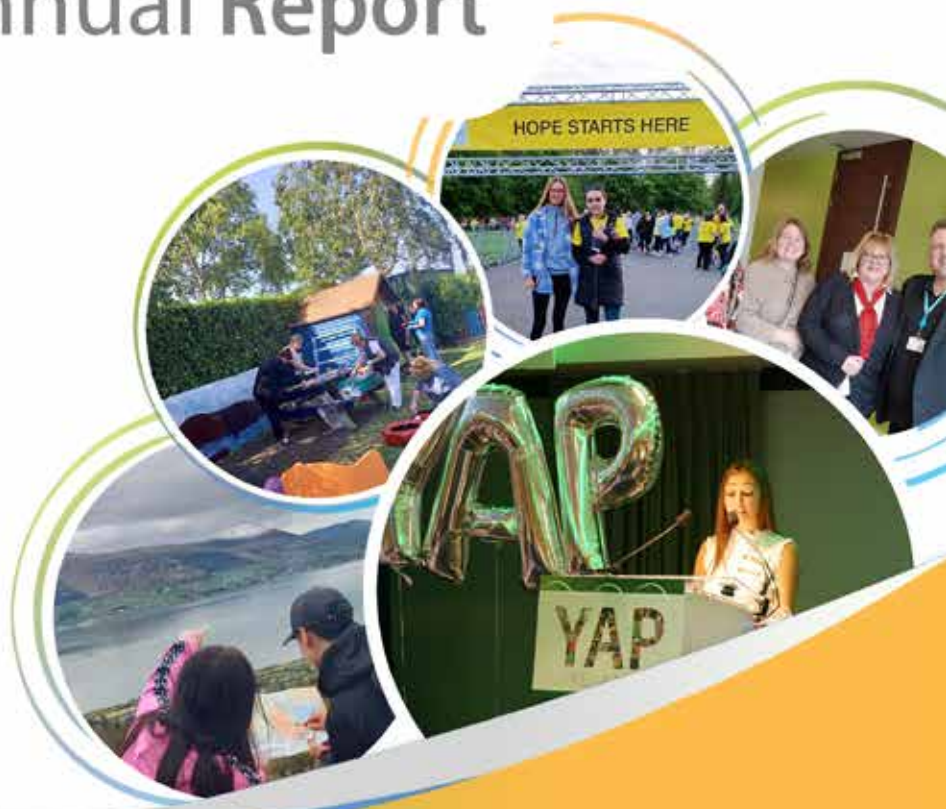
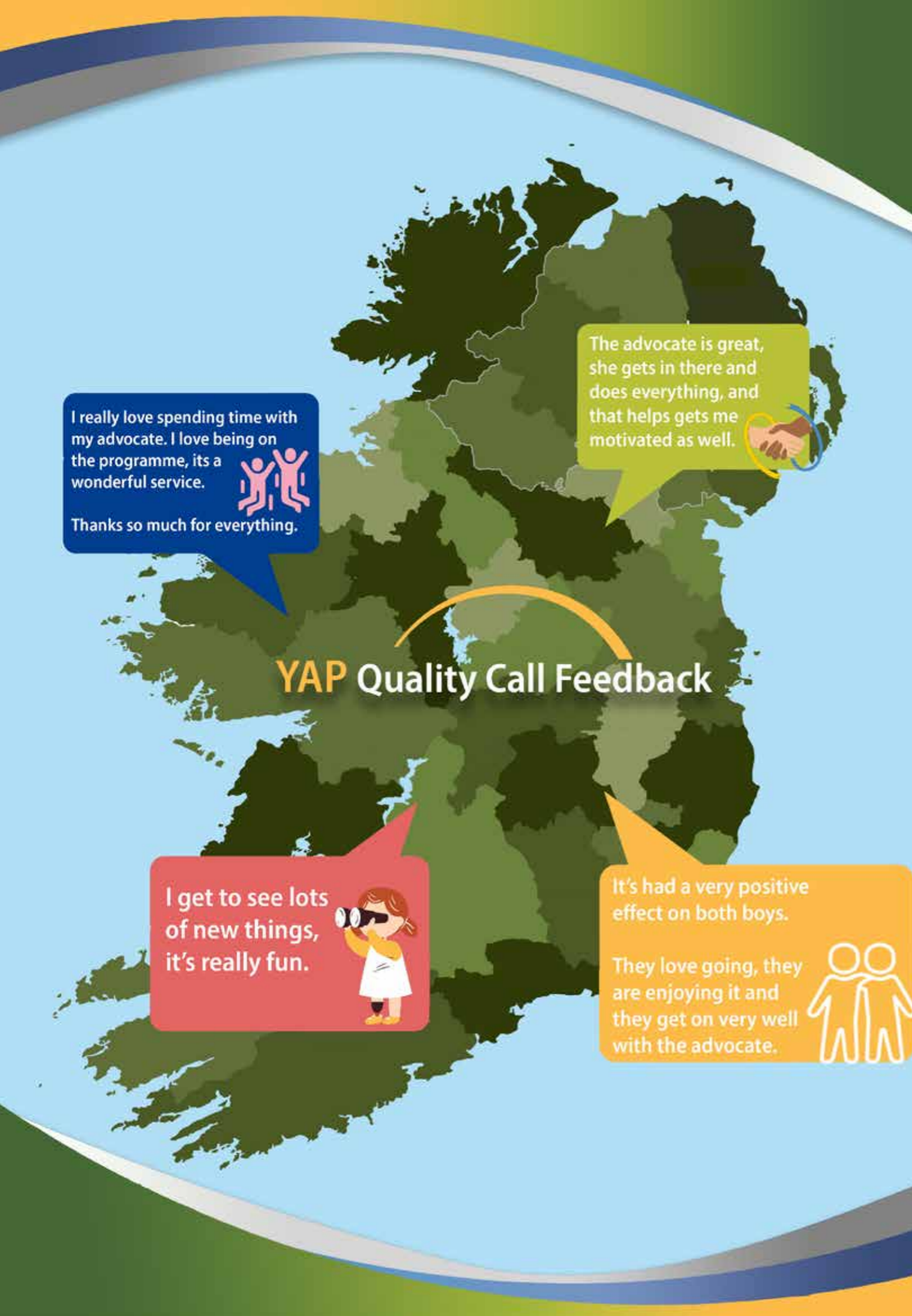




