

Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae an Chabháin
County Cavan Vocational Education Committee
Adult Education Services



**New & Emerging Needs of Young
People in County Cavan**

2010

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the Youth group, club, and youth reach participants in Co. Cavan who took time to participate in this research and to share their views, attitudes and feelings.

We would also like to thank all Youth leaders, and Tutors who took time to get involved with the research and return questionnaires, and make this piece of research possible.

Introduction

Under the Youth Work Act 2001, Co. Cavan Vocational Education Committee has a statutory responsibility for the development of youth work in the county. As well as a variety of support services, Youth Services are an integral part of the services delivered by County Cavan VEC. Co.Cavan VEC has been a provider and supporter of the Youth Service Programmes and activities, including information, funding applications, grant aid, training, evaluation and monitoring, planning and resources.

Co.Cavan VEC is working in conjunction with Rapid Action on Youth group (RAY). The group's objective is to review the range and scope of services for young people in County Cavan and identify gaps in such services particularly for young people at risk. One task of the research is to examine 'The New and Emerging Needs of young people in Co.Cavan'.

This report reviews the results of a survey of 206 young people aged between 13 and 18 years in Co. Cavan. The research was carried out between January 2010 and March 2010. The research involved participants from youth groups/clubs/youth reaches, right across County Cavan.

The aim of the research was to specifically explore the 'New and Emerging Needs of Young People in County Cavan', giving young people a voice in the provision of services; specifically, to explore and identify what young people have to say about community facilities, leisure activities, worries and concerns and sources of support.

Research Methodology

This piece of research involved the distribution of questionnaires (See Appendix 1) to young people, aged 13 to 18 years, throughout county Cavan. The questionnaire was distributed to all youth groups listed in the Co.Cavan VEC Youth Services Directory. Questionnaires were also distributed to Youth Reach centres in Cavan, Cootehill and Kingscourt. By distributing the questionnaires to youth groups and clubs throughout Cavan, it was felt that it would enable a broad spectrum of information from all corners of the county.

The questionnaires were anonymous and contain questions on sport/leisure, health and well being, alcohol/drug use, and a series of general questions. The main concern with regards questionnaire design was to ensure that the key question areas were being addressed i.e. the views of young people on social and personal issues, services and community facilities, leisure pursuits and interpersonal relationships.

Questions were included about who young people would go to if they had a problem so as to get an insight to the support network available to young people. Questions were also included around what information is available to young people in their school/local area, and what information they think should be made more available to young people. A number of studies have shown escalating levels of alcohol/drug use in Ireland. A question around drug and alcohol use was included to examine to what extent this is an issue for young people in County Cavan. Open-ended questions were also included to attempt to capture qualitative material which does not really lend itself to 'tick-box' answers.

Data collection took place between January 2010 and February 2010.

Results

This section of the report will present the findings from the survey. Results are presented in the order in which survey items occurred. Total numbers responding to any one item may vary across the results, as a small number of participants left questions blank, or gave multiple answers depending on the question asked. Percentages reported are percentages of responses to the individual items, unless otherwise noted.

Age

Young people aged 13 to 18 years, participated in the research. The Table below shows the percentage of young people who completed questionnaires from ages between 13 and 18.

Age in Years	% of Participants
13	20
14	16
15	10
16	7
17	10
18	12
Did not answer	25

Gender

58% of the sample was female and 40% of the sample was male. A small number of participants (2%) chose not to indicate their gender.

Background

Respondents were asked to describe their background. The majority (79%) reported their background as 'Irish'. Seven percent indicated their background as 'Irish Traveller', two percent reported their background as 'African origin' and a further two percent as 'Other'. Only one percent indicated their background as 'East European origin'. The remaining 9% choose not to answer this question.

Drug/Alcohol

Although the focus of this study was not drug and alcohol use, drugs and alcohol nevertheless play a huge part in many young people's lives today in Ireland. The extent of a young person's drug and alcohol use arguably impacts on the needs of that person. For this reason, participants were asked how often they used a number of commonly available drugs. The results presented in the Table below show the number of participants who answered 'Never', 'Sometimes' or 'Often'.

