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# WHERE DO YOU GO WHEN YOU GO OUT?

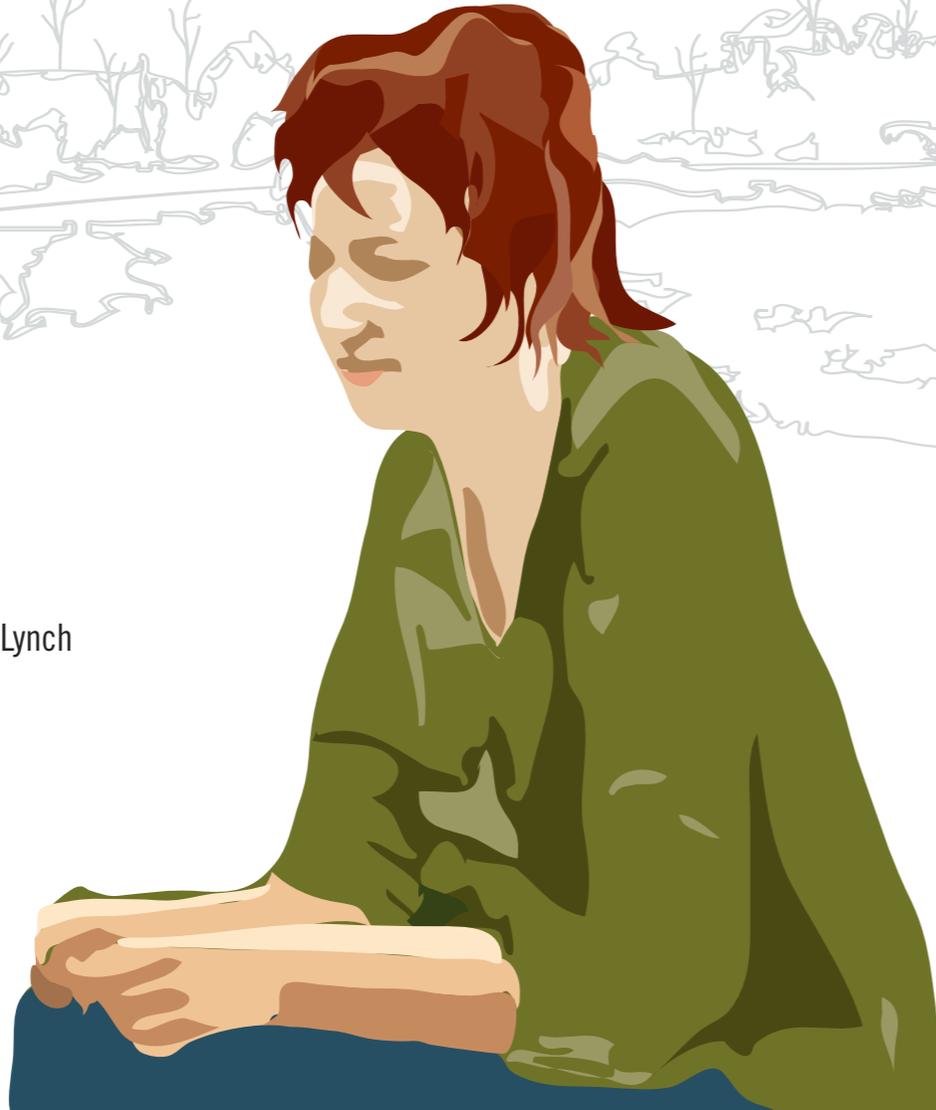


Young people's views on youth friendly facilities in East Cork

# Young People's Views on Youth Friendly Facilities in East Cork

**A Report** by

Mary McGrath and Deborah Lynch  
January 2007



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank you to Brendan and Finbarr for supporting us when we needed it most.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Mary McGrath** is a community consultant who has considerable experience as a community development practitioner, researcher and facilitator. She is fundamentally committed to social justice, equality and inclusion. She completed a BA Degree in European Studies (University of Limerick), a Higher Diploma in Education (UCC) and in Social Integration and Enterprise for Community Development Workers (UCC). Mary has trained with Meitheal, CAN (Community Action Network) both community development support and training organisations and Aontas, the National Association for Adult Education among others. Currently Mary is working on a consultancy basis with East Cork Area Development. She has been involved directly in this work since it began, with young people and with the organisations that work with them. Mary grew up in East Cork and now lives in Whitegate with her family. She has two children Kate, 17 and Beineón who is 15.

**Deborah Lynch** is a lecturer in the Department of Applied Social Studies at University College Cork and lives in East Cork. Kiran is her 8 year old son. She is passionate about young people's participation and active involvement in influencing the world around them. Debby became involved in the analysis of the exploratory survey and co-authored the report. She comes from a social work background and has practiced in a range of different settings, including working on community development projects in South Africa, India, Nepal and Indonesia. She obtained her Ph.D at the University of Sydney in Australia. Her most recent publication is: Lynch, D. & Forde, C. (2006) Social Work within a Community Discourse: Challenges for Teaching, *Social Work Education – The International Journal*, 25, 8, 851-862.

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## FOREWORD

This report represents a landmark in a process focused on young people that has been ongoing since late 2004. At the core of this process has been the active participation of the young people of East Cork. By providing the structures and opportunities for young people to express their needs, hopes and aspirations, East Cork Area Development has been able to work in partnership with young people, the Health Service Executive (HSE), and the other organisations that support them to begin a process to address these needs.

“Where Do you Go When You Go Out” is an account of how we set out, not only to listen to our young people and act upon what they said, but also to enable them to share their thoughts in an inclusive, innovative, and participative way.

Initially, a questionnaire was circulated, which saw over seven hundred young people indicate their desire to see a broader range of youth facilities throughout East Cork. To deepen the consultation process, East Cork Area Development working with representatives from youth organisations then organised a conference for young people. This was held in Midleton in October 2005. *Exit The Street – A Place of Our Own* saw over 150 young people come together to express their views through a variety of media, from film to music and drama.

