



The Creative Youth Plan – Policy context and briefing, September 2022

Contents

1.	Introduction	2
1.1	Creative Ireland Programme 2017 - 2022 – Background	2
1.2	Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027	2
1.3	Creative Youth – Background	3
1.4	Creative Youth – summary of progress to date	4
2.	Creative Youth in the Community	6
2.1	Local Creative Youth Partnerships (LCYPs)	6
2.2	Cruinniú na nÓg	7
2.3	Youth Theatre	7
2.4	Fighting Words	8
2.5	Creative Technology	9
2.6	Music Generation	10
2.7	Group/Choral Singing	10
3.	Creative Youth in the Education System	12
3.1	Creative Schools	12
3.2	Creative Clusters	13
3.3	Teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	13
3.4	Arts in Education Charter / Arts in Education Portal	14
3.5	Creative Engagement Programme of the NAPD	16
3.6	Early Learning and Care	16
3.7	Bringing Live Arts to Schools and Teachers (BLAST)	18
4.	Other Initiatives and Supports (smaller scale)	18
4.1.	Other Creative Youth supported initiatives	18
4.2.	Other Creative Ireland Programme supports	19

1. Introduction

1.1 Creative Ireland Programme 2017 - 2022 – Background

In December 2016, the government approved a new all-of-government initiative entitled Clár Éire Ildánach/Creative Ireland Programme as a legacy project arising from the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, and as the main implementation vehicle for national cultural policy priorities. Originally a 5-year initiative, the Creative Ireland Programme has sought to place creativity at the centre of public policy.

The Programme is a high-level, ambitious, all-of-government initiative to mainstream creativity in the life of the nation. The core proposition is that participation in cultural and creative activity promotes individual, community and national wellbeing.

The programme seeks to support each citizen – whether individually or collectively, in our personal lives or in our institutions – to realise our full creative potential, by encouraging, facilitating and supporting collaboration in order to cultivate a diverse, accessible and creative cultural ecosystem that sustains wellbeing for all.

The Creative Ireland Programme 2017 - 2022 is based on 5 pillars:

- *Pillar 1 - Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child*
- *Pillar 2 - Enabling Creativity in Every Community*
- *Pillar 3 - Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure*
- *Pillar 4 - Ireland as a Centre of Excellence for the Creative Industries*
- *Pillar 5 - Unifying our Global Reputation*

The Creative Ireland Programme is also supporting the development of initiatives and inter-Departmental partnerships, to promote the impact and benefits which creativity can have on addressing wider societal issues such as health and wellbeing, positive ageing and communication surrounding climate change.

In addition, the Programme was integral to the government response to citizens needs during the COVID-19 crisis – supporting immediate responses such as the #InThisTogether and #CreateAtHome initiatives, as well as providing a support and advisory role under the Government’s COVID Resilience and Recovery 2021 plan.

1.2 Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027

In early 2022, the government committed to the vision that everyone should have the chance to realise their full creative potential and therefore announced that the innovative all-of-government culture and wellbeing programme would be extended, in principle, for five more years.

The Creative Ireland 2023-2027 programme will focus on the following areas:

- Creative Youth

- Creative Communities
- Creative Industries
- Creative Health and Wellbeing
- Creative Climate Action and Sustainability

It is anticipated that a final framework of Clár Éire Ildánach/Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027 will be brought to Government for its final agreement in autumn 2022 prior to its publication, launch and implementation on an all-of-government basis.

1.3 Creative Youth – Background

The Creative Youth Plan was published in December 2017 and aimed to give every child practical access to tuition, experience and participation in art, music, drama and coding by 2022.

The key objectives of Creative Youth, and those measures which have been supported as part of its implementation, are to:

- Expand young people’s **access** to creative initiatives and activities,
- Focus on the **inclusion** of every child, and
- Support **positive and sustainable outcomes** for children and young people through creative engagement across formal and non-formal settings.

The Plan works across:

- Schools: Enhancing arts and creativity initiatives in schools and early years settings.
- Teacher CPD: Increasing and enhancing teacher continuing professional development opportunities across primary, post-primary and early years settings.
- Out-of-School: Improving cross-sectoral collaboration to support creativity for children and young people in the community.

The Core Principles of Creative Youth are:

- i. The Voice of the Child and Young Person is vital: A core principle in the Plan is that the voice of children and young people should be heard in both the development and delivery of programmes. Through the Hub na nÓg structure, (which is supported by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth) this is built into the various elements of the Plan.
- ii. Collaboration: Working together across government and with various stakeholders means we are increasing the impact of our individual efforts and achieving the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
- iii. Innovation: It is important that we honour the overall commitments made in the Creative Youth Plan. We are also, however, prepared to learn and adapt as we roll out that plan, to be open to change and new ideas to progress creative practice and thinking across our education system and across the non-formal system. We are prepared to try new things, take risks and expand the programme.