Describe how often you take the following

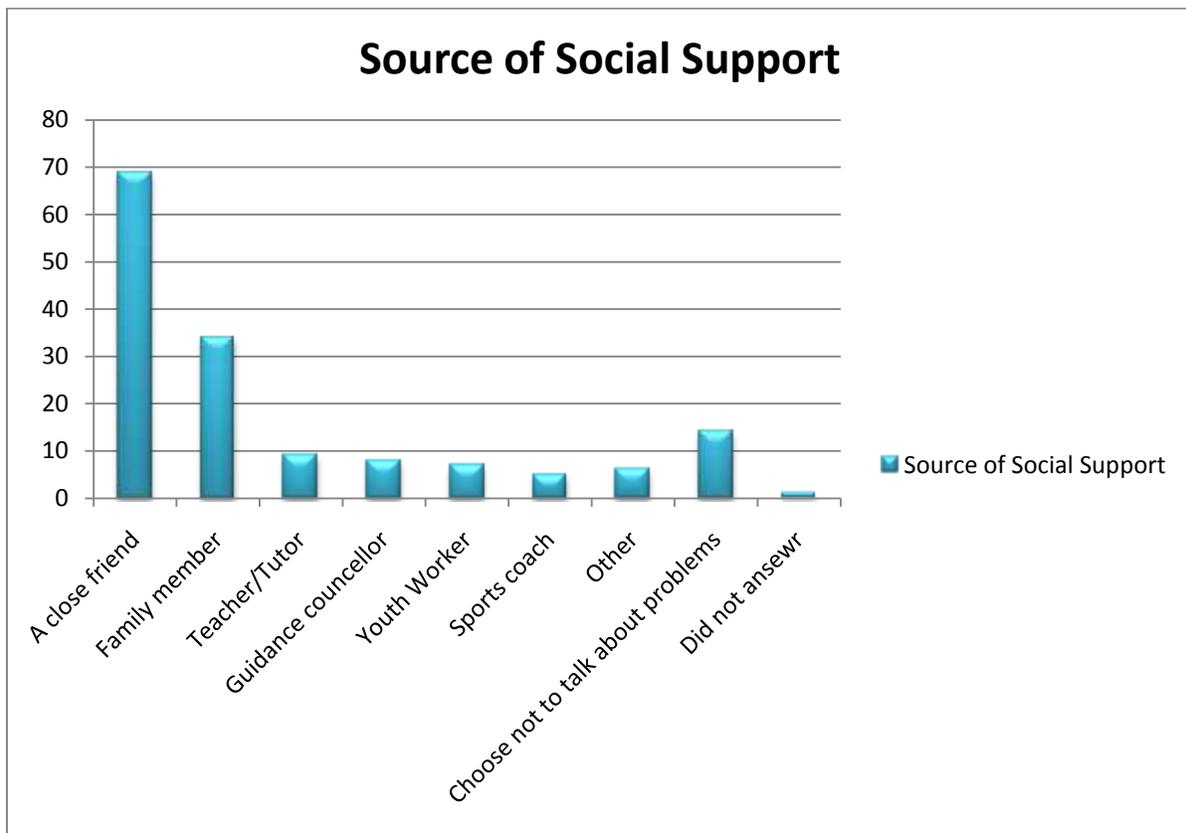
	Never	Sometimes	Often
Alcohol	102	71	31
Tobacco	124	29	45
Cannabis	156	27	15
Ecstasy	171	9	7
Solvents	120	6	10
Other	151	11	11
Did not Answer	8		

These results indicate that tobacco is the substance causing the greatest amount of concern for this group of young people. Also of concern are the number of young people drinking alcohol 'Sometimes' or 'Often', given that mental and physical health risks associated with alcohol are greater the earlier one starts drinking. There are also some areas for concern around the number of participants using Cannabis. Slightly less than half of the sample reported that they never drank alcohol. Relatively low numbers of participants reported using other drugs. Only 8 participants did not answer this part of the questionnaire.

It must be remembered that in self-report research, the validity of data about illegal activities can be called into question. However, at face value these data indicate a low level of illegal drug use among the young people of county Cavan.

Who would you most likely talk to if you had a problem?

Participants were also asked about sources of social support. From a list of different people relevant to young people’s daily lives, they were asked to indicate who they would talk to if they had a problem. Participants could choose one or more options, whatever was relevant to that individual. The chart below illustrates the results for the sample as a whole.



Majority of participants reported that they preferred to talk to close friends their own age or a family member most often. Worryingly 14% of participants said they choose not to talk to anyone about their problems. Which would lead to the question, Is this one of the new emerging needs for young people in Cavan? Why do 14% of young people asked choose not to talk about their problems? Is there nobody they felt they could talk to in a safe, non-judgemental environmet?