We have learned much in the past two years, we still have more to learn. However, we believe that in this report we have shown a way of working, upon which we can build a more positive future for all our young people.



**Michael Walley**  
Chairperson  
East Cork Area Development

### East Cork Area Development Ltd

was formed in 1995 to address the economic, social, and educational issues faced by the area. It is a community partnership, with its Management Board being drawn from the private, public, community and voluntary sectors. It currently operates the National Rural Development Programme, the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, and the European Interreg IIIB Programme.

Working in partnership with other groups and agencies it seeks to access and deliver resources for the area, directing them towards areas and communities of interest where they may have maximum impact.

Through its Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, East Cork Area Development has fostered a partnership approach with organisations like the East Cork Youth Network (ECYN) and supported the diverse range of actions that have taken place during this process. It has acted, and continues to act, as a catalyst for improving the quality of life of the young people of East Cork.

## WHAT IS THE REPORT ABOUT?

In December 2004, East Cork Area Development (ECAD) set out to prioritise the needs of young people in the East Cork area and to start a consultative process with those who work directly and are concerned with young people. This is delivered through the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP). ECAD is committed to “*The inclusion of all members of our community in deciding where we want to go and how we get there*” (ECAD, September, 2005).

In consulting youth organisations in the area, a common priority clearly emerged; the need for a place where young people could meet and participate in a range of activities. In Youghal, this was about finding “a place to go” for young people. In Midleton, it was about “young people walking up and down the streets” and having “no-where to go”. In Cobh, it was about designing “a place of their own” for young people. Later, other groups from Carrigwohill and Glanmire became involved with the same concerns. How did the young people themselves see it? An exploratory survey was carried out in preparation for a youth conference in Midleton: *Exit the Street*. Through this process, young people from second level schools, Youthreach and Area Youth Projects in East Cork expressed their thoughts, feelings and views.

The report will describe this work that is ongoing and has different facets. These include: the survey of over 700 young people in East Cork; *Exit the Street*, a young peoples’ conference where groups of young people presented using a variety of creative media including film; the East Cork Youth Network (ECYN); a Youth Film Project; a Youth Exchange Project and The Skit Day.

The report presents a snapshot of some aspects of young people’s lives, experiences, feeling and views. They told us emphatically that they do not have adequate facilities; they identified where they go and what they do currently and what they would like to happen in the future. This includes recreational facilities and places to “hang around” with friends. They also identified the issues that concern them.

Based on the responses of young people and on our learning from this process, we make the following recommendations that are further developed in this report:

### RECOMMENDATION ONE

Meet the needs of young people for recreational facilities. Our work highlights the urgent need for action at local and policy level.

### RECOMMENDATION TWO

Further develop networks with and for young people in East Cork.

### RECOMMENDATION THREE

Forge links between schools, Youghal Youthreach Centre and community projects including youth cafés. All are working towards the well-being of young people.

### RECOMMENDATION FOUR

Build confidence and skills (including leadership skills) of young people in a variety of ways.

### RECOMMENDATION FIVE

Ensure that facilities developed are inclusive of all young people living in East Cork.

### RECOMMENDATION SIX

Sharing of information is needed.

### RECOMMENDATION SEVEN

Address the health awareness needs of young people.

### RECOMMENDATION EIGHT

Encourage young people to be actively involved in their East Cork communities by creating opportunities for them to contribute.

### RECOMMENDATION NINE

To mobilise all members of the East Cork community.

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## INTRODUCTION

### CONFERENCE JUST FOR THE YOUNG ONES

THE IRISH EXAMINER, TUESDAY 18TH OCTOBER 2005

### CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON YOUTH

THE EVENING ECHO, TUESDAY 18TH OCTOBER 2005

### EAST CORK YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE TO PROVIDE POSITIVE FORUM

THE IMOKILLY PEOPLE, THURSDAY 20TH OCTOBER 2005

### YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE IN MIDLETON – A FIRST FOR EAST CORK

THE IMOKILLY PEOPLE, THURSDAY 27TH OCTOBER 2005

### SUCCESSFUL YOUTH CAFES SET TO MAKE CORK DEBUT

THE IRISH EXAMINER, TUESDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 2005

In October and early November 2005 these headlines appeared in our national and local newspapers. They reflect positive vibrant and active images of young people and of their East Cork communities.

## What sparked these headlines? What are the stories behind them?

As expressed by Edward and Hatch, there is “a need for a story about young people that is not just about young people at risk, young people in education or preparing for work or young people being diverted from anti-social or criminal behaviour. The story of young people must add up to something positive. It must convey that we are interested in young people not just because they will be adults one day in the future, but because it is important to do right by them now” (2003, p.58).

These headlines are referring to an East Cork Youth Conference that was held in Middleton, East Cork on Tuesday October 24th 2005. Some 250 people attended the conference, *Exit the Street: A Place of Our Own*. Of these, 150 participants were aged 15 to 19 years. But this is only part of the story. This report is an account of a *process of engaging with young people*. The Conference is part of that process, one which involves young people and those who work with them in this East Cork community.

The report will address the following questions:

HOW DID IT ALL START?  
WHO WAS INVOLVED?  
WHAT WAS THE CONFERENCE ALL ABOUT?  
WHAT HAPPENED AFTER IT?

We will describe work that is ongoing and has different facets. These include: an exploratory survey of over 700 young people in East Cork in the lead up to the conference; *Exit the Street*, a young peoples' conference where groups of young people presented using a variety of creative media including film; the East Cork Youth Network (ECYN); a Youth Film Project; a Youth Exchange Project and The Skit Day.