# Youth **Advocate** PROGRAMMES IRELAND

## 2023 Annual Report





I really love spending time with my advocate. I love being on the programme, its a wonderful service.



Thanks so much for everything.

The advocate is great, she gets in there and does everything, and that helps gets me motivated as well.



## YAP Quality Call Feedback

I get to see lots of new things, it's really fun.



It's had a very positive effect on both boys.

They love going, they are enjoying it and they get on very well with the advocate.



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# Foreword

Welcome to the YAP Ireland Annual Report for 2023 which has been an exceptional year for the organisation. This report shows the amazing work carried out to support children, young people and families in achieving their goals. We continue to grow our services within the strengths-based, needs led, goals focused YAP Model. We have also expanded the service through Tusla Education Support Service, ensuring that early intervention is available to young people struggling in education and have worked with Tusla on extended support for Separated Children Seeking International Protection.

Like all organisations we have had change within our team of staff, bringing new skills and experience to the organisation. We continue to attract community-based advocates across the country, bringing a wealth of life experience and skills to the children, young people and families. I want to thank all our great staff and advocates for the innovation, skills and sense of fun they bring to the organisation.

I want to thank Tusla, our main funder and partner, for their support and work throughout the year. The relationships with all levels of the organisation remain strong with our critical voice being valued while we work together in the best interests of children, young people and families.

I also want to thank the HSE Disability and Mental Health Services for their support to increase services – this is an important partnership with potential for huge benefits for children, young people and families. Thanks is also due to Oberstown Children's Detention Campus, St. John of God's and St. Patrick's Hospital for their partnership over the years.

The Board of YAP Ireland provide guidance, support, oversight and skills to the organisation which is much appreciated. We continue to work together to implement the Strategic Plan 23-26 with specific emphasis on increasing the diversity of the Board.

The children, young people and families that we have the privilege to work with deserve our greatest thanks for embracing the service and working with us to change not just their own lives but to influence broader change in society. As ever, they show amazing resilience and strength.

