

**Under embargo until
Friday 20th November, 2020.**

The Irish Youth Foundation teams up with Ireland's leading voices in sports, music, literature and TV to capture the imagination of the Irish public and inspire action for 'Generation Pandemic'.

On Friday, November 20th, World Children's Day, the Irish Youth Foundation will put a spotlight on Ireland's biggest ever crisis for the country's most vulnerable children and young people with a social media campaign that will see personalities from the worlds of sport, music, TV and literature take action by sharing their childhood photos online.

Amid a second lockdown, the national campaign which starts this Friday, is a call-to-action to the Irish public to stand behind and support 'Generation Pandemic' - Ireland's hidden children as the situation reaches breaking point; **100,000** children going to bed **hungry** every night, **one in five** living in **poverty** and **60%** of under-24s now **unemployed**. Many are harder to reach and struggling to fend off isolation, hunger, mental ill-health issues and the danger of permanently falling through the cracks.

New results this week from the fourth tracker survey carried out by The Irish Youth Foundation in partnership with Amárach Research, echoes concerns from those working closest with young people that issues with mental health and isolation are spiralling out of control. In a snapshot survey taken on November Friday 13th, **91%** are missing friends, **50%** of young people are missing youth workers and mentors, **72%** are missing sporting activities, **81%** are missing family, **61%** of children are citing isolation as their biggest issue (up **22%** since July), and **58%** are having difficulty maintaining structure and routine.

Lucy Masterson, CEO of the Irish Youth Foundation, says: *"The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the lives of our most vulnerable children and young people. Their critical supports and lifelines have been taken away - from the basics of a safe, warm place to go after school for a hot meal, Wi-Fi for home learning, right up to access to mental health supports and activities that keep them from becoming invisible. Years of transformative work by*

local youth projects, charities and organisations across the country have been wiped out.

*Despite the overwhelming demand for additional supports, fundraising opportunities have virtually disappeared, and government funding alone, cannot meet the need. This week, though we were thrilled to release **€500,000 from the Generation Pandemic fund** to support these critical charities and organisations, we find ourselves in a terrible situation where we can only meet 6.6 % of a staggering **€7.5million** in application requests. This is why we are appealing to the public for help. Childhood can't wait. We must act now".*

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Irish Youth Foundation has been monitoring the burning issues facing Generation Pandemic. This has been tracked through ongoing research with Amárach, and ground-level feedback from a national panel of over one thousand youth workers and project leaders who work closely with the children in after school clubs, sporting clubs and organisations.

Results prompted the social media campaign and has already seen over thirty celebrities (and rising) getting behind #GenerationPandemic, including the president of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, Bressie, Padraig Harrington, Roddy Doyle and Kellie Harrington. Many more will be revealed on World Children's Day as they mark their support. The public will be invited to post their childhood photos on social media and donate an hour of their pay.

The Irish Youth Foundation's target is to reach **20,000** children. For more information, visit: www.iyf.ie.

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About the Irish Youth Foundation.

The Irish Youth Foundation is the only foundation in Ireland dedicated exclusively to meeting the needs of the country's most vulnerable children and young people. Their stated mission is to level the playing field and help children to break out of poverty and achieve their fullest potential. They support people and projects that want to give our most marginalised young people an equal and fair chance to succeed.

Over the past 30 years, they have raised over €20 million and supported more than 2,000 projects across the island of Ireland, reaching 50,000 young people directly. Their sole focus is young people and to support the organisations and highly skilled youth workers that care for their physical, mental and educational well-being. This can range from grassroots projects such as homework clubs & supportive environments such as the Solas Project, right up to larger children-focused charities such as Lust For Life, Jigsaw and Focus Ireland.

The proceeds of the 'Generation Pandemic' campaign will support ambitious plans to shepherd 20,000 of our most vulnerable young through the challenges that they face. By: 1) assisting youth workers in identifying, reconnecting and persuading young people who have fallen through the cracks to re-engage vital services and 2) funding proven and innovative programs, facilities and supports across three pillars: Education, Health & well-being and pathways to further learning and employment.

A bespoke Instagram Channel @GenerationPandemic will launch on World Children's Day and will feature updates on the month-long campaign, quotes from those that sign up to support, as well as childhood photos from Ireland's leading personalities and sports stars.