This Report and its launch are also an integral part of this work in motion. All of this is about young people exploring and identifying the issues which affect their lives and examining the facilities that are available to them now. It is also about identifying the ways in which these facilities can be improved upon in East Cork and the development of support networks. Though we are aware of the common use of the term “recreation” by government (Office of the Minister for Children, 2006) and other research in Ireland (de Roiste & Dineen, 2005), the term “facilities” is used intentionally by us. This term was used initially in the context of involving young people in a conference which was about the need for them to have ‘a place to go’; hence “*Exit the Street: A Place of Our Own*”. In this work we are interested in the places, locations and structures that facilitate the gatherings of young people in a social context. Nevertheless, the term “recreation” is one which we accept as important, particularly in relation to the National Recreation Policy for Young People due to be published this month. This policy document we are led to believe will prioritise both “recreational facilities” and “youth café type facilities” in particular (O'Brien, 2007). We have avoided using the term “leisure” as our focus is on places and on activities rather than on all the things young people do in their free time such as watching television and reading. We also feel that the term “leisure” has been commercialised (Caldwell, 2005).

Our use of “youth friendly” in the title of the report is a descriptive term in relation to facilities named by young people themselves; it is very specific to the report and implies that we are naming facilities that young people have identified as important to them in meeting their needs, hence “youth friendly”.

The work in this report is based on a belief that young people are best able to express what young people need. They do not need interpreters. They do need the support of all of us in the community to enable it to happen in a way that is positive and enjoyable and provides learning for all. Throughout this report, we choose to use 'young people' because in our view, it is not over laden with preconceived notions like terms such as teenager, adolescent or youth. For more detailed exploration of representations of 'youth' refer to Christine Griffin's work (2004). In the context of our work, young people are people between the ages of 13-19 years and who live in the East Cork Area. Like Stainton Rogers and colleagues (2004), we argue that young people are a highly diverse group. Some are at school, others have already left, and some are working, while others are not. As these authors state, "All that (largely artificially) defines them is a matter of age" and "They vary along all manners of factors including those of class, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity. They also vary in their religion (or lack of it), their political affiliation (or lack of it) and the sub-cultures to which they belong" (p.19). When we use the term 'young people' here we use it in an inclusive sense. It is only exclusive in relation to age. For us 'young people', though a distinct grouping with their own experiences, needs and ways of behaving, are part of the whole community of 'people' in East Cork.

The report is a 'snapshot' of what it is like to be a young person in East Cork at this particular point in time. We acknowledge that things are changing all the time at the local level and these young people are moving on. We are also very aware of the rapid changes occurring at the national level in Ireland. As we write, we await the delivery of a National Recreation Policy for Young People (Office of the Minister for Children, March 2006), informed by a public consultation process that involved young people. This is all happening in the context of rapid social changes in Ireland, the 'Celtic Tiger' economy, greater cultural and ethnic diversity and legislative and policy developments in the area of children's rights (Hennessy and Hogan, 2000 cited in Lalor and Baird, January 2006, p.14). The National Development Plan (2007-2013) is due to be announced with up to €50 billion in social spending programmes. We believe the seven year strategy will include funds for recreational facilities for children. It is being drafted by the Office for Social Inclusion (O'Brien & Paul, 2007).

In writing this report, we hope that a balance has been maintained between producing a document that belongs to young people, that represents them and that they will want to pick up, read or flick through; and one that will help achieve facilities that meet identified needs by mobilising the East Cork community as a whole as well as service providers and funders of local groups in the area.

The outcomes of consulting young people are important, and so is the process itself (Hill et al, 2004). While consultation activities can bring a range of new skills and promote self-confidence in young people, we agree with these authors who argue that "if these gains in competence are accompanied by lack of impact, which then results in a disillusionment, that is itself negative for the individual and for society" (p.83). We are acutely aware of this danger. One young person in our exploratory survey wrote "By the time something happens I'll be old enough to drink."

We like the approach suggested by Hill and colleagues which involves collaboration among all the stakeholders, including young people and is committed to achieving real and tangible outcomes based on what young people want (2004, p.77). In his launch of the Report of the Public Consultation for the Development of the National Recreation Policy for Young People, Brian Lenihan TD acknowledges that services designed in consultation with young people are much more likely to succeed than those developed without their involvement. He highlights the importance of partnerships particularly at local level in developing recreation opportunities for young people (Office of the Minister for Children, March, 2006, p.3-4).

In writing this report we want to capture a way of working with young people and move this process forward in a positive way. The report is divided into two parts. The first section focuses on the process of involving young people through the exploratory survey on their needs, the conference *Exit the Street* and other youth activities. The second part looks ahead to the way forward and makes some recommendations.

# SECTION ONE



## SECTION 1

According to the National Children's Strategy "Children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity"

(Government of Ireland, 2000, p.30)

The last thirty years has seen the development of a considerable body of literature on the meaning of consultation as a mode of involving children and young people in decision making. Hart's ladder of participation (1992) is among the best-known models and is used in the *National Children's Strategy*. Other and potentially more appropriate models have since been devised, including Treseder's non-hierarchical and dynamic conception of involving children/young people in decision-making. We like Treseder's interpretation of consultation, "a process which requires the commitment to take on board young people's views and present detailed information back to them" (1997, p.4). For us, consultation is an on-going process. This is emphasised by the Louth Comhairle na nOg Report (2005, p. 3) which argues that consultation as a method of gathering views must be linked to decision-making and that the views of those being consulted must be fed into a wider process, in which young people remain involved. We view adult responsibility in this process of decision-making as critically important. As noted by Kirby and colleagues (2003, cited in National Children's Office, Children's Rights Alliance and National Youth Council of Ireland, June 2005, p. 16) even if decisions are made autonomously by young people, "implementation will require input from adults and is ultimately dependent on adult structures, responsibility and power". The UK National Youth Agency (April, 2004) and the Irish guidelines, "Young Voices" (NCO, CRA & NYCI, June 2005) are excellent resources on the topic of involving young people (see Recommended Reading).