- iv. Inclusivity: We will ensure as we roll out Creative Youth that we reach as many children and young people as possible, especially those in disadvantaged areas and those seldom heard. This commitment will run through all elements of the Programme.
- v. Evaluation: As we develop new initiatives, robust monitoring mechanisms will be put in place to capture data and ensure we are delivering best practice initiatives and value for money. These mechanisms will allow effectiveness and impact of initiatives to be measured and allow the Programme to evolve to better achieve its aims. This will be a feature of all elements of the Programme.

While creativity is commonly associated with the arts, it is important to identify that creativity in the context of the Creative Ireland Programme should be considered more widely. Creativity is the use of imaginative capabilities to transform thinking and produce original and innovative ideas and solutions. It involves collaboration, investigation, challenging assumptions and taking risks and there are opportunities for creativity to be expressed in not only music, drama and visual art but also in writing and learning languages, in mathematics and sciences and in designing, making and entrepreneurial activities.

Throughout 2022, work has been ongoing across Government Departments in the development of the *Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027*.

1.4 Creative Youth – summary of progress to date

The Creative Youth Plan contains 18 specific actions – the following summarises some of the key areas where significant progress has been made since the publication of the Plan in December 2017:

- *Cruinniú na nÓg* – the national day of free creative activities for children and young people was launched and rolled out in partnership with every local authority. To date, the Creative Ireland Programme has run four very successful *Cruinniú na nÓg* days – including a wholly online and virtual event in 2020 and 2021. In 2022, *Cruinniú na nÓg* returned in person on the 11th June, with over 650 events that took place nationwide.
- Pilot *Local Creative Youth Partnerships* (LCYPs) were established in conjunction with 3 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in 2019, seeking to develop closer local networking and provide more opportunities for young people to engage with creative activities out of school – particularly those most disadvantaged. A further 3 pilots were established in July 2021.
- Under the Creative Ireland Programme, Music Generation has continued to grow and expand, establishing Local Music Education Partnerships in remaining areas Kerry, Kildare, Longford, Meath, Tipperary, Dublin City, Fingal and Limerick County, with Cork County due to commence by year end 2022.
- The pilot *Creative Schools* initiative was developed, launched and rolled out. With support from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and the Department of Education, the programme is managed by the Arts Council. Round 5 is due to commence in September 2022 – having already supported over 640 schools to experience a new creative journey since the programme was introduced in 2018.

- A new *Creative Clusters* Programme was rolled out – as part of the Schools Excellence Fund initiative of the Department of Education. Creative Clusters encourages collaboration among 3-5 schools to address common issues through a creative project. With almost 300 schools having participated to round 4 in the 2021/2022 academic year, round 5 will commence in September 2022 with an additional 78 schools across 21 full-time Education Support Centres
- Full training in accessing the *voice of the child* has been provided to those delivering initiatives such as Creative Schools, Creative Clusters and the LCYP pilots as well as helping to inform the development of programmes for Cruinniú na nÓg.
- Support for *Teacher CPD* for primary and post-primary schools with research undertaken to support the development of a new early years CPD model.
- Projects that help increase access to out-of-school provision have been supported – including in the areas of music education, creative writing, creative technology and youth drama.

In 2020 and 2021, the direct Exchequer investment in the Creative Youth Plan (by the Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media, Education and Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth and the Arts Council) has been over €6m annually. In addition, provision of approx. €1m is made available each year for the hosting of Cruinniú na nÓg (this increased to €1.7m in 2022). As a direct response to the COVID-19 crisis, a further allocation of approximately €1m was also made available on a once-off basis in 2020. In addition to this “core” funding for Creative Youth initiatives, the Department of Education has also provided significantly increased funding to support the nationwide roll-out of Music Generation of €7m on an annual basis.

As part of a broader deliberation on its future, the [Creative Youth Conference 2021](#) (and three on-line workshops in the lead up to it) provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to reflect on progress to date and input their views concerning the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Through examining the impact that Creative Youth has had to date, the conference asked what steps are needed – across all sectors of government and society – to ensure young people are provided with equitable access to the arts, culture and creative activities; to be provided with the opportunities to grow, learn and develop into the (creative) citizens of the future.

Further information on a range of initiatives that have been developed and/or supported to help deliver the Creative Youth Plan are outlined in detail below.

2. Creative Youth in the Community

2.1 Local Creative Youth Partnerships (LCYPs)

Action 14 of the Creative Youth Plan states that [Local Creative Youth Partnerships](#) will be established on a pilot basis within Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

The aim of the Partnerships is to provide out-of-school creative activities for young people by bringing together the whole local infrastructure. This includes Youth Officers and other relevant personnel, Local Authorities (Arts Officers, Creative Ireland Coordinators, Heritage Officers, Librarians etc.), Education Centres, representatives of the local Early Years sector (County Childcare Committee), representatives of the non-formal education sector, and local cultural and creativity resources such as arts centres etc.

The target audience for all LCYP programmes are children and young people in local communities (within the ETB's geographical remit) in 'out of school' settings with a particular focus on those who are marginalised or experience disadvantage. They are an opportunity for the ETB to forge new partnerships with local cultural and creative partners and to act as change agents within their local communities.

