? Presentation. 10.40 – 10.45**
- **Topic vote 10.45 – 10.50 (Mentimeter)**
- **Access to workshops. 11.00 – 11.45**
- **World Café 11.45 – 12.45**
- **LUNCH 12.45 – 13.15**
- **Final topic voting. 13.15 – 13.25**
- **Evaluation and express of interest form 13.25 – 13.30**
- **Topic result. 13.30 -13:35**
- **Closing speeches with Cllr Niall Gannon & hosts 13.35 – 13.45**



# Topics of Discussion and Selection Process

This year, participants were asked to go on to Mentimeter to pick topics which they felt were most important or had the biggest impact on the lives of young people in County Longford. Mentimeter was used this year as a time saving method to instantly gather responses and to have the vote counting be made easier. Sticky notes and pens were provided for any students that could not connect to mentimeter so that they could still cast a vote. A total of 67 young people voted through mentimeter and 5 voted using the sticky notes.

This topics identified during the counting were:

- Exam Stress
- Transport
- Youth Facilities
- Bullying - Online and In School
- Community Safety
- Discrimination
- Substance Abuse - Vaping and Drugs
- Lack of Family Resource Centres
- Homelessness
- Artificial Intelligence
- Mental Health

Once the key themes were identified, the top three topics were taken as the focus of the day's workshops. The top three topics selected were:

- Exam Stress
- Transport
- Youth Facilities

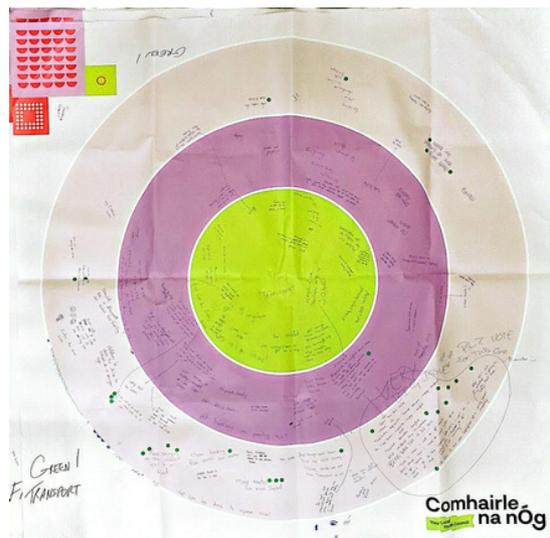
These topics became the subjects of workshops held in a World Café format, where every participant had the opportunity to voice their opinions and share their concerns on each issue. Comhairle facilitators guided the discussions, helping young people explore these topics in depth, identify barriers, and brainstorm potential solutions. At the end of each session, participants voted on the solutions that resonated with them most, allowing everyone to have a say in determining the constructive steps forward for these key issues.

# World Café Workshop

- **Workshop Setup and Process:**

Young people were split into different groups upon entry to encourage young people to not stay within their own school groups and to encourage them to speak to new people. The young people were evenly split into 3 colour groups of Pink, Green or Purple and then were further split into 3 numbered groups of one, two and three. This created 9 groups in total to match the World Café rotation. The rotation of the groups allowed young people to speak about every topic on the day. Young people were asked to stay within their colour and to move from 1 to 2, 2 to 3 and 3 to 1.

Table Setup	Pink	Green	Purple
1	Pink 1	Green 1	Purple 1
2	Pink 2	Green 2	Purple 2
3	Pink 3	Green 3	Purple 3



The three topics were then discussed in each number zone, using the World Café mats. Longford Comhairle na nÓg members facilitated the tables and helped young people through the following questions.

- 1) Tell us more about the issue (inner)
- 2) What are the challenges or barriers? (mid)
- 3) What could be done to help improve the issue? (outer)

Young people were instructed to write the answers working from the inner circle outwards.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were taken from the World Café mats.