*Siobhán O'Dwyer*

**Siobhán O'Dwyer**  
CEO YAP Ireland



In a world full of noise where young people are subject to a constant stream of twenty-four seven information and content designed to grab and steal their attention, it is more difficult than ever to carve out a space to just be yourself, to be exactly who you are. I believe young people can find the space to be who they are within the safety of their relationship with the Youth Advocate Programmes Ireland.

We tell young people all the time who they need to be, what they need to do and not do, what they should do and be and yet the only thing a young person needs to do or be is to be themselves.

The greatest thing about YAP is that it recognises the individuality of each young person. Young people are not a homogenous group, and so services and society should not treat them as such. The YAP experience is as unique as the young person and the family who journey through it.

The YAP model and its organisation is designed to be agile enough to wrap around the young person without requiring any individual to fit into a service. Recognising the individuality of young people, their stories, strengths, their hopes and their dreams is what YAP does really well.

I am so proud to play a tiny role in the odyssey of the young people who journey through their YAP experience, I am so proud of the advocates and staff who journey with them and help them to navigate and negotiate all that is thrown at them along the way. YAP really see and celebrate the innate value of each person who journeys through the YAP experience.

2023 was quite a year, where we as an organisation navigated many of our own challenges and twists and turns, but guided by YAP's north star which are the young people and their families, we made our way.

Thank you to everyone who came on this journey and may we continue, together to find our way in the future.

*Réidín Dunne*

**Réidín Dunne**  
Chair



# YAP Services

The YAP model is evidence-based, achieving positive outcomes with young people and families within their communities, through the employment of community based advocates.

An individual service plan based on the strengths of the young person and their family is developed and offers a wraparound approach to address the needs of the young person within their family and local community.

YAP's goal is to empower young people and their families and to put in place supports that will remain after programme involvement has ended.

The model is flexible and can be adapted to meet the needs of a wide range of client groups.



## Intensive Support Programme

The Intensive Support Programme provides intensive support of up to 15 hours a week for a 6 month period to young people (8 – 18 years old) and their families to help them achieve their goals.

Young people are primarily referred to our programme by TUSLA and those referred may be at high risk of placement in care, secure care and/or custody, (Levels 3 and 4 on the Hardiker Scale). They may also be experiencing difficulties around their home, education, peer groups, behaviour and/or community.

In 2023 we worked with 427 young people and families through the Intensive Support Programme.

## Independent Advocacy Service (IAS)

The IAS is provided to Child and Adolescent Mental Health community teams and inpatient units by providing both group and individual support to young people and families.

An Independent Mental Health Advocate supports young people and their families to understand the service provided to them both in inpatient units and in the community, and to enhance their participation in service provision, express their views, and make informed decisions.

In 2023 we provided individual support to 66 young people and families and group advocacy to over 100 young people in inpatient units.



## Out of Hours Service

YAP Ireland provides a 24 hour, rapid response support for young people referred by the Tusla Crisis Intervention Service to support their temporary placement and care plan when they find themselves out of home.

This is a short-term intervention with an aim to reduce the immediate risk the young person is facing. Following a needs-assessment the young person and YAP advocate identify activities that support them to stay safe while a care plan is developed.

In 2023 YAP worked with 33 young people accessing out of hours services.



**CAMHS has kept us afloat, YAP has taught us how to swim.**



## Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) intensive support programme

This programme utilises our intensive support model to work with young people who are living in the community and accessing CAMHS services.

The strengths based, wraparound approach leads to increased self-esteem and confidence for Young People and Families increasing their positive engagement in their care plan. The service will support young people and families to deal with issues that have arisen due to their clinical diagnosis and enhance their recovery.

The service is available in the Limerick area and we hope to expand to other CAMHS teams in 2024.

## Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)

YAP Ireland began a pilot with TESS in 2022 to provide intensive support to young people directly referred by Education Welfare Officers.

This early intervention is aimed at addressing the underlying reasons that lead to school refusal, poor attendance and poor educational achievement.

The success of the programme has led to the further rollout across the country with increased funding. In 2023 we worked with 28 young people and families referred by TESS.

*"All tricky cases need this intense level of support! The work they do is incredible, all my families that have finished with them cannot say enough good things about their experience and most importantly the young people are back at school."*

TESS referrer.



*"It's a great programme and one of the only things I look forward to every week."*

TESS Young Person.