Access to Information

The young people who participated in the study were asked the degree to which they felt there was enough information available to young people in their local school or community environment, and what issues they thought there should be more information available about. Their responses are detailed in the table below:

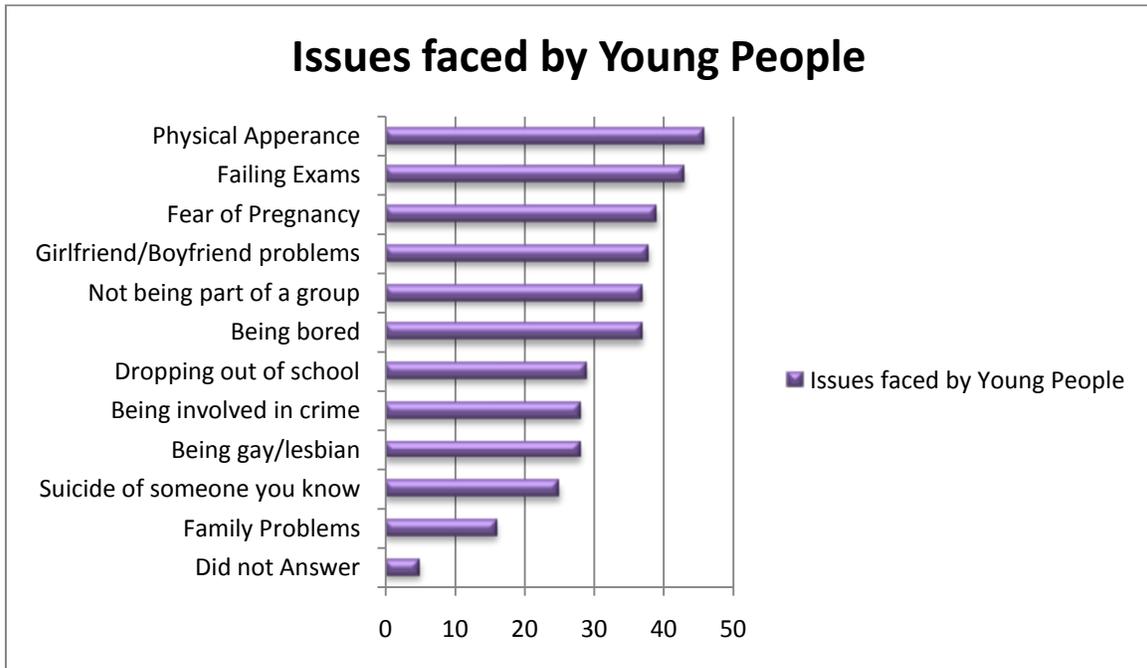
Issue	% Young People who thought there should be more information available
Young people's rights	43
Sport/Leisure/How to keep fit	33
Suicide Awareness	32
Relationships	30
Depression	28
Gay/lesbianism	28
Healthy Eating	27
Alcohol/illegal drug use	26
Careers/Education	26
Mental Health	25
Divorce/separation	20
Sexuality	17
Travel	13

The table above shows the responses by topics about which respondents feel they do not have enough information. The highest scoring issues young people felt that they do have access to information about include Young people's rights, Sport/Leisure/How to keep fit and Suicide Awareness.

However, significant numbers of respondents reported that they do not have enough access to information about Relationships, Depression, Gay/lesbianism, Healthy Eating, Alcohol/illegal drug use, Careers/Education and Mental Health.

Main issues young people face

Young people were also asked to identify the main issues faced by young people. The most common response was Physical appearance, which was listed as a concern by 46% of participants. Failing exams was the second most common response, which was listed by 43% of participants. Other concerns listed included fear of pregnancy, girlfriend/boyfriend problems, not being part of a group and being bored/having nothing to do. The chart below shows the results for Issues faced by Young people in county Cavan.



Young People in County Cavan

Participants were given a list of statements regarding youth and lifestyle, and were asked to agree or disagree with the statement.

Majority of young people asked agreed with the following statements:

- There is nothing to do and nowhere to go for young people our age
- It can be difficult to take part in a social life when you have to depend on your parents for transport
- Young people experience pressure to belong to a social group; the pressure to “fit in”
- Today’s youth are tomorrow’s adults
- There is increasing availability of alcohol and drugs and pressure to use
- Increased sexual health concerns for young people (fear of STIs and burden of responsibility)
- Young people are under huge pressure to achieve academically in school or college
- Young people are an important part of the community
- When young people hang around it is often felt that they are “up to no good”
- There is a pressure to live up to media ideals of lifestyles

There was only one statement that majority of young people disagreed with:

- Young people don’t have any responsibilities

However there was one statement that 46% of participants agreed with and 47% of participants disagreed with:

- There are a wide variety of activities on offer for young people

The table below shows a further breakdown of the results:

	% Agree	% Disagree
There is nothing to do and nowhere to go for young people our age	64	32
Young people don’t have any responsibilities	21	70
It can be difficult to take part in social life when you have to depend on your parents for transport	70	28
There are a wide variety of activities on offer for young people	46	47
Young people experience pressure to belong to a social group; the pressure to “fit in”	67	29
Today’s youth are tomorrow’s adults	60	24
There is an increasing availability of alcohol and drugs and pressure to use	66	22
Increased sexual health concerns for young people (fear of STIs and burden of responsibility)	63	31
Young people are under huge pressure to achieve academically in school or college	78	15
Young people are an important part of the community	72	17
When young people hang around it is often felt that they are “up to no good”	73	21
There is a pressure to live up to media ideals of lifestyles	53	37

Priorities for Co.Cavan

Participants were asked to list three things they would prioritize for young people in county Cavan, if they were head of the county for one day. This was an open-ended question and responses were collapsed into categories.