### Exam Stress

Elements of the Issue	What are the Challenges/Barriers?	What are Possible Solutions?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High leaving cert points pressure</li> <li>• No help in School</li> <li>• Work-life balance</li> <li>• Weight of school bag</li> <li>• Gender stigma</li> <li>• Teachers not being able to teach</li> <li>• Lack of time</li> <li>• Increased use of AI</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Lack of understanding from teachers</li> <li>• The CAO system</li> <li>• Too much homework</li> <li>• Teachers give too much homework</li> <li>• High expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irish taught incorrectly</li> <li>• Lack of help and affordable study facilities</li> <li>• Heavy books</li> <li>• pressure from society</li> <li>• If your siblings did well, high expectations</li> <li>• Feeling behind</li> <li>• Can't keep up with work during class</li> <li>• Not enough vacant rooms to support quiet study spaces</li> <li>• no place to study</li> <li>• price of grinds</li> <li>• Poor time management</li> <li>• Lack of supplies</li> <li>• Public schools get less fundings</li> <li>• Teachers not caring about the work from other subjects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free tea</li> <li>• Study plan</li> <li>• Lower points for colleges</li> <li>• Have rest days</li> <li>• Allowances for sleep</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Less stress in class from teachers</li> <li>• Allow fidgets in class to help for focusing</li> <li>• teachers should be more supportive in helping rather than judgemental</li> <li>• Teach students how to manage time and schedule</li> <li>• More practical exams</li> <li>• Get appropriate covers for missing teachers</li> <li>• More funding to support teachers</li> <li>• Less homework, more continuous assessment</li> <li>• More access to free study websites, less pay walls</li> <li>• Grants for learning aids</li> <li>• After school study free of charge</li> <li>• Make tests open book</li> <li>• Talk to your guidance counsellor</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were taken from the World Café mats.

### Transport

Elements of the Issue	What are the Challenges/Barriers?	What are Possible Solutions?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Link is not local enough</li> <li>Not enough frequent running buses.</li> <li>Not enough bus drivers for the amount of bus routes.</li> <li>Unsafe on buses with rough people being let on.</li> <li>Bus drivers skipping stops because of assuming no one is getting off there.</li> <li>Expensive bus fares for students with zero income.</li> <li>Not enough seats on buses in the morning because of college students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People don't clean up after themselves.</li> <li>Bus drivers aren't receiving enough training.</li> <li>The bad behaviour on buses is never addressed by the driver.</li> <li>The fares keep going up.</li> <li>The seats aren't clean.</li> <li>Some buses are lacking accessibility i.e. ramps.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incentivise more people to take up bus driving with higher wages or improved benefits.</li> <li>More bus stops, more buses.</li> <li>Improved funding network that supports drivers and passengers.</li> <li>There should be fines for littering.</li> <li>Roads should be done up to be more bus suitable.</li> <li>Have buses update their routes based on needs of young people.</li> <li>Young people friendly buses.</li> </ul>



## Recommendations

The following recommendations were taken from the World Café mats.

### Youth Facilities

Elements of the Issue	What are the Challenges/Barriers?	What are Possible Solutions?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. lack of third spaces</li> <li>2. free youth/study groups needed</li> <li>3. lus na greine (own a youth building but not enough facilitators)</li> <li>4. public transport—students shouldn't have to rely on their parents for 100% of their transport needs</li> <li>5. granard library facilities are inadequate (horrible opening times, not enough space, etc)</li> <li>6. no study spaces in a town with over 1,000 secondary school students (granard)</li> <li>7. CAMHS and mental health facilities are not accessible</li> <li>8. no way to get to the facilities (links to transport)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. not enough funding, struggle finding volunteers</li> <li>2. not enough people joining clubs/being aware of the clubs being there/not enough being done to advertise the clubs</li> <li>3. not enough young people want to participate as the activities/clubs happening aren't what interests them/the activities are outdated</li> <li>4. (^ links to the above point) most clubs are sports related and many people aren't interested in sports</li> <li>5. people aren't respecting the spaces that the activities are happening in (graffiti, defacing it, leaving it dirty, etc)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ask local authorities to invest more in clubs and staffing</li> <li>2. advertise the activities adequately (social media, make them known in school, posters, etc)</li> <li>3. fundraisers to try get money to fund more activities</li> <li>4. talk to county councilors about how important it is for young people to have safe facilities and things to do</li> <li>5. improve sport and health facilities</li> <li>6. build more parks/skate parks</li> <li>7. volunteer getting some kind of compensation for their work (gift, certificate, money, gift card)—but volunteers aren't supposed to be given compensation so perhaps just employ them</li> <li>8. facilities could offer free grinds/courses</li> </ol>



# Topic Voting Results

Following World Café sessions, each young person was given a voting card and was instructed to pick the most important topic out of the three facilitated during the workshops.