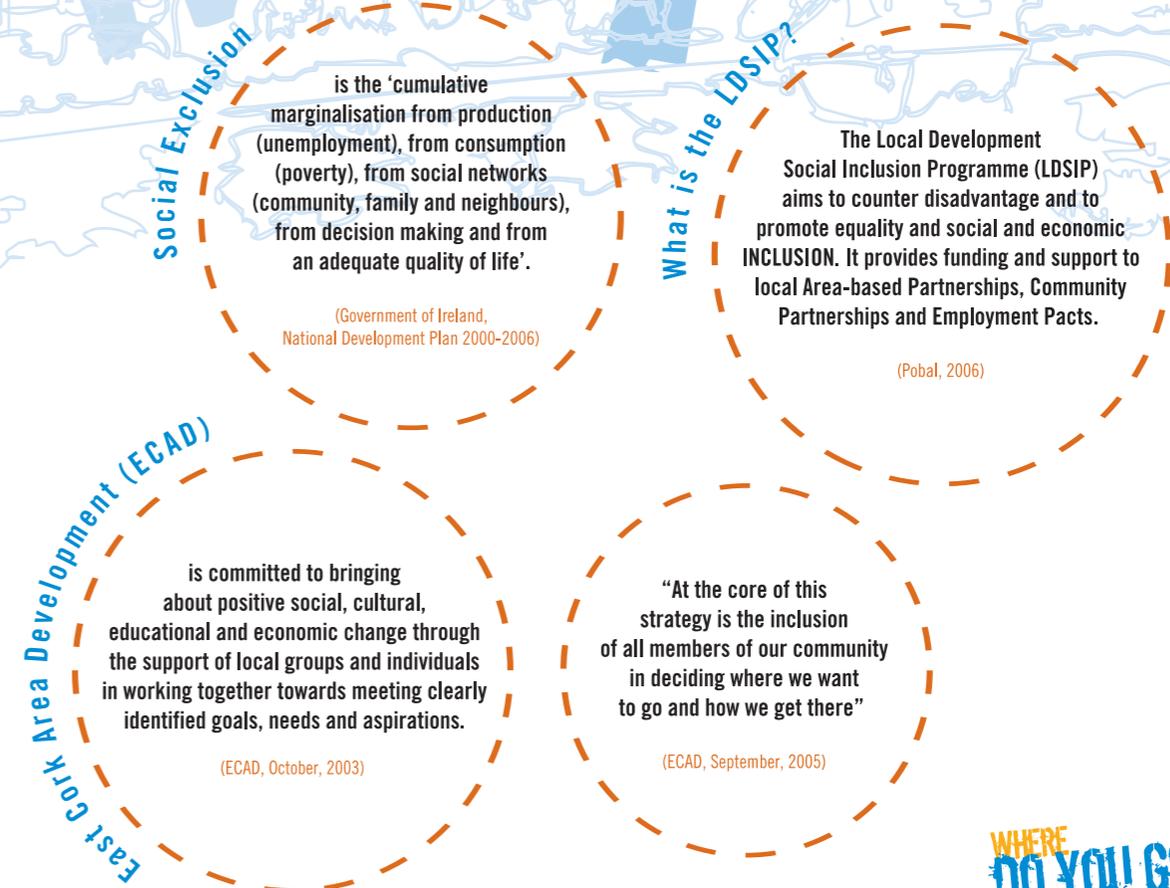
We will now start at the beginning and describe this process which involved young people in East Cork...

In line with this goal and government commitment (in keeping with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Ireland in 1992), there is some impetus at the national level for consultation with young people and their participation in policy development and planning. These developments include structures such as Comhairle and Dail na nOg, Student Councils, National Children's Office (NCO) Children and Young People's Forum and publication of participation guidelines (National Children's Office, January 2007). The lack of recreational facilities was a major issue identified by children and young people in the consultation process on the National Children's Strategy, a topic in discussions at the Dail na nOg in 2005 (and again in 2006!) and recently young people were directly involved in the public consultation process on the development of the National Recreation Policy (Office of the Minister for Children, 2006).

and young people

## HOW DID IT ALL START?

The work described in this report began with an initiative undertaken by East Cork Area Development Ltd. (ECAD) through the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP). One of the aims of ECAD is to complement and add value to the services and supports of other organisations working with young people in the East Cork area. A map is presented in Appendix 1 indicating the ECAD area.



WHERE DO YOU GO WHEN YOU GO OUT?

In December 2004, ECAD engaged in a consultation process to identify the needs of young people in Cobh, Youghal and Midleton through discussions with the main youth organisations with whom ECAD had links in each of these areas. These were: Cobh Youth Services, Midleton Youth Project, Foroige and the Youghal Youth Committee (Appendix 2). Part of the brief was to highlight any common needs in the East Cork area as a whole.

In late 2004, at a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midleton Youth Project, the view was expressed that *“young people have nothing to do on a Saturday night other than walk down one side of the street and back up the other – it’s a disgrace”*. This view was mirrored within the other two communities, Youghal and Cobh. Phrases like *“no-where to go”* or *‘the need for ‘a place to go’* were being used by representatives of the organisations who worked with young people in the area. One of the members of the Youghal Youth Committee in his role as a voluntary member of the Foroige Youth Club in Youghal, prioritised the need for a place for young people to go that they could *“call their own”* and *“hang out”* and that would accommodate the significant need in terms of the large numbers of young people in that area. Interestingly, this focus was on ‘buildings’. Cobh Youth Services are one of the main youth service providers in that town. They had recently accessed funding to buy a building and wanted to look at *“what would happen in that building?”* This led to putting together a plan for the use of the building in consultation with all of the young service users, youth workers (paid and voluntary) and the members of the Management Board. This was about ownership so that young people in Cobh would have a place that they could identify as their own.