In 2019, three pilot LCYPs were chosen following an application process:

- *Kerry Education and Training Board*
- *Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board*
- *Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board*

The remit of LCYPs goes beyond that of the arts, and includes cultural and creative activity in all spheres (arts, heritage, STEM, entrepreneurship etc.).

Each LCYP was required to conduct an initial youth consultation, to help better inform the Partnership in working out the details of a work plan – the voice of children and young people remains core to a LCYP. The work of each of the pilots in this regard is supported by Hub na nÓg. Key to their work to date has been a targeting of seldom heard cohorts – they have engaged with family resource centres, traveller youth, Garda Youth Diversion projects, young people in direct provision, homeless young people, LGBTQ+ and those with disabilities by way of example.

In July 2021 the Minister for Education announced the establishment of the next three Local Creative Youth Partnerships in the following regions:

- Cork Education and Training Board
- Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board
- Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board

These new partnerships, which commenced in mid-2021, brings the total number of LCYPs to six.

2.2 Cruinniú na nÓg

[Cruinniú na nÓg](#) is Ireland's national day of free creative activities for children and young people under 18 years of age. One of the actions contained within the Creative Youth Plan, Cruinniú was first established in 2018 to provide all young people with increased opportunities to experience free creative activities within their own communities.

The primary objectives of Cruinniú are to:

- empower young people to develop their creative potential by providing opportunities for them to participate in free creative activities in their local communities;
- increase awareness of the benefits of participation in creative activities;
- encourage collaboration between local authorities and creative practitioners in their area.

The 31 local authorities have been the main delivery partners for Cruinniú, concentrating on the development and delivery of bespoke programmes of activities for their local area, traditionally delivered "in-person" through local authority facilities. The Creative Ireland Programme supports Cruinniú with investment of circa. €1m annually and a total of €1.7m in 2022.

Cruinniú na nÓg held, 500 free in person events and activities in 2018, 780 events in 2019 and over 650 in 2022 across all local authorities. The re-imagining of Cruinniú na nÓg as an online event in 2020 both challenged the original concept for additional strategic partners but also presented significant opportunities. The Creative Ireland Programme Team took on a producing role as the 2020 event pivoted online. Some 500 events took place online in each of 2020 and 2021. In addition to the collaboration with local authorities, strategic partnerships have developed with a range of national bodies to deliver innovative opportunities for young people of all ages to engage on Cruinniú and to place young people at the centre of the events as co-creators.

2.3 Youth Theatre

Action 8 of the Creative Youth Plan commits to "*measures will be developed to expand participation in drama/theatre outside of school, primarily by expansion of youth theatre*", and recognises the importance of youth theatre in supporting and developing young people's personal development and wellbeing, critical and active citizenship, imaginations, and creative thinking.

Youth Theatre Ireland (YTI) is the national development organisation for youth theatre, supporting a network of youth theatres who deliver year-round programmes of drama workshops and performance opportunities to young people aged 12-21.

The [YTI project supported by Creative Ireland](#) seeks to achieve the following:

- Establish a range of new local partnerships and build key relationships to expand YTI in new areas, facilitated by a YTI Development Officer.
- Provides a structured training programme (including QQI accredited training in youth drama facilitation practice) to support the development of quality youth theatre practice.

- Provides ‘taster’ workshops for young people in local youth service and other appropriate settings.
- Supports the establishment of 3 new youth theatre groups (in Dublin, as well as Offaly and Westmeath - two counties where no YTI-affiliated group currently existed).

The project is co-funded by the Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth. In 2020, the Creative Ireland Programme funded Youth Theatre Ireland to work with As I Am (the national autism charity) to develop resources which provide youth theatre facilitators with the confidence to plan and deliver workshops which are inclusive of young people with autism and other neurodiverse conditions.

In 2021 and 2022, further funding is being provided by both departments to support youth theatre groups to re-engage current members and increase attendance at youth theatres while operating remotely. This has allowed youth theatre groups to re-open for in-person work following COVID-19 and to help increase membership. In recognition of the difficulties encountered during COVID-19, provision is being made to support the wellbeing of leaders and young people involved in youth theatre. As a continuation of the work carried out under the Creative Youth Plan, it is intended to support the development of new youth theatre groups in underserved areas of the community to diversify the membership of youth theatre Ireland and to provide training for new youth theatre leaders.

2.4 Fighting Words

Fighting Words has provided free tutoring, mentoring and publishing in creative writing for more than 250,000 children and young people around the country since 2009. The model has been shown to positively impact on personal, social and academic development with participants demonstrating increased levels of engagement not just with creative writing but also with the whole school experience, leading to improved motivation, confidence, self-esteem, pride in creative ability, a greater ability to work collaboratively, and improved literacy. Much of the service is delivered by volunteers and much of the practical work is provided on a pro bono basis. They currently have 1,200 trained volunteer tutors around the country. Many of Ireland’s most well respected artists have volunteered for the Fighting Words project.