The topic to receive the most votes was Exam Stress.

This was followed by Transport with the second leading amount of votes.

And then Youth Facilities which was third most voted topic for young people.

# Election of New Comhairle na nÓg Committee

The Expression of Interest forms were handed out after lunch and collected by each table facilitator.

Expression of interest to join Longford Comhairle na nÓg

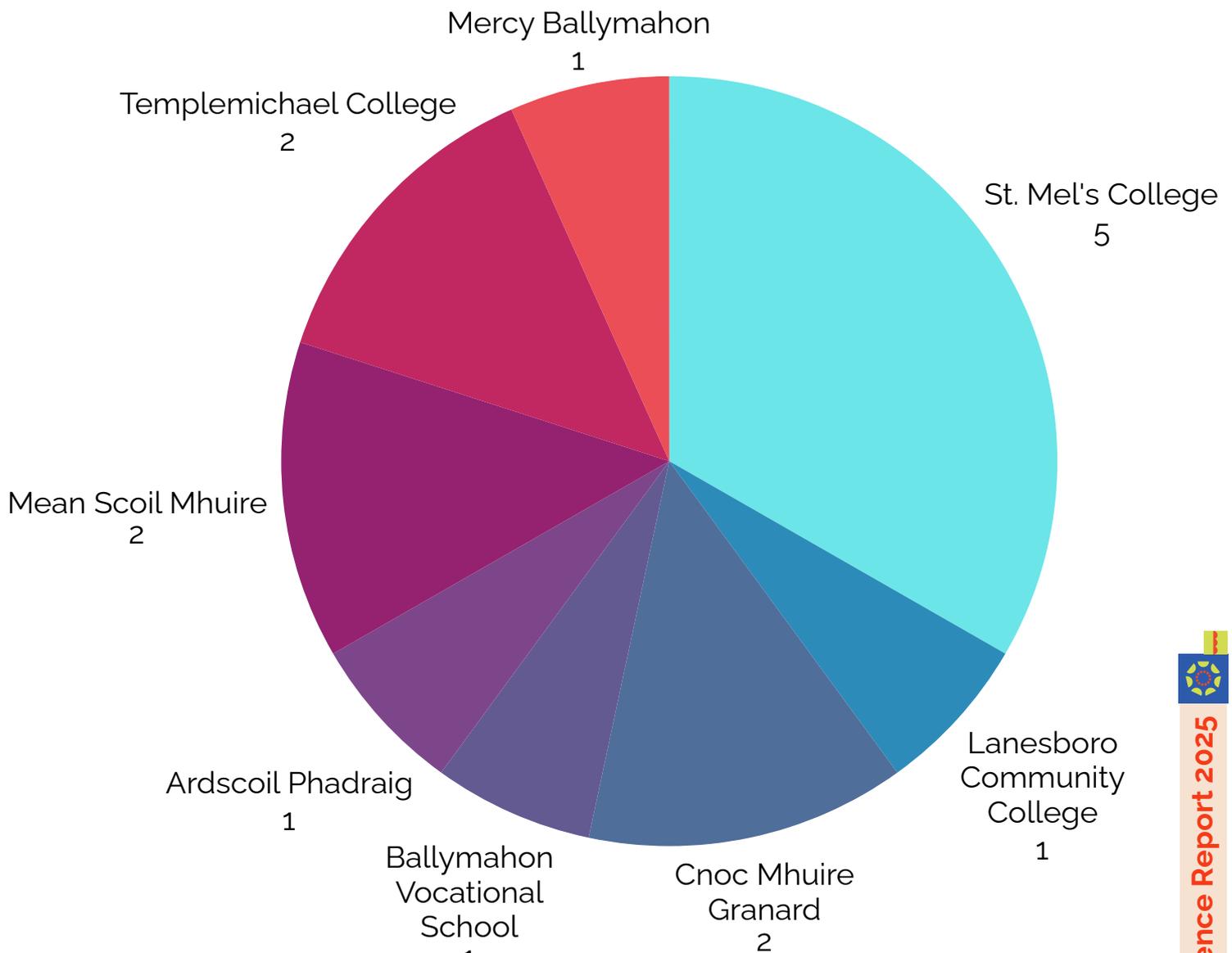
1. Name:
2. Date of birth:
3. Contact number:
4. Parent's contact number:
3. School/learning institution or youth organisation attended:
4. Why would you like to join Longford Comhairle na nÓg?