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

We provide independent advocacy to young people where the social worker deems that age is a consideration in the assessment of eligibility for Tusla services.

The Independent Advocate supports the young person in understanding the assessment process, linking with appropriate legal and refugee services as well as practical support such as food, transport etc.

The service commenced in April 2023 and we worked with 39 young people.

## New Service

### Separated Children Seeking International Protection (SCSIP Integration Support)

YAP Ireland are setting up a pilot programme to provide intensive support to 50 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children across the country as identified by TUSLA.

The aim is to provide intensive support services for Separated Children Seeking International Protection and Ukrainian Minors who need community-based support to improve Integration & Social inclusion, access to education, health and wellbeing.

In 2024 YAP Ireland will be expanding our services for Separated Children Seeking International Protection beyond the initial support and advocacy relating to eligibility assessments.

YAP will be offering Integration Support to up to 55 young people across the country as identified by TUSLA with the aim of providing intensive support to individual young people (over a 3 month period), focusing on supporting them to access community based support and education to promote better health and well-being and social inclusion.



*"One of the first things we notice when a YAP worker arrives to the social work office to transport a young person, is their warmth and their friendly enthusiasm towards the work and the young people. They are quick to develop rapport with the young people and have always ensured the young person's needs are met while on their transport runs. We've never had a complaint or a concern about any of the YAP workers from the young people or from the carers at the destination point."*

*"The whole team are so grateful to YAP because the YAP workers make it such an easy partnership. The support provided by YAP to the SCSIP service is invaluable. In the interest of the children and the staff, long may that support last!"*

Thomas Dunning, Principal Social Worker for Separated Children Seeking International Protection

## Growth in

### YAPAbility

(Disability and Mental Health Intensive Support Service)

The majority of YAPAbility programme referrals are received from HSE Disability Teams. In 2023 YAP worked with 31 young people and families

The young people who participate in YAPAbility embody resilience and determination, courageously embracing challenges and seizing opportunities for growth. Their willingness to explore new horizons inspires us all and serves as a reminder of the potential within each of us.

Some of our young people have returned to education/training, engaged with independent living skills training, improved their family relationships and started in voluntary and paid employment.



Each year YAP Ireland conducts a Staff Opinion Survey in conjunction with Adare HRM.

The Management at YAP Ireland are committed to listening to feedback from Employees and developing an action plan to manage any suggestions for improvements. In 2023, the response and feedback was once again overwhelmingly positive.

Congratulations to all who play a role in making YAP Ireland a positive place to work, now and into the future!



We are always looking for new people to join our team!

If you are interested in working with YAP Ireland you can visit our careers page via this QR code.

## Working in YAP



95.45%

of Respondents agree or agree strongly that they have been provided with the required training to carry out their role effectively.



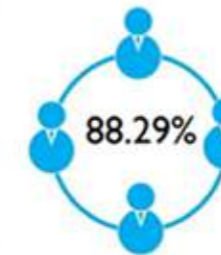
98.20%

of Respondents agreed or agreed strongly that YAP is an enjoyable place to work.



88.28%

of Respondents agreed or agreed strongly that YAP cares about them as an individual.



88.29%

of Respondents agreed or agreed strongly that YAP has good communications throughout the Organisation.



88.28%

of Respondents feel valued within their job at YAP.



87.39%

of Respondents agree or agree strongly that they have the materials and equipment that they need to do their job right.



81.98%

of Respondents agree or agree strongly that they are aware of YAP Ireland's Strategic Plan and how their role fits in with the plans.

84.54%



of Respondents agree or agree strongly that they are given opportunities to learn new skills to help them develop in their current role.

87.28%



of Respondents agree or agree strongly that there is room for them to develop further in their current role.



80%

of Respondents agree or agree strongly that they have access to peer support and colleagues who help develop in their role.



72.73%

of Respondents agree or agree strongly that they are aware of the Internal Training and Educational Assistance Program in YAP and how to access it.

# Evidence Based Tools

## Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief emotional and behavioural screening questionnaire for young people and parents/carers. The 25 questions in the SDQ measure 5 different types of strengths and difficulties.

This a widely used tool that helps to identify how young people and parents/guardians view their difficulties and measures improvements over time.