Fighting Words aim to reach every child and adult in the country. To support this objective, the Creative Ireland Programme has partnered with the organisation since 2019 to assist in realising national coverage, with additional support from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to initiate an Irish language version of the programme.

At the time of writing, there are 23 Fighting Words venues around the country. In Dublin there is the Dublin centre, the National Coordination centre, and a presence on the Dublin City University campus working with student teachers. Fighting Words is also in Cork, Galway, Wicklow, Kildare, Longford, Kerry, Wexford, Mayo, Donegal, Laois, Clare, Limerick, Louth, Monaghan, and in the Gaeltacht areas

of Conamara, Uí Rathach in Kerry, and Gaoth Dobhair in Donegal. Fighting Words also operates in Northern Ireland, in Belfast, Coleraine and Derry in Northern Ireland.

During 2020 and 2021, the Creative Ireland Programme supported Fighting Words to provide a large range of online supports to young people, their families and schools as in person workshops were postponed due to public health restrictions. These supports included an initiative (*That One Time*) to draw together a collection of writing reflecting the experiences, thoughts and ideas of frontline workers and their families, as well as playing a role for Cruinniú na nÓg by partnering with the Great Lighthouses of Ireland for the *Become a Young Story Keeper initiative*, and engaging professional creative writers to develop online resources, such as “how to” videos and genre-based instruction manuals.

In 2021, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth approved funding to extend the impact of Fighting Words’ *Story Seeds* programme to 14,000 children and young people. The programme is designed to help young people articulate their life stories so that they can understand their experiences and place in the world. Through creative writing, *Story Seeds* strengthens positivity in children and helps them to reimagine the negatives in their lives and transform their sense of place and possibility. Operating through many genres of creative writing, this funding has extended the *Story Seeds* programme beyond Dublin’s north inner city into Dublin West, Dublin south inner city, Bray/Wicklow, Drogheda, Cork City, Limerick City in 2021 and 2022. Multiple publications have ensued to date, podcasts have been recorded, and a film record of the project is ongoing.

As one example of the power of the *Story Seeds* programme, at the specific request of the Garda community liaison unit in Drogheda, Fighting Words works with Drogheda United football club and St. Oliver’s Community College, Drogheda where 28 Transition Year students, girls and boys, had sports writing workshops with journalist David Kelly, attended training and matches and interviewed the players. The pieces the teenagers wrote were published by Fighting Words and by the club in match programmes, and the young writers spoke about the project on LMFM radio.

Fighting Words commenced in 2022 with a renewed commitment to reactivate in-person workshops all around the country, with further support from the Creative Ireland Programme. This is progressing very well to date, with a wide range of programmes, publications, and several new regional locations seeking to become established.

2.5 Creative Technology

The Creative Ireland Programme has been working in partnership with [Kinia](#) on a pilot programme supporting the delivery of creative technology projects in out-of-school settings. Primarily this has enabled young people (in particular teens and those at greater risk of marginalisation) to take part in a range of technology projects and experiences, designed for both engagement itself but also with an eye to supporting interest in future technologies and skills development.

A Digital Needs analysis was conducted by Kinia from January – June 2021 which received 88 responses from youth settings across 19 counties. The [report](#) was published in June 2021 and highlighted the need of youth settings to provide these opportunities for young people. Creativity and technology are areas that have experienced accelerated growth and are emerging as a key driver to future community development and opportunity. By enhancing the existing plans and programmes of youth settings through the creative application of technology, the programme hopes to achieve positive outcomes and the development of future skills for young people.

Kinia have been working with the organisations that responded to the needs analysis along with others identified by Tusla, CYPSCs, ETBI, and Local Authorities in the form of training and equipment. An interim report of the work completed in 2021 is available [here](#).

The development of micro-credentials to provide a progression route through defined creative technology skills is a priority for 2022.

2.6 Music Generation

Music Generation is Ireland’s National Music Education Programme that aims to transform the lives of children and young people through access to high quality performance music education in their locality. Initiated by Music Network, Music Generation has been co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, the Department of Education and Local Music Education Partnerships. The national roll-out of Music Generation is one of the actions contained in the Creative Youth Plan.

During the first phase of commencement (2010 – 2015), the programme was established in 11 Local Music Education Partnership areas (Carlow, Clare, Cork City, Laois, Limerick City, Louth, Mayo, Offaly/Westmeath, Sligo, South Dublin and Wicklow).

A second phase of the programme has seen Music Generation established in a further 9 Local Music Education Partnership areas (Cavan/Monaghan, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Galway City, Galway County, Kilkenny, Leitrim, Roscommon, Waterford and Wexford).

In December 2017, as part of the Creative Ireland Programme, Government announced its commitment to support the roll-out of Music Generation nationwide by 2022. (Kerry, Kildare, Meath, Longford, Tipperary, Dublin City, Fingal, Limerick County, and Cork County).

Locally, the programmes are managed by Music Education Partnerships, under the leadership of Music Development Officers. An evaluation of this programme is due to be completed in late 2022.