government supporting communities  
AN LONGFORD  
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

## Expressions of Interest to Join Comhairle

Total : 15



This year, Comhairle has received **15** Expressions of Interest to join Longford Comhairle na nÓg.

The young people who have sent their expressions will be invited to their first Comhairle meeting on November 6th.

# Conference Evaluation

Near the end of the conference, an evaluation form was shared to the attendees to ask them the following questions about the Annual Youth Conference.

- What was your favourite part of the Annual Youth Conference?
- Do you have a better understanding of what Comhairle na nÓg is about?
- Did you feel your opinions on the matters were heard and respected?
- Any suggestions for Longford Comhairle na nÓg for 2025?
- Did this year's Annual Youth Conference meet your expectations and if not, why?

The evaluation form had 62 responses. These are the statistics on how they were answered.

- 96.77% of attendees said they have a better understanding of what Comhairle na nÓg is about. Only 2 respondents explicitly stated they did not have a better understanding, suggesting a minimal need for adjustment in the presentation of Comhairle na nÓg's purpose.
- 95.6% of attendees felt their opinions were heard and respected. From those who stated they did not feel heard or respected, 2 of the respondents shared that they weren't really sure and 1 of the respondents wrote that they will wait and see if what they said is acted on before feeling heard.
- 96.77% of attendances said the day met their expectations. The 2 responses that said otherwise simply said 'No' with no further explanation to why.

## Feedback Suggestions:

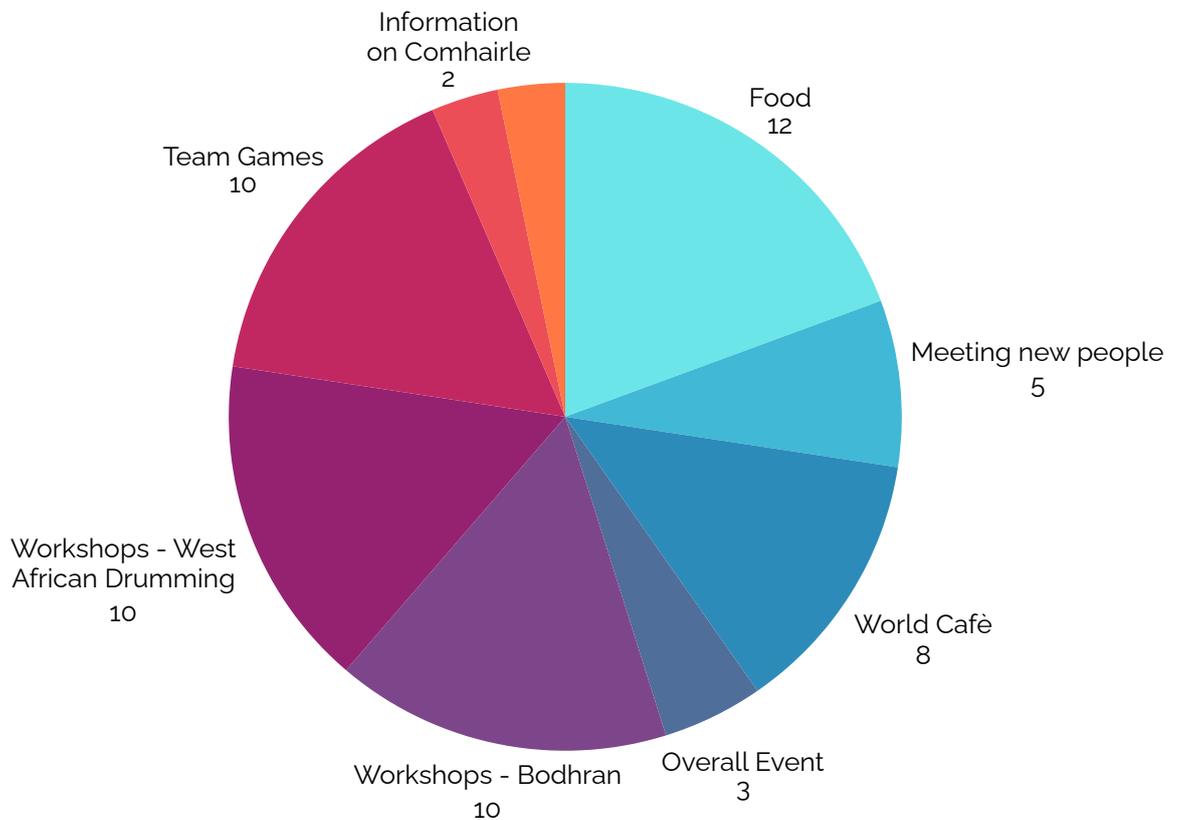
- Improve Transport for young people
- Improve Study Facilities in Libraries
- More facilities for smaller sports like Golf and Skateboarding
- More Time for Games during Annual Youth Conference
- Invest in School Lunches
- Focus on something fun, for example, the skate park last year was a great idea.
- The study packs are a great idea, I think they should be done again for JC and LC.
- Try to get more buses in rural places
- Involve more Roma young people.



# Event Highlights and Comments

What was your favourite part of the Annual Youth Conference?

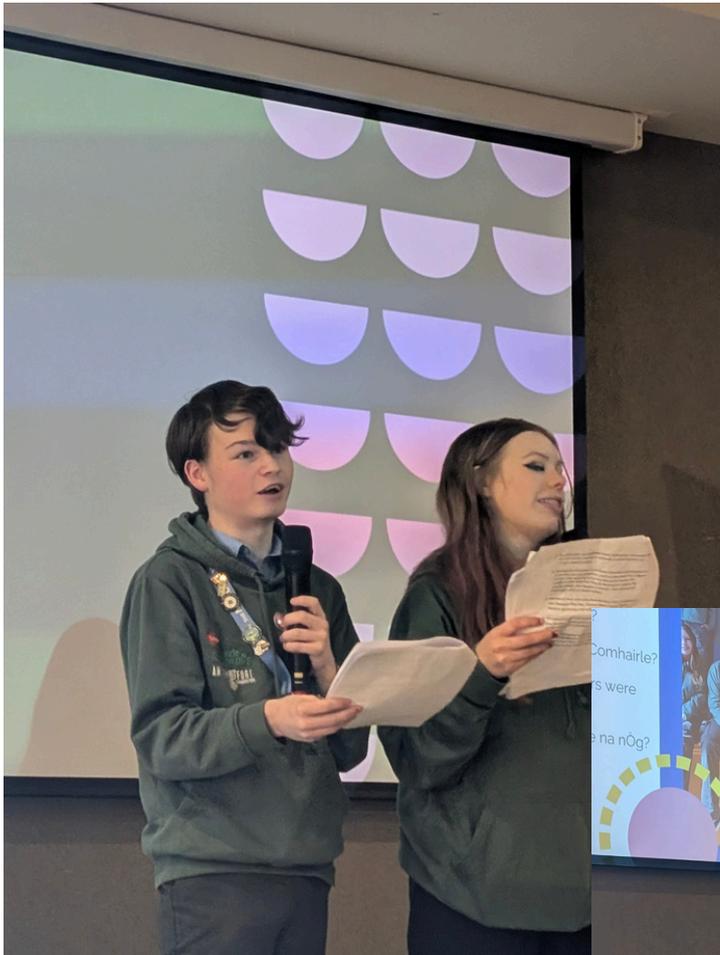
- Food
- Meeting new people
- World Cafè
- Overall Event
- Workshops - Bodhran
- Workshops - West African Drumming
- Team Games
- Information on Comhairle
- Other



# Photo Gallery



# Photo Gallery



# Photo Gallery



# Photo Gallery



# Photo Gallery



# Comhairle na nÓg

Your Local  
Youth Council



An Roinn Leanaí, Míchumais  
agus Comhionannais  
Department of Children,  
Disability and Equality