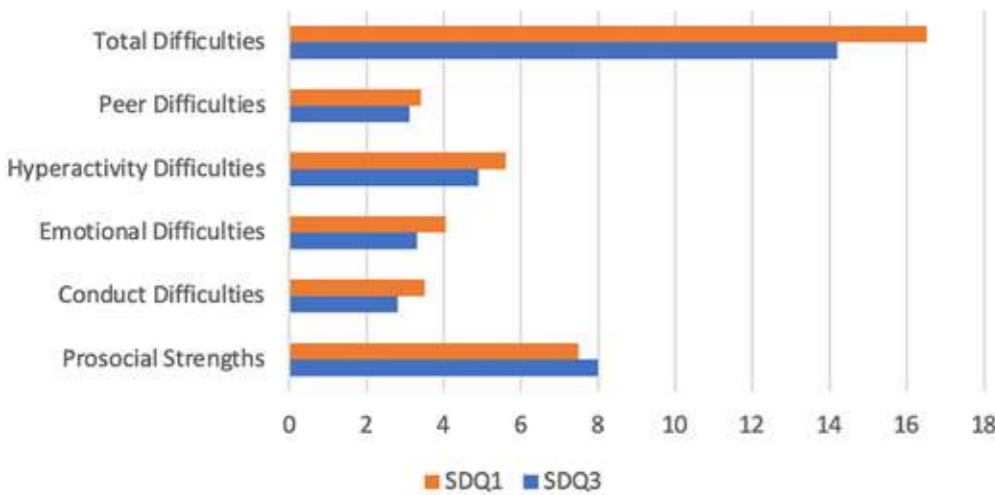
### 5 Strengths and Difficulties measured:

- Pro-social Behaviours
- Conduct Problems
- Hyperactivity
- Emotional Symptoms
- Peer Problems

### How does it work?

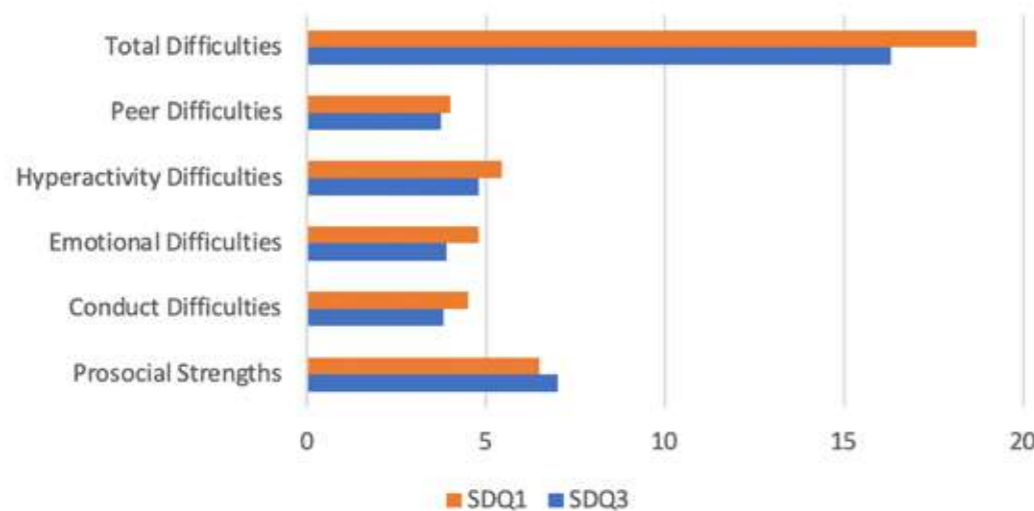
The first SDQ (SDQ1) is given to the young person and parent within the first two weeks of the programme starting. The third SDQ (SDQ3) is given to the young person and parent at the end of the programme.

Young People's SDQ1 Vs SDQ3



This (left) bar graph demonstrates that young people who completed SDQ1 and SDQ3 felt the difficulties they had experienced had reduced since receiving YAP support, and that they had increased their pro-social strengths.

Parents'/Guardians' SDQ1 Vs SDQ3



This (right) bar graph illustrates that Parents who completed SDQ1 and SDQ3 felt the difficulties their Young People had experienced had reduced since receiving YAP support, and that their Young Person had increased their pro-social strengths.