2.7 Group/Choral Singing

Action 9 of the Creative Youth Plan is a commitment that *“a strategy to develop and extend choral singing will be developed. The Creative Ireland Programme will work with key partners to develop a programme aimed at encouraging creative and sustainable engagement with singing and choral music*

for young people". The Creative Ireland Programme partnered with Sing Ireland whose mission is to develop and support all forms of group singing in Ireland.

Phase 1 of the project was undertaken in 2018, which sought to consult and build the case for *YouthSing Ireland* – this included commissioning of a piece of research now available in the publications section of www.creativeireland.gov.ie.¹

The project then proceeded to deliver newly composed and developed resources in Irish or of Irish cultural heritage, specifically commissioned for YouthSing Ireland and designed to be used in formal (classroom) and informal settings (outside of the classroom). The new pieces are by Seán Doherty, Róisín Blunnie, and Anne-Marie O'Farrell and are available [here](#). These resources are intended to give access to fun and developmental resources to be used by teachers, musicians, and young people.

Following delays due to Covid-19, SingSpace workshops commenced in May 2022 in Athlone, Newbridge and Ballymun. Details on SingSpace is available [here](#).

Initial outcomes of pilot SingSpaces:

- At the time of writing, 1,171 young people took part in the following SingSpaces that had taken place.
- The SingSpaces took place in both rural and urban settings including schools from Longford, Leitrim, Roscommon, Westmeath, Meath, Galway, Dublin, and Kildare.
- The participants were drawn from mainstream as well as DEIS schools, and from a variety of contexts: national schools, Gaelscoileanna, and Educate Together.
- 31 Teachers benefitted from a professional development experience that led to the development of confidence and skills for the teachers to further develop their classroom singing in their schools.
- Teachers experienced the development of musical knowledge, vocal technique and conducting skills.
- Young people were involved in performing together with other singers from other schools in their regions.
- Young people were involved in developing their individual creative voice in the co-creation of new music.
- Young people, through performance, engaged with fundamental elements of choral singing such as pitch, rhythm, sound, blend, interpretation, and expression.
- Young people developed their understanding of Irish cultural heritage and language.

¹ <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2019/12/Creative-Ireland-and-Youth-Singing-in-Ireland-Helen-Doyle-research-paper-2019.pdf>

3. Creative Youth in the Education System

3.1 Creative Schools

Creative Schools is led by the Arts Council in partnership with the Department of Education, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth. <https://www.artscouncil.ie/creative-schools/>

Creative Schools support schools/Youth Reach centres to put the arts and creativity at the heart of children's and young people's lives. It provides opportunities for children and young people to build their artistic and creative skills; to communicate, collaborate, stimulate their imaginations, be inventive, and to harness their curiosity. It aims to empower children and young people to develop, implement and evaluate arts and creative activity throughout their schools/centres and stimulate additional ways of working that reinforce the impact of creativity on children and young people's learning, development and well-being.

Creative Schools provides tangible supports for schools to embrace these developments by placing the arts and creativity at the centre of school life. Each participating school/centre is supported by a Creative Associate for nine days over the school year. The Creative Associate works with the school to carry out an analysis of their current engagement with the arts and creativity. Using this they create a sustainable Creative Schools Plan which draws on a range of opportunities within the school/centre and the wider community.

Creative Associates respond to each school's priorities and needs and supports them to deepen the creative opportunities for children and young people. They use their practical experience, to develop partnerships that enable sustained relationships between schools/centres and the arts and cultural sectors. In addition, schools/centre's participating receive a total grant of €4,000 over 2 years to implement their plans.

In the four rounds from 2018 to 2021, a total number of 1,168 schools have applied to participate in Creative Schools with over 650 schools invited to participate. 2021 saw an expansion in the number of new schools participating compared to 2020. There were 350 schools participating in the initiative during the 2021/2022 academic year, and a fifth round is due to commence in September 2022. 2022 will see the initiative expand to work with Oberstown Children Detention Campus School, Ballydowd High Support Special School, Crannóg Nua Special School and St Canice's Special School. These schools have been invited to take part in the initiative and will receive increased Creative Associate time and funding with a total award of €8,000 over two years.

In May 2020, RTÉ One television aired a documentary, [*Creative Kids*](#), commissioned by the Creative Ireland Programme which demonstrated the powerful effect that creativity has on our youngest citizens.

3.2 Creative Clusters

Creative Clusters is a pilot initiative of the Department of Education, led by and in partnership with the Teacher Education Centres (ESCI) and funded through the *Schools Excellence Fund*.

The initiative has also been informed by recent curriculum reform in Ireland, which places emphasis (from early childhood through to post-primary education) on the development of key skills, such as being creative, communicating, and collaborating with others; and recognises the value of play, imagination, and enquiry in developing these skills.

A Creative Cluster consists of between 3 to 5 schools collaborating on the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of an innovative arts and creative learning project which supports them to address a common issue or challenge, identified by that cluster. Creative Clusters include schools at different stages of their journey in using creativity in the classroom. Clusters consist of primary schools only, post primary schools only or a combination of primary and post primary schools.