A snapshot of the projects that the Irish Youth Foundation currently supports;

- **Fighting Words** set up by Roddy Doyle and Sean Love provides free tutoring, mentoring and publishing in all forms of creative writing for children and young people across Ireland. They are about encouraging and helping young people to discover and harness the wonderful power of their own imaginations and creative skills. And, in so doing, to use the creative practice of writing and storytelling to strengthen our children and teenagers to be resilient, creative and successful shapers of their own lives.
www.fightingwords.ie

- **Engage in Education** is a charity based in Limerick City. They support motivated students & parents from socioeconomic disadvantaged areas & communities. They provide supports that will empower disadvantaged students to progress through all the levels of the education system.
<http://engage-edu.ie>

- **A Lust for Life** is a multi-award-winning movement that uses content, campaigns and events to facilitate young people to be effective guardians of their own mind - and to be the leaders that drive our society towards a better future.
www.alustforlife.com

- **Waterford and South Tipperary Community Youth Service** work in collaboration with young people and local communities to achieve improvements in the young people's quality of life. Working through youth work methodologies, the Youth Service supports thousands of young people in the south-east of Ireland every year.
<https://wstcys.ie>

- **The Life Centre** is an alternative centre of education that works with 12 - 18 years old who are no longer in the mainstream education system. The Centre and its team of volunteers work with the young people 1:1 and in small groups to prepare them for their Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations while equally focussing on personal and social development.
www.corklifecentre.org

- **Teen-Turn** addresses the numbers of third level qualifications, particularly those related to STEM, attained by women from disadvantaged and underrepresented communities. Teen-Turn achieves this by providing—from when participants are teenagers—ongoing hands-on experiences, exposure to consistent, invested role model mentors and long-term support through alumnae career development opportunities.
www.teen-turn.com

- **MyMind** provides face to face and online counselling and psychotherapy services for mild to moderate mental health issues to adults, children, adolescents, couples and families. We have a team of over 100 mental health professionals who provide services in 15 languages using a variety of therapeutic methods. In 2019 MyMind provided over 28,000 appointments to more than 4,700 clients from its 5 locations in Dublin, Cork and Limerick.
www.mymind.org
 - **Doras Buí** is a community resource centre and early years' service. We work with young parents; and provide them with information to empower them to make informed decisions about their education and employment opportunities. This enables them to practice positive life experiences while often living in difficult circumstances.
<https://dorasbui.ie>
 - **Helplink Mental Health** provides accessible, free or low-cost mental health services, locally (West of IRL), nationally and internationally, for children, young people and adults seven days a week. The three types of mental health services that Helplink provides are counselling, information provision and education.
<https://helplink.ie>
 - **Obair** has been in existence in Newmarket on Fergus Co Clare for over 20 years. It is a community development organisation that works with people to combat social exclusion as well as to develop social enterprise in the area.
www.obair.org
 - **The School Completion Programme** in Dublin 1 & 7 works with schools, local youth agencies, parents and young people towards identifying and addressing barriers to education. They provide various tailored interventions to children targeted as at risk of early school leaving, including 1-to-1 support, family support and small group work.
www.dublincypsdirectory.ie
 - **Love and Care for People** "LCP" is a Cork-based charity; they raise awareness and educates young people (aged 9-19 years) to include those with fewer opportunities, financial difficulties, special needs, mental health difficulties, refugees, those living in isolated & disadvantaged rural areas among others about family violence, social exclusion, mental health, neglect, and hardship with a purpose to reduce and prevent it.
<https://loveandcareforpeople.eu>
 - **Just Ask** aims to transform the community through education and support for Inner-City Children. It runs daily after school club which provides homework support, hot meals, wellbeing support for junior and secondary school children in 2 locations and an evening time youth club for secondary school children.
<https://www.just-ask.ie>
 - **Southill Hub** supports the community to be a great place to 'grow up and grow old'. Working with young people, their families & the wider community. Providing a safe, welcoming space for the community to play, meet and eat.
<https://southillhub.org>
 - **Solas Project's** (based in Dublin's South Inner City) incorporate a mixture of targeted interventions and community-wide activities. Their work focuses on children and young people at risk of being marginalised by society, specifically through the education, employment and justice systems. Their six programmes support over 500 young people annually
<https://solasproject.com>
 - **Safe Haven** provides sailing opportunities for young migrants in Ireland, in particular those living in Direct Provision. The project's primary aim is to facilitate the integration of new communities in Ireland. Through the opportunities we provide, young migrants learn new skills and have rewarding experiences.
www.safehavenireland.com
 - **The Roscommon Young Carers project** is a pilot project to support young people aged 8-21 who fulfil some kind of carer role. It offers support, both practical and emotional and works to ensure the young carers can have fun in a safe, non-pressured environment.
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