## What did we find?

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires from young people and their parents/guardians on the YAP programme from 2013 to 2023 were analysed.

The analysis shows that there is a decrease in young people's difficulties scores across the difficulties themes at the end of the YAP programme when compared with the start of the programme.

Similarly, the graphs (left) demonstrate an improvement in parents'/guardians' ratings of the difficulties that young people experienced at the beginning of the YAP programme. Again, we can see a consistent decrease in difficulties from the beginning of the YAP programme to the end.

## Quality Assurance

YAP Ireland carries out quality calls and questionnaires with parents/carers, young people and referring agencies to evaluate their experience with the YAP service.

In 2023, 87% of young people had positive feedback, 87% of parents/carers gave YAP a satisfaction score of 4 or more out of 5 and 94% of Social Workers said they would recommend YAP to a colleague.



The advocate is very helpful, feels like I have backup. They listen differently, its like advice.



The programme is helping me in building confidence for parenting my kids.

# Cohorts & Outcomes

## Who we work with

In 2023 91% of children and young people with whom we worked remained at home at the end of the programme. The model continues to achieve positive outcomes for children, young people and families.

## Cohort

The Cohort information is for 4,109 young people and families who YAP Ireland have worked with across all programmes between January 2011 and October 2023.

## Outcomes

Outcomes are recorded for young people over four domains: Self, Family, Education/Employment or Training & Safety/Behaviour.

The outcome rating is on a scale of 1 – 9, with 1 indicating significant issues, 4 some difficulties, 5 is a medium point and 6 – 9 showing some or significant improvements. Percentage improvements represent the percentage of young people who have moved from some or significant difficulties at the outset to some or significant improvements by the end of the programme.

## Ethnicity

79% were classified as Irish, with 4% being members of the Irish Travelling community. 5% were from an African or Asian background and 4% were Eastern European, while for 7% nationality was not recorded. The remaining 1% came from another nationality background.

## Current Placement

61% of young people were living at home when they started the programme. 12% lived with extended family, with 15% in foster care, 5% lived in residential care or supported lodgings.

Of the 1,841 living at home at the start of the programme, 1,636 (or 89%) remained at home at the end of their time with YAP, while a further 69 (4%) were living with extended family.

## Gender and Age

55% of referrals to YAP are male and 45% are female. 4% are aged <10, 17% 10-12, 48% are aged 13-15, 26% are 15-17 and 4% are aged 18+.

## Education

81% of young people engaged with YAP Ireland are in education while 19% are not in education. Of those in education, 84% are attending school regularly.

## Mental Health Diagnosis

63% of young people referred to YAP Ireland have no mental health diagnosis, with 30% having a mental health diagnosis and 7% awaiting assessment.

## Household Circumstances

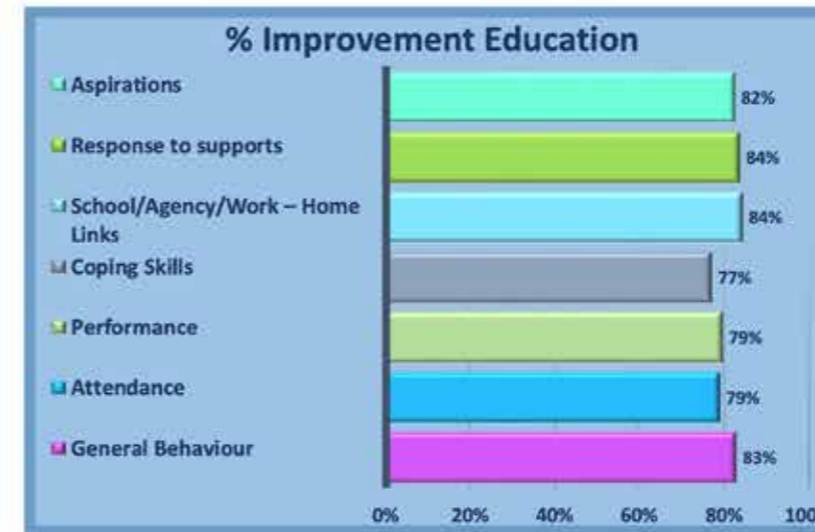
64% of those living at home are living in a single parent household, with 36% living in a two-parent household. 68% of primary carers have full medical cards and 5% have a GP only medical card. 43% of clients have a history of drug or alcohol misuse in their immediate family. 20% had an immediate family member convicted.