Each Cluster is provided with training and is supported by a designated Cluster Facilitator linked to an ESCI full-time Education Centre and is led by a designated lead school, with one of its teachers acting as lead school coordinator. This cluster coordinator is the main point of contact for each cluster project and participating schools, as well as having an overall responsibility for maintaining project records and reporting to the Cluster Facilitator and their local Education Centre Director.

The purpose of this pilot scheme is to demonstrate how the arts and creativity can support clusters of schools to work together to address common learning challenges, identified by those schools.

Cluster schools are strongly encouraged to engage with their students to identify an area to be explored by that cluster. The Creative Clusters scheme provides schools with access to creative people, supports them to draw on their own skills and experiences and those within their wider communities.

Creative Clusters are also encouraged to engage with other initiatives under Creative Ireland Pillar 1. This includes collaborating with Creative Schools or engaging in CPD provided at both primary and post primary level.

The Creative Clusters initiative commenced in the 2018/2019 academic year with the establishment of 23 clusters comprising 68 schools countrywide, while a further 21 Clusters comprising 77 schools were established and joined the initiative for the 2019/20 academic year. A new group of clusters, comprising 72 schools, joined the programme from September 2020/2021. In September 2021/2022 81 schools joined the programme with a further 78 schools who are joining the Creative Cluster initiative in the forthcoming 2022/2023 academic year.

3.3 Teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

CPD for teachers, and for artists working in partnership with teachers, is crucial to the long-term success and sustainability of the overall Creative Youth plan. In order to achieve the long-term objective of cultural and creative education it's necessary to build a critical mass of education and arts

professionals who are versed in the theoretical frameworks of arts and creativity education, and equipped with the skills and techniques for delivering programmes.

Teacher-Artist Partnership (TAP)

The Teacher-Artist Partnership (TAP) CPD summer course and residency programme is an arts-in-education initiative in which artists work in partnership with teachers. TAP was launched as a pilot in 2014 and following publication of a report on the pilot in March 2016 has now been mainstreamed. TAP Summer Courses, operating in all of the 21 full-time Education Centres in Ireland, take place in either July or August. Each course involves 20 teachers and 8 professional artists and is delivered by trained Teacher Artist Facilitators. The initiative also includes funded Artist in Residency opportunities in which participating teachers and artists work together in collaboration in the school during the following academic year. An additional 261 Teachers and 110 Artists completed the 2022 TAP 2022 Summer Course.

In addition to traditional “face-to-face” training, during 2020 the programme also introduced an accredited online model. Since 2014, some 1,750 teachers and 392 artists have taken part with 85 facilitators trained to deliver the programme. In addition, there have been 853 residencies which impacted directly on in excess of 41,997 (averaging 24 students per class). The initiative is administered through Tralee Education Centre, with support from the Department of Education and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media

TAP is now being developed as a European programme under the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership in the area of Innovation and Sharing of Best Practice category.

Junior Cycle for Teachers

[Arts in Junior Cycle](#) consists of a series of professional development experiences for teachers to support engagement with the arts and learning in junior cycle. The workshops embody the principles and key skills which underpin the Framework for Junior Cycle and the Arts in Education Charter and provide teachers with creative methodologies to engage with learning outcomes in their classroom. The initiative is based on partnership with key partners across the arts and education sectors. The initiative is administered through Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), Monaghan Education Centre with funding provided by the Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and Education.

3.4 Arts in Education Charter / Arts in Education Portal

Arts in Education Charter:

The Arts in Education Charter was launched in January 2013 by the Department of Education and the (then) Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The Charter plays a pivotal role in promoting both Arts Education and Arts in Education among children and young people through the alignment of a joined-up, integrated and collaborative approach across Government Departments, Education Agencies and Arts Organisations. The Charter is available [here](#).

There are two strands to Arts in Education practice: one involving interventions by the arts world in the domain of formal education, the other involving students engaging with the arts in the public domain (usually in publicly-funded arts venues, local or national).

The Charter articulated and promoted the essential role of the arts in education, enabling students to be successful in school life and work. Implementation of the objectives of the Charter requires the partnership and collaboration of arts, education, business, philanthropy and government that have a national scope and impact, as well as state and local partnerships that promote educational policies supportive of arts in education.

The Creative Ireland Programme included a commitment that the Charter would be ‘embraced, fast-tracked and resourced’ – a commitment re-stated in Creative Youth, which means that continued implementation of the Charter’s commitments is fundamentally part of the Creative Youth Plan (and indeed many of the original commitments are now encompassed by Creative Youth actions).

Arts in Education Portal:

The establishment of the [Arts in Education Portal](#) was an objective of the Arts in Education Charter. The ethos for the portal is building a community of practice within arts and education, providing a space where artists and teachers can be supported and inspired. It provides a platform through which good collaboration practice in arts-in-education and arts education will be supported. Submissions for the portal are invited on an ongoing basis, and templates and guidelines have been drawn up to assist those who wish to make a submission.