Thus a common priority had quickly and clearly emerged from discussions with these organisations and groups; the need for a place where young people could meet and participate in a range of activities. In a needs analysis that was carried out in Carrigtwohill in July 2004, findings pointed to the need for young people in the area to have *“somewhere to go, a safe place where young people could socialise such as a youth café or some type of drop-in centre”* (Ryan, 2004, p.12). The Peer Support Education Group in Midleton (Appendix 2) had already made contacts with the Gaf Youth Café in Galway and felt strongly that a similar approach would work in their town. What is a Youth Café? (Appendix 3).

In the broader Irish context, a recent survey of the views and needs of 988 young people in County Kildare found that the most frequently identified concern by the respondents was *“being bored/having nothing to do”* and the future action identified was *“having somewhere to go/something to do/a place to hang out”* (Lalor & Baird, January, 2006, pp.2-4). Hall and colleagues (1999) write about how issues of *“space and place”* are connected to personal and social identity of young people in their transition to adulthood. They emphasise young people’s need for *“...movement and association (a place to go) – space in which to meet and be with others, space which young people can enter on their own terms and on their own initiative, unaccompanied and unsupervised by adults”* (p.506). This is clearly expressed by a 15 year old in their project: *“Basically everyone needs somewhere to go, somewhere to be with friends..... and have a place that’s away from home and away from school”* (Hall, Coffey & Williamson, 1999, p.506). This theme of young people wanting a comfortable place where they could *“hang out”* with their friends and where they can have a sense of ownership also emerged as important for young people during the consultation process of the National Recreation Policy (Office of the Minister for Children, 2006).

It became evident to the organisations involved that if we as a community were to meet young people’s need for *“a place to go”*, then we had to look to other communities to see what was happening and at models which were working. Above all, young people had to be directly involved from the outset.

In early 2005, East Cork Area Development proposed the idea of hosting a conference in order to gain a better insight into what young people were saying and further develop ideas around meeting their needs in an appropriate way. This was supported by those who were involved in the initial research discussions. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the next step would be well informed and youth oriented. It aimed to bring together young people and those interested in working with young people in our community as a whole. These included; youth groups, youth workers (paid and voluntary), teachers, social workers, health care providers, parents, community groups and statutory agencies.

## THE MAIN OBJECTIVES WERE:

- To bring together all those interested in working with young people in East Cork to look at models of best practice in relation to a “place” for young people, including “youth cafés”.
- To work in partnership with young people to support them in identifying their needs and in finding ways to meet these needs.
- To create a dynamic forum for the exchange of ideas and information to help us shape the future.

The conference would provide an opportunity for young people to express their views and feelings in creative ways through a wide variety of media. It would hear directly from young people themselves about the issues that affect them and about the kind of future that they envisaged.

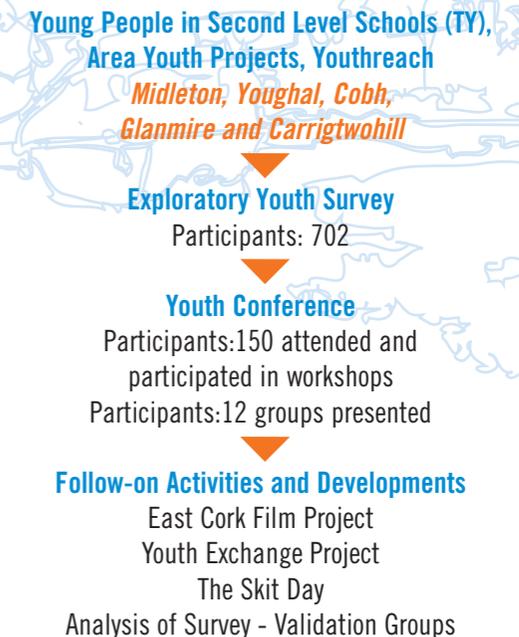
## INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Based on the 2002 Census figures, there were 6,542 young people aged 13-19 years living in the ECAD Area in East Cork (CSO, 2002). While age specific statistics are not available yet from the 2006 Census, the population of the ECAD area increased by 13.7% during 2002-2006, which is significantly above the comparative National, County and Province figures (ECAD, December, 2006). Figures on enrolment numbers from the Department of Education and Science (2006) for second level schools in East Cork gives the numbers of young people in the area by school and by gender (Appendix 4). In general, the age at second level school ranges from 12 to 19. However, it is important to note that these young people attending these schools in East Cork are drawn from a much wider catchment area including Mayfield, Mahon, Montenotte, Ballyvolane, Cork city and even Watergrasshill and Fermoy.

Young people in five East Cork towns (Midleton, Youghal, Cobh, Glanmire and Carrigtwohill) were involved through the Transition Year (TY) Programme in 12 East Cork Second Level Schools (as there was no uptake for transition year in one second level school, 5th Year students participated), the Youghal Youthreach project and 3 Area Youth Projects including

the Midleton and Carrigtwohill Youth Area Projects and Cobh Youth Services (Appendix 2). Involving all the Second Level Schools, Youthreach and 3 Area Youth Projects in the ECAD area meant that a cross-section of young people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds would be included. Figure 1 illustrates how young people were involved at the different stages of the project.

Figure 1 Involvement of Young People



As shown, the first stage in the process of involvement was an exploratory youth survey which was followed by the youth conference: *Exit the Street*. A range of other activities flowed from the survey and conference.



## The Process of Involving Young People

All the schools and youth groups were contacted directly before the summer break in 2005. Meetings took place with Principals and TY Co-ordinators in the schools and Youth workers in the projects. All were provided with an Information Pack which gave an outline of the conference event. By June 2005 all schools were on board and ready to participate in September when follow up calls were made and in each area where possible the local youth worker was introduced as the liaison person.