It's been very good for me and my grandson.

I'm his Nanny, we have a lot of difficulties with the family.

The support and being able to talk to someone has been great.



# Participation & Consultation

YAP Ireland is committed to providing access to participation for all young people and families that work with us. We believe that participation provides young people and families with confidence to speak out and opportunities to have their views heard within their services and the wider community.

Participation can take many forms with young people and families setting their own agendas, choosing their own activities and themes, and deciding what they want the goals to be.

I feel more confident in myself and when I am speaking to people.

## External Consultation

In March 2023, young people and families from YAP met with the Board of the Mental Health Commission as part of their stakeholder forum. They spoke about their experiences of CAMHS services to feed into the report on CAMHS published by the Mental Health Commission in July 2023. Our young people and parents are very proud to have been part of this very important process.

CEO, Siobhán O'Dwyer along with colleagues from the community and voluntary sector met with Minister Roderic O'Gorman in November regarding the crisis in Tusla leading to young people being placed in inappropriate placements. The voice and real experience of young people and their families was brought into the room with real life examples and the importance of putting young people and families at the heart of all Government departments was emphasised.

Siobhán also participated in the HIQA and MHC focus groups on developing a self appraisal tool to support services to implement the National Standards in Health and Social Care services. Carly Quinlan, Team Leader worked with HIQA and the MHC on developing child friendly resources to explain the National Standards including facilitating consultation with young people from YAP in 2024.



## Parent Forum/ Groups

YAP Ireland runs a Parents Forum each year where parent /carers from across the country have an opportunity to come together to work on various projects.

In 2023 there were two parents' forum days one in April and another in December with a total of 72 attendees. The Parents Forum worked on consultation on the Participation Strategy as well as consulting on the theme for 2024. They also took part in discussions about the practicalities of having a service user on the Board of YAP Ireland in the future.

## Youth Forum

YAP Ireland runs a Youth Forum each year where young people from all around the country come together to work on various projects of their own choosing. Projects are then presented by the participants at the National Event in Croke Park.

In 2023 we held three Youth Forum events, in April, July and November. Overall, we had a total of 181 participants at the Youth Forum Events in 2023, up from 157 in 2022. The group worked on the theme for 2023; *Sustainability – in friendships, family and community*, and also worked on choosing a theme for 2024. They also created a sustainable library and friendship bracelets which they showcased at the National Event in Croke Park in August.

## Young Recruiters

YAP Ireland are committed to having young people on all interview panels for all roles. To achieve this we carry out training for young people around the country twice a year to ensure that there is always a group ready to participate on interview panels as the need arises.

The benefit for young people is that they gain experience of the interview process that prepares them for interviews themselves. The benefit for YAP is to see how well candidates can relate to young people, as this will be an integral part of their role.

A total of 18 young people sat on interview panels around the country in 2023.

# Governance & Finance

YAP Ireland is a registered charity and is signed up to the Charities Regulator Governance Code.

This code outlines the minimum standards we should meet to effectively manage and control the charity. Good governance ensures that systems and processes are in place so that we achieve our charitable objectives with integrity and to ensure that the organisation is managed in an effective, accountable, and transparent way.

The Board of YAP Ireland is responsible for maintaining YAP's adherence to the Charities Regulator Governance Code.

YAP Ireland Board Members are volunteers and come from all walks of life, bringing with them a wide range of expertise from financial accounting, information technology, law and education among others.



## YAP Board Members 2023

| Name                  | Office            | Meetings Attended | Joined YAP Board |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Réidín Dunne          | Chair             | 3                 | 2017             |
| Barry Martin          | Outgoing Director | 1                 | 2018             |
| Philip O'Callaghan    | Secretary         | 4                 | 2018             |
| Danielle Erica Curtis | Director          | 1                 | 2019             |
| Laura Curran          | Director          | 2                 | 2019             |
| Tremaine Teddy Reese  | Director          | 0                 | 2022             |
| Janet Lincoln         | Director          | 3                 | 2022             |
| Eva Gurn              | Director          | 4                 | 2022             |
| Gordon Walsh          | Director          | 3                 | 2022             |
| Brendan Feehan        | Incoming Director | 4                 | 2023             |
| Nives Paic            | Incoming Director | 3                 | 2023             |
| Melissa Lynch         | Incoming Director | 3                 | 2023             |
| Thomas Fedigan        | Incoming Director | 0                 | 2023             |

Complete audited accounts for YAP Ireland for 2022 are available to view on our website at: <https://yapireland.ie/research-publications/>.