Underpinning the development of the portal is a strong and implicit shared belief in the intrinsic value of the arts in the lives of children. The Portal – through the content that it shares – has a role in advocating this value. The portal seeks to reflect current practice that is taking place in Ireland. Its vision is to establish a structure through which the arts and education community can be developed. From here, the content will develop through continued support and building of the community both online and offline. New features for the Portal will be phased in over the coming months.

The aim is to make the portal the key national digital resource of arts and education practice in Ireland. A communications strategy is planned which will outline ways for the Portal Editor to maintain ongoing dialogue and communication with the arts/education community. Quality of content will be a key guiding criterion. The Portal will provide an unprecedented opportunity for young people throughout the country to engage productively with arts-in-education in Ireland.

The Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and Education provide funding support for the continued development of the charter actions and the portal.

Arts and Culture in Education Research Repository (ACERR):

The Arts and Culture in Education Research Repository (ACERR) has been developed by an association of institutions committed to upholding the principles of the Arts in Education Charter and the Creative Ireland Programme, promoting Arts and Cultural Education and Arts in Education Research. Its creation fulfils one of the commitments made in the Arts in Education Charter.

The ACERR has joined the Digital Repository of Ireland as a member in order to securely deposit materials relating to arts and culture in education in a trusted digital repository. Work on developing the ACERR was overseen by a steering group with members representing over 10 national cultural and educational institutions.

The ACERR intends to facilitate long-term preservation of arts and culture in education content from a broad range of backgrounds. It will facilitate data in a range of mediums, including video and images, which will help researchers convey and demonstrate the findings of their research to the general public, who will have free access to the repository. The ACERR has been developed as part of the Creative Ireland Programme with support from the Dormant Accounts Funds. The ACERR is available to access [here](https://repository.dri.ie) (repository.dri.ie).

3.5 Creative Engagement Programme of the NAPD

National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) – a representative body for Principals and Deputy Principals – operates the [Creative Engagement programme](#).

The Creative Engagement Programme ‘The Art in Our Schools’ was set up by the NAPD in 2004 and is co-funded by the Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and Education to encourage secondary school students to engage with the arts.

Under the programme, grants up to €2k are awarded to schools for art education under clearly set criteria and undertaken on a jointly funded basis with the school involved. The projects involved allow art practitioners to work with students in schools to allow students to produce work in visual art, music, theatre, dance, film and poetry. The programme strives to encourage creativity, initiative and complements curricular learning in the arts, heritage and culture. NAPD envisions an education system energised through the arts and where creativity is a core activity in the post primary curriculum.

Where possible, the NAPD attempt to focus the expansion of the Creative Engagement Programme on those schools which may not be participating in other Creative Youth initiatives (although opportunities may exist to build on the resources of both programmes, and where overlaps may occur optimisation of outcomes is sought).

3.6 Early Learning and Care

The Creative Youth Plan contains a number of actions in the area of early years (led by the Early Years Division of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth (DCEDIY)). These actions are to:

- Develop a once-off Early Learning and Care Bursary Project for Early Year Settings, as resources become available, for the purpose of acquiring materials and equipment; and

- Develop a research report to identify principles that will underpin and support the development of arts in early learning and care practice and CPD which promotes the principles, guidelines and pedagogical practices.

The initial action progressed is the research report to underpin future actions.

Creativity in the Early Learning and Care (ELC) sector is supported through the national practice frameworks, *Síolta* and *Aistear*. The frameworks promote a holistic approach to encouraging and supporting creativity, imagination and individual expression in young children. Both frameworks highlight the importance of promoting children’s creative expression through the medium of play and active learning experiences that enable all children to participate and express themselves creatively through a variety of media with the encouragement of supportive adults.

The frameworks are being implemented by the Department of Education (D/Ed) and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth (DCEDIY) in partnership with the National Council for the Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and *Better Start*, which is supporting the development of a national CPD and mentoring programme for Early Years educators. The Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) framework underpins the evaluation of educational provision in early years by the D/Ed inspectorate, evaluating, for example, ELC settings’ provision for creative play and children’s progress and achievements in relation to their arts education and development.

The Early Years Division of the DCEDIY and D/Ed worked in partnership with the Arts Council and the NCCA to support the initial research. An advisory group of representatives from these bodies are supporting this work and will consider the research findings. The research undertaken by Dr Triona Stokes of Maynooth University will inform the content of a pilot CPD programme to be delivered in 2023. The CPD pilot programme will test the principles articulated in the research. The research project is now almost complete and has examined and articulated the following:

- The role of creativity, play and the arts in young children’s learning and development, ages 0-6;
- An overview of creativity, play and the arts in early learning and care policy and provision in Ireland (including the manner in which these relate to the First 5 Strategy and the national frameworks - *Síolta* and *Aistear*);
- A glossary of terms related to the arts, creativity and play – including shared features and key distinctions, where relevant;
- Examples of excellent engagement with the arts in early learning and care practice;
- Features of quality when engaging with the arts in early learning care practice; and
- Key principles underpinning young children’s quality engagement with the arts in early learning and care practice.