The young people were invited to participate and asked to complete a survey questionnaire individually first. It was explained that the survey was about facilities for young people in the East Cork Area. Consent to participate was voluntary and on the basis that information gathered would be treated confidentially within the schools and youth projects and would be used only in working to meet their needs. When compiled each group would receive feedback through the youth workers. Following completion of the questionnaires, the young people moved into small groups to talk about what came up for them and common issues. The TY Co-ordinators and Youth Workers informed the young people about the idea of a conference and invited them to consider representing these group responses in a public way "to a community of people including other young people, adults who are interested in working with them in finding ways to meet their needs, representatives of other youth organisations who have experience in their own communities of working with young people". A list of suggestions were provided to facilitate young people to think about ways of presenting that involved creative methods such as drama, music, poster, sculpture, painting, film, maps and oral presentations. Everyone who completed the questionnaires was involved in deciding what would be said at the conference and how it would be presented. At the conference there was a smaller representative group of 10 to 15 members from each of the larger groups.

## THE EXPLORATORY SURVEY

The survey is not a stand alone research study and was not intended to be. As part of a larger process, it was a means of starting a discussion that would lead to an opportunity for the young people to present their thoughts, feelings and views in a local public forum i.e. the conference. In keeping with the goals of the conference, the survey sought to give the young people in East Cork a voice through which they could express their views on the adequacy of current facilities, their usual activities and experiences and future wishes. The qualitative focus of the survey facilitated this by allowing the respondents to express their views free from the predefined structure inherent in closed question questionnaires and free from the assumptions and influence of adult views. Research designs with a qualitative focus are often used in pilot or exploratory research of this type (Knobel, 1993). The survey was carried out throughout September 2005.

### THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The survey questions arose directly from conversations with young people around what it was like to be young in East Cork. They invited broad opinion on adequacy of facilities, current experiences and a broad unlimited 'wish list' for the future:

1. Do you think that there are adequate facilities for young people in...? *name of area?*
2. If you go out where do you go?
3. What would you like to see happening in ... *name of area* for young people in the future?

The respondents were also asked to tick a box indicating their age-group (13-15 years or 16-18 years). The first question was intentionally provocative, its aim being to stimulate individual responses and group discussions that were lively, animated and involved. One of the young people involved in setting the question expressed 'that, (question), was just to get them going'. The other two were open questions, designed to invite broad opinion. Involvement of young people meant that the language used was informal and youth friendly.

## ANALYSIS

A content analysis was carried out on the qualitative data gathered, using the method described by Knodel (1993). Content analysis involves the manual coding of documents to obtain counts of categories or themes which facilitate interpretation and further analysis. This approach allowed the identification of the key activities, issues and themes that were expressed by the young respondents of this survey and enabled them to be analysed in a meaningful way. See Appendix 5 for discussion of coding system used.

## VALIDATION GROUPS



Another layer built in to the analysis of the information from the questionnaires was called validation (Appendix 5). Accepting that we as adults do not know what the

issues are for young people and that we sometimes use a different language, a further consultation with young people was introduced after the initial coding was carried out. Interpretation of the information from young people in their responses is not left up to one or two adults. Instead, in issuing an invitation to participate in the analysis of the data it re-involves some of the young people who have participated from the start. This led to further engagement, re-iterating ownership.

Groups of young people from each of the five areas, who were involved in the questionnaires and in the conference, gathered together to validate the interpretation of the responses to the questions. Groups ranged in size from 3 members (Glanmire) to 7 members (Youghal). Groups had to have a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 12 members. In all, 22 young people were consulted.

The Validation session took place at a local venue organised through the local youth project (3) or school (2) and was friendly and informal. The interviewer together with the Youth Worker or Teacher, acting as note-taker, introduced the session with a recap on the questions. Blank questionnaires were passed around with reminders of how the questions were introduced. Information was given on how many were returned from their area and in East Cork overall. Members of the group then looked at five actual questionnaires. A brief introduction to coding followed, outlining the reasons why and how this was done. This was followed by a focus on the data from the questionnaires. The intention in doing this is to ensure that no translation, no changing, no misinterpretation took place. This was done by use of direct quotations and by checking interpretation in the validation groups. Are we understanding and thus coding correctly what you and other young people are saying? In asking about the coding we checked if we were interpreting correctly and whether our codes were valid and reliable. It also allowed young people who participated in this process of validation to choose what quotations best expressed their views and experiences. Questions asked were:

Is there something that stands out for you?  
Is there something that really says it for you?  
Can we quote your responses?

They were consulted on how they would like their ideas presented, what format of reporting their views would be preferable to them and most likely to be read by their cohort. They were asked about how they would like it to be launched, by whom and in what way they would like to be involved in it. They were asked who they would like to invite to the launch and for their ideas on getting publicity for the event.

The validation process also presented an opportunity to provide reassurances of confidentiality and use of the information only to achieve support both financially and otherwise, from members of their community as a whole and to lobby for adequate resources for young people in the East Cork area.

WHERE DO YOU GO WHEN YOU GO OUT?

## THE SURVEY FINDINGS

Overall there were 702 responses to the questionnaire from participating young people. As Table 1, shows most of the respondents were from Midleton. As illustrated in Appendix 4, second level school population numbers were highest for Midleton. Some 56% of the questionnaires were completed by young people in the 13-15 age-group which would be expected as most of the respondents were in transition year in the second level schools. Ages of the young people were not recorded for the Youthreach group. With the exception of Youghal (48.2%), response rates were high for all the second level schools ranging from 85% to 100%. Some 90% of the trainees in Youthreach participated.