Audited accounts for 2023 will be published in due course. YAP Ireland accounts are prepared under Charity SORP (FRS102)



# YAP National Event 2023

In August 2023 YAP Ireland held our annual National Event at Croke Park, Dublin.

Young people, parents, families, advocates, staff and stakeholders presented under our theme of 'Sustainability; in friendships, families, environment and communities.'

The day was filled with fantastic projects, singing and jokes, as well important speeches from former advocates, board members and representatives from other organisations with a focus on improving social care across Ireland.



## Cork



YAP Cork showcased some wonderful ideas they had over the year for promoting Sustainability, which included learning about fast fashion and growing food from advocates Claudia and Declan.

There were also art activities, visits to the beach as well as trips to second-hand clothing shops, outdoor activities like forest zip-lining and much more!

## Dublin



We had two lovely publications from the Dublin participation and Dublin Parent's groups at the YAP National Event. Created by the North Dublin participation group and Dublin South parent's group, the booklets focus on self-care and conflict resolution respectively.

There was also a video presentation of a sensory garden created by the North Dublin Parents group and a performance of 'Forever Young' by young people Daisy and Sophie, which received an encore at the end of the day.

## Meath /Louth



The Meath/Louth group's video contained all sorts of great sustainability activities and fun projects, including a trip to the Kilogram Sustainability clothing shop in Navan, where they spoke to the manager and learned about the store.

They also had talks on wildlife areas and visited Kells recycling centre where site manager Christine gave them a guided tour.

## Sligo / Mayo



The Irish Raptor Research Centre was established in 1999 as an institution for research on birds of prey, and in 2003 parts of the area were opened to the public.

We really enjoyed our time at Eagles Flying and recommend it to everyone!

YAP Sligo Mayo presented their National Event video all about their trip to Eagles Flying, a bird sanctuary in Northern Ireland.

While there, the group learned all sorts of interesting facts about birds of prey across Ireland!

## Waterford/ Wexford

YAP Waterford and Wexford's sustainability project came in three parts, hosted by various members of the group.

The young people focused on sustainability in wellbeing and creativity, environment and relationships, sharing all the wonderful art they produced, acts of kindness they performed and trips they went on as part of their project!



## Limerick



YAP Limerick were busy with their projects titled 'sustainable fun' which involved crafts, music, sports and activities. One really impressive project was their sustainable table, which they not only brought to life with amazing paints and decoration, but also brought to Croke Park stadium on the day of the event!

The presentation ended with the message of the group looking forward to more fun and adventures in the future.

## Cavan / Monaghan



Scan the QR Code above to view all the presentations from the 2023 National Event via the YAP Ireland Youtube channel.



YAP Cavan Monaghan had a fantastic presentation, featuring all their fun and engaging participation activities over the year. Their accompanying video was a brilliant showcase of all the fun and learning the year contained for the group.

The group even brought their sustainable bicycle to Croke Park on the day of the event, which was brought to life from all the drawings and signatures by attendees on the day.



I like that it offers me a lot of services, for school, for myself.

The advocate is always there to provide for me, it's like having a sibling.



### Acknowledgements

YAP Ireland would like to thank our partners and funders in particular TUSLA Child and Family Services, HSE and YAP Inc. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the Board of Directors, the Staff and Advocates who contribute to the effective running of the organisation.

Last but not least, we want to thank the children, young people and families for working with us and welcoming us into their lives - it is a privilege.



One of the best services I have ever received. They are helping not just me, but also my family; to rebuild relationships.

Everybody is getting support.



I've started a pre-apprenticeship course.





# Annual Report

## 2023



Funded by:



An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

**Charity Registration Number:** 20071462

**Company Registration Number:** 468697

**Charity Number:** CHY18562

[www.yapireland.ie](http://www.yapireland.ie)