The identified principles will be considered through consultation and action research, with a view to finalising and publishing the Principles in 2023.

A bursary programme was also developed in 2019 with 4 organisations working in arts and creativity winning the tender. These were Children’s Books Ireland, Graffiti Theatre Company, The Ark and ReCreate. These organisations have worked in collaboration with early learning and care services in

2020 to share resources or services to a large number of groups in the sector and have adapted their projects and plans to deliver their projects during Covid-19. The projects have had a great impact despite the challenging conditions.

3.7 Bringing Live Arts to Schools and Teachers (BLAST)

In May 2021, the Minister for Education announced a new arts in education residency initiative for both primary and post-primary schools called BLAST (Bringing Live Arts to Schools and Teachers).

The initiative aims to support the integration of the principles and key skills outlined in the Arts in Education Charter and Pillar 1 (Creative Youth) of the Creative Ireland Programme. The scheme gives pupils in schools all over the country the opportunity to work with a professional artist on unique projects to be originated and planned between the artist, the teacher and the school under the coordination of the Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI) network of 21 full-time education centres. This initiative supports children and young people for the future, where skills like the ability to connect and collaborate with others, engage in creative and critical thinking and practice inclusivity at every level will be paramount to peace, stability, sustainable economic growth and equality.

In 2021, 488 schools were awarded grants through BLAST and a new round for 2022 has been launched with a closing date of 30th September 2022.

www.gov.ie/en/service/69096-blast-arts-in-education/

4. Other Initiatives and Supports (smaller scale)

4.1. Other Creative Youth supported initiatives

The Creative Ireland Programme also seeks to support other initiatives which provide opportunities to advance the overall aims and ambitions of the Programme as a whole and the Creative Youth Plan implementation in particular. Some examples include:

The Big Idea

The Creative Ireland Programme has supported the piloting of a new initiative, The Big Idea, which, in partnership with the Institute of Designers in Ireland (IDI), is working with transition year students to address problems and issues through creative problem solving and design thinking. As well as enabling the start-up of the project, the Creative Ireland Programme support is also facilitating the evaluation and further socialisation of the concept with the education sector.

In 2022, The Big Idea is working with 42 post-primary schools as part of their transition year programme. An adapted model is also being trialled in a YouthReach setting and as part of a Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCAP).

The Big Idea and the IDI are working on a research project, to explore the range of creative pathways for students post Leaving Certificate. Following this, if there is an identified need from the research to offer alternative pathways for students, the project will then move to develop a Creative Foundation programme.

<https://thebigidea.ie/>

Junk Kouture

This is a programme that works with transition year students around creativity, fashion and recycled materials (www.junkkouture.com). The Creative Ireland Programme supported the hosting of the Junk Kouture 2020 grand finale, to ensure that young people were given the platform to exhibit the costumes created despite not being able to attend an in-person event. The Creative Ireland Programme also supported Junk Kouture to develop increased links with the education sector in 2021. The goal was to enable participation by young people who don't have the active support of schools and the provision of enhanced online supports for teachers in participating schools.

4.2. Other Creative Ireland Programme supports

In addition to those initiatives which have been developed or enhanced through the Creative Youth Plan, the Creative Ireland Programme also supports local programmes of creative activities the length and breadth of the country through local authorities under [Creative Communities](#).

National Creativity Fund (2018- 2021)

In 2018, the Creative Ireland Programme launched a National Creativity Fund (NCF), which saw 30 innovative new initiatives supported. A 2018/19 funding scheme to provide specialist and targeted support for smaller initiatives, it was hoped that these projects would significantly add value and/or scale to the implementation of the overall Creative Ireland Programme and would help inform policy and/or cross-sectoral development in the area of culture, creativity and well-being. Of these, 15 were aimed at providing specialist and targeted supports and interventions for children and young people – these included:

- Supporting the Royal Irish Academy to establish **Le Chéile** – the Open Youth Orchestra of Ireland, a cross-border ensemble made up exclusively of musicians with disabilities including Down syndrome, autism and cerebral palsy.
- Supporting Narrative 4's **Empathy Project** – a story exchange initiative to equip young people to use their stories to build empathy, shatter stereotypes, break down barriers and ultimately make the world a better place. Narrative 4 were further supported to provide training and mentoring to 12 youth workers who work with Traveller and Roma young people – a section of society whose voices are not often heard – to empower them to tell their stories and challenge the stereotypes held by the wider community.
- The Chester Beatty Library's [Intercultural Schools Programme](#) – which seeks to embrace cultural diversity, combat racism and foster inclusive environments in schools across Ireland

through an onsite programme for children and young people and digital learning tool accessible to teachers all over the country.

- The development of Helium Arts' [Creative Health Hub model](#) – to provide children facing life-long medical conditions and disabilities with multidisciplinary creative activities that support their psychosocial needs and wellbeing.