**Table 1** Number of Respondents by Town, Youth Group/School and By Age

Town	School/ Group Name	No. aged 13-15	No. aged 16-18	Age not recorded	School total No.	Town Total No.
Carrigtwohill	St. Aloysius College*	58	44	0	102	140
	Carrigtwohill Area Youth Project	32	6	0	38	
Cobh	Colaiste Muire	46	23	0	69	86
	Carrignafoy Community College	11	5	1	17	
Glanmire	Colaiste an Phiarsaigh	41	27	0	68	126
	Glanmire Community College	30	28	0	58	
Midleton	St. Mary's High School	32	36	0	68	273
	CBS Secondary School	41	25	0	66	
	Midleton College	25	21	0	46	
	St. Coleman's Community College	30	52	3	85	
	Midleton Youth Project	6	2	0	8	
Youghal	Schools: Colaiste Eoin /Loreto /CBS	27	14	0	41	77
	Youghal Area Youth Project	14	9	0	23	
	Youthreach	0	0	13	13	
<b>Total Numbers</b>		<b>393</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>702</b>

\* St Aloysius College is an all female school.

## Views on Adequacy of Facilities for Young People in Each Town

**Table 2** Adequate facilities in each town?

School/ Group Name	YES Adequate Facilities	NO Adequate Facilities	Other	No Response	Town Total No.
Carrigtwohill	5	80	17	38*	140
Cobh	4	73	9	0	86
Glanmire	17	105	4	0	126
Midleton	11	234	24	4	273
Youghal	2	63	10	2	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>39 (5.5%)</b>	<b>555 (79.1%)</b>	<b>64 (9.1%)</b>	<b>44 (6.3%)</b>	<b>702</b>

\* As a result of changes made to this question by one organisation, the responses could not be included.

As Table 2 shows, 79.1% of respondents answered 'no' when they were asked if they thought there were adequate facilities in their town for young people. Only 5.5% said 'yes' that there were adequate facilities. A further 9.1% gave a qualified response.

## EMPHATIC “NO”

In many cases ‘no’ was emphasised by use of large print and exclamation marks. This is illustrated by the following examples which are colour coded as follows to indicate each of the five towns (Glanmire, Cobh, Youghal, Carrigtwohill and Midleton):

“NO!!! There is nothing here whatsoever. Nothing at all. Not even a little thing to do. Do something!!!!”  
“No. No place for young people”  
“No way. Not at all. Too many pubs, restaurants, no sheltered areas to go”  
“No definitely not!”  
“Absolutely nothing”

“No. There is Nothing to do at all!!!”  
“NO!!!”

• “No theres no where to go”

“NO!!!!”

“Not a HOPE”

“NO!!!!”

“Absolutely (without a single doubt in my mind) NOT!”

“No there is nowhere to go”

“No Way”

“There is definitely not!!”

“No! There are no recreational facilities at all for young people in this area. People that live here get so bored because there is nothing to do EVER!!”

These strong and definitive reactions to our question speak for themselves and provide insight into the feelings of young people about this issue. In many of the responses further information was given. References were made to a number of other factors.

In Midleton, a common response was “no, there is nothing except a cinema and a pool hall”. These examples illustrate this further:

“no, midleton has no adequate facilities because all people do is go walking around the town the only facilities in midleton is fat alberts it’s a pool hall & that’s all there is & its boring”

“No! There is only one place to go and that’s the pool hall, most people who go out and just go drinking because there is nowhere else to go”

“No, the Guards and the Council are constantly giving out about the amount of underage drinking but realistically there is not much else to do if you don’t play pool”

In Cobh, “For my age group I don’t feel there are adequate facilities. I used to be a member of a drama group but due to lack of funds have closed down. I feel bored everyday.” And Youghal “No, there are no facilities for young people here in Youghal”

Reference to fields, corners and walls were made in a number of responses to Question 1 Carrigtwohill:

“No, there is not a lot to do except to lye down the field and talk on sunny days & there is no where to socialise with my peers!”

“No because most of the time we just hang around by fields and walls”

There were many references to drinking alcohol in answer to this question:

“No! Young people have nowhere to go or nothing to do so they turn to underage drinking”

“No because teenagers have nowhere to go and causes underage drinking and gets into trouble. They jst hang around dangerous places such as pontoon, Stonebridge”

“I dont think there are enough facilities in Midleton for young people, as the cinema is very old and not very big and it is expensive. .... Market Green is a great place to shop for young people - but not at night time. Alot of young people get bored and so many of them decide to drink under age”

“No because most young people hang in the same spot and usually get into trouble Because of Boredom. They also get depressed because of no facilities and end of in a lot of danger like vandelisum getting drunk or deeling with drugs”

“No I do not because if there were, you would not see young people on the streets and drinking because there is

**nothing else to do”**

“No because young people find themselves having no where to go when in Midleton on a nite out. There is limited amount of places to go. And some young people get bored very easily. Some young people turn to alcohol as a means of doing something to occupy themselves”

“No we have nowhere to go & that why ‘underagers’ go drinking in dangerous places. example: (babywalk, factory, pontoon)”

“No. Because young people are on the streets drinking”

“No because if there was, less people would be going drinking in bushes every weekend thinking that it does not get much better than this”

“No. young people these days tend to just hang around on the street late at night turning to alcohol because of

**boredom”**

“No, there are facilities for younger children such as playground + there are pubs for over 18s but nothing for the teenage population”

“No. Because there are absolutely no facilities young people have nothing to do but smoke drink.”

“No - because there is nothing for teenagers which leads to people drinking and smoking”

“Cobh has very inadequate facilities There is nothing for young Adults to do!! You can go for a walk or go drinking and that is the sad truth.”

“No I don’t + I think this is obvious. As to the amount of people you see on the streets drinking smoking, dealing etc.”

“No. Young people/teenagers in Glanmire and have nothing to do.....this can lead to underage drinking in forests and parks”

They also chose to make other comments about this in response to the question:

“No, there is nothing for teenagers to do, that’s why people take drugs”

“No. There is no proper youth centre or anything. Everywhere we go we get told to move”

“No. We have no place to go in the evening. We just have to hang around, which annoys old people. We have no proper place to hang around.”

“No I’m either too young or too old for any facilities around here”

“No!! Shock Horror.....” There are facilities for children i.e. primary school children but NONE for teenagers”

“No, there’s no swimming pool, not even a youth club so people have nowhere else to hang out other than the street”

We were struck by the large number of references to drinking alcohol in the responses. Yet we did not specifically ask these young people about drinking alcohol. The young people themselves were making the link between the lack of facilities, feelings of boredom, depression, danger and drinking alcohol. A large scale national study on the mental health of young people also highlights the link that young people made between a lack of recreational activities in their communities to feelings of frustration, boredom and misuse of drugs and alcohol (National Suicide Foundation, 2004).

We believe that the comments of these young people about alcohol need to be framed in the national Irish context where under-age drinking is ranked as the highest among 35 European countries in relation to the number of teenagers who regularly binge drink and the second highest in reported regular drunkenness (ESPAD, 2003 cited in National Children's Office, May, 2005, p.11). These comments provide us with some insight into young people's feelings and views, and the validation groups' comments provide clarification and additional perspectives on the issue of drinking alcohol.

For example, this is what the Cobh validation group told us:

**“Drinking happens a lot in Cobh. If friends are drinking you have nothing else to do other than drink”**

When asked if there was peer pressure to drink they felt there wasn't that but **“just nothing else to do”** although one questionnaire respondent in Cobh says **“My associates drink and its hard for me not to”**

In the Carrigtwohill validation group, they said **“All young people in Carrig drink, these places are not safe, and we drink because of boredom and peer pressure”**

Another comment was about underage drinking **“12 years is important age for something to do.. youre very vulnerable”**.

The Glanmire validation group told us **“People who don't go out are not interested in drinking and theres no alternative”** and Midleton, **“Drinking is an issue. Nothing to do but drink”**

## “YES” RESPONSES

A number of respondents who expressed the view 'yes' that there were adequate facilities also qualified their response with unsolicited extra information or explanation. For example, a number of young people felt that although there were facilities in their area these were connected to sporting activities:

**“Yes I think there is adequate facilities in the area but they are nearly all sporting facilities”**

**“There is for sports but that's it.”**

**“Yes there are facilities for young people for example the community hall, the pitch”**

**“Yes, Soccer club, G.A.A., Rugby etc”**  
**“No theres nothing to do if you don't play sports”**

**“Yes we have adequate facilities in midleton. We have many sports which we can choose from. We have a soccer club. GAA clubs midleton and balinacuragh. We have a rugby club, golf club and pitch and putt club. The pitch and putt club is constantly being vandalised”.+ No. There isn't a lot of things only sports and not everybody plays sports”**

**“For young kids yes. But for teenagers nothing! If you are not into sport or drama etc. there is nothing for you”**

The validation groups provided the following additional information in relation to this:

In Glanmire, in relation to the **“yes”** answers....**“probably GAA people”**... **“only if you are part of a club”** and even then they commented on the charges for sporting facilities **“€50 per hour for Astroturf, there are four sections and they charge that for each one... need 10 to be able to afford”**

**“In Cobh its all sport....”**

In Youghal, a **“yes” to this question it was felt must be made by “a lad into sports... plenty of sports in Youghal if youre into sport... or maybe someone older, 17-18, who can get into pubs & so has something to do”**

In Midleton, likewise the validation group members agreed that there is **“nothing to do unless you do sports”** and **“theres loads to do if you play sports”**

example with the exception of “sport” or of “money” (i.e. there are not adequate facilities unless you have money).

If the participants responded to the question in terms of their own area i.e. they made reference to the place they live being outside of the East Cork area, then these were also coded as “other”. (Appendix 5).

## Other Responses

Some 9.1% of responses to question 1 were put in a category “Other”. These included “not really”, “don't know”, “yes but could improve”, “kind of I suppose”. These responses were seen to be ambivalent, some said “no” with qualification for

## ACTIVITIES AND PLACES

The respondents were asked “if they go out where do they go?” and in responding to this question many of them mentioned particular places that they went to with friends or activities in which they participated.

Table 3 Activities Identified by Respondents in each Town

Activity	Carrigtwohill Schools/Youth group (N=140)	Cobh Schools (N=86)	Glanmire Schools (N=126)	Midleton Schools /Youth Groups (N=273)	Youghal Schools /Youth Groups (N=77)	Total No. Respondents (N=702)
Hanging around (with peers)	118 (84.3%)	76 (88.4%)	110 (87.3%)	210 (76.9%)	63 (81.8%)	577 (82.2%)
Drinking alcohol	8 (5.7%)	5 (5.8%)	2 (1.6%)	15 (5.5%)	12 (16.6%)	42 (6%)
Hobby (dance, art, music, etc.)	0	6 (6.9%)	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (1.3%)	9 (1.3%)
Sport (pitch and putt, soccer, etc)	2 (1.4%)	17 (19.8%)	13 (10.3%)	9 (3.3%)	8 (10.4%)	49 (7%)
Pool-snooker	0	1 (1.2%)	1 (0.8%)	0	0	2 (0.3%)
Cinema	19 (13.6%)	1 (1.2%)	18 (14.3%)	90 (32.9%)	16 (20.7%)	144 (20.5%)
Night-time activities (discos, band and open mic nights)	2 (1.4%)	4 (4.6%)	1 (0.8%)	11 (4%)	0	18 (2.6%)
Shopping	12 (8.6%)	0	4 (3.2%)	3 (1.1%)	0	19 (2.7%)
Part-time work ( Babysitting)	0	4 (4.6%)	0	1 (0.4%)	0	5 (0.7%)
Other	28 (20%)	10 (11.6%)	9 (7.1%)	37 (13.6%)	13 (16.9%)	97 (13.4%)

WHERE DO YOU GO WHEN YOU GO OUT?

**Table 3** shows the