The table below summarizes the needs listed by young people in county Cavan.

Priority	Number	Percentage
Sports Facilities/Adventure Activities	65	32%
Cinemas	48	23%
Shopping Centre	30	15%
Youth Disco	19	9%
Community Hall	18	9%
Swimming Pool	17	8%
Snooker/Pool/Arcade Halls/Bowling	16	8%
Youth Centre/Drop-In Centre	12	6%
Transport	12	6%
Ice Skating ring	9	4%
Age Card for under 18	6	3%
Courses on Depression/Drugs/Alcohol	4	2%
College/Homework Clubs	3	1%
Music/Drama/Computer Clubs	3	1%

The most consistent responses were 'Sports facilities/Adventure activities' as well as 'cinemas'. This response shows the need for an increase in facilities and activities for young people in Co.Cavan.

Conclusion

The report gives an overview of the activities, views and needs as reported by young people from across County Cavan.

There are some areas for concern. Drug/alcohol use is widespread and a significant number of young people report using drugs/alcohol 'sometimes' or 'often'. Many respondents felt they did not have enough information on issues such as young people's rights, sport/leisure/keeping fit, suicide, relationships and depression.

The results reflect a diversity of views and needs. The responses of the young people in this research provide clear indications of the needs of the young people of County Cavan. Some priority areas for action are;

- The need for more readily available information to young people on topics discussed.
- Awareness around issues young people face, example physical appearance, failing exams etc. So support can be provided for young people in these areas of their lives.
- Awareness that there is an increasing availability of alcohol and drugs and pressure for young people to use
- More available support for young people for someone to "talk to", in a safe non-judgmental environment.
- The need for an increase in facilities and a range of structured activities available, to meet the different interests, of young people in Co.Cavan.

This concludes the report on the New and Emerging Needs of young people in County Cavan

Appendix 1: Questionnaire used in Research

New and Emerging needs of young people Questionnaire

Age: Male Female

Background: (Please circle the one that best describes your background)

Irish African origin Other

Irish (Traveller) East European origin

Describe how often you take the following, if ever?

	Never	Sometimes	Often
Alcohol			
Tobacco			
Cannabis			
Ecstasy			
Solvents			
Other			

Who would you most likely talk to if you had a problem? (Tick the relevant boxes)

A close friend, my own age	
Family member	
Teacher/Tutor	
Guidance counsellor	
Youth worker	
Sports coach	
Other	
I choose not to talk to someone about my problems	

Do you think there is enough information available to young people in your school or community environment? What issues do you think there should be more information available to you people? (Circle the relevant issues)

Healthy eating

Mental health

Careers/education

Sport/Leisure/How to keep fit

Gay/lesbianism

Relationships

Alcohol/illegal drug use

Sexuality

Travel

Divorce/separation

Depression

Young people's rights

Suicide awareness

What are the main issues that young people your age face? (Circle the relevant issues)

Not being part of a group

Physical appearance

Fear of pregnancy

Parent/guardian separation/divorce

Parent/guardian with an alcohol problem problem

Parent /guardian with mental health

Suicide of somebody you know

Being gay/lesbian

Dropping out of school

Failing exams

Being involved in crime

Being bored/having nothing to do

Girlfriend/boyfriend problems

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Disagree
There is nothing to do and nowhere to go for young people our age		
Young people don't have any responsibilities		
It can be difficult to take part in social life when you have to depend on your parents for transport		
There are a wide variety of activities on offer for young people		
Young people experience pressure to belong to a social group; the pressure to "fit in"		
Today's youth are tomorrows adults		
There is an increasing availability of alcohol and drugs and pressure to use		
Increased sexual health concerns for young people (fear of STIs and burden of responsibility)		
Young people are under huge pressure to achieve academically in school or college		
Young people are an important part of the community		
When young people hang around it is often felt that they are "up to no good"		
There is a pressure to live up to media ideals of lifestyles		

If you were head of the country for one day, name 3 things you would prioritise for young people in Co. Cavan? (e.g. Sports facilities, cinemas, Youth centres)

Thank you very much for filling in this questionnaire

