

****** Press Release******

Youth Advocate Programmes Ireland

Thursday, June 25th 2020

For Immediate Release

**YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES DEMAND SCHOOLS REOPEN AND INCREASED
MENTAL HEALTH, COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC SERVICES FROM NEW
GOVERNMENT**

A recent survey conducted by Youth Advocate Programmes Ireland (YAP Ireland) shows that young people and families receiving the YAP Service hope that the new Irish government will ensure that schools and creches reopen, make additional provisions for mental health, community and public health services, permanent housing and additional income supports to ameliorate some of the negative effects of Covid-19. YAP Ireland work with many vulnerable children, young people and families around the country who already faced difficult circumstances prior to the lockdown of society in March 2020. Many of these young people rely heavily on services within the community such as youth groups, sports clubs and indeed mental health services. The results of YAP's survey show that both young people and their parents/ carers are concerned that many community-based services will not reopen and that this will negatively impact their mental and physical health and the treatments they need to receive.

The research also finds that children, young people and families have been greatly impacted by the closure of the school/ childcare and the pressure to homeschool and keep up with coursework. Many families are single parent households who may have children with additional needs who fear the schools and childcare will not reopen for their children or that they themselves will catch the Corona Virus and will become unable to care for their families.

Throughout the pandemic, staff have found unique and creative ways to connect with children, young people and families keeping them engaged with the service. According to a parent her daughter "feels her support is still ongoing and is finding YAP a good lifeline" as her needs continue to be met throughout the pandemic. Engagement and interaction from YAP Ireland was key to reducing the negative impacts on children, young people and families throughout the last three months as the survey shows that our clients were most impacted by loneliness and the closure of their schools/ childcare.

Discussing the recent survey findings, Siobhán O'Dwyer, YAP Ireland CEO stated "It is very clear that vulnerable children, young people and families have suffered greatly during the lockdown and are very clear in their priorities for the coming months. They want services to reopen so that they can access the supports that they need and the full reopening of schools and childcare is a top priority. I hope that the new Government and relevant Departments and agencies take

their request on board and do everything they can to ensure that services reopen quickly and schools and childcare can be accessed by all by September.”

YAP Ireland are funded by Tusla, The Child and Family Agency, and the HSE to provide intensive support programmes to children, young people and their families. Over the last number of months YAP have been one of the few organisations that continued to provide a full service to all families both online and face to face.

-ENDS-

For further information, please contact Shannon Reilly, Communications Officer, YAP Ireland at sreilly@yapireland.ie or 087-2312111.

Siobhán O’Dwyer is available for interview.

Notes for the editor:

- YAP Ireland was founded in 2002 and Today is operating in 22 counties across Ireland. YAP Ireland employs 34 permanent staff and approximately 150 advocates. In 2019, 527 young people and their families participated on the YAP programmes, including 333 referred for the first time.
- Throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic YAP Ireland continued to provide services to 95% of young people and families both online and in person.
- YAP Ireland is a leading provider of intensive support programmes for young people and families. It uses a strengths-based, family focused approach delivering intensive support over 6 months to young people with complex needs helping them to achieve their goals. For more information, please visit www.yapireland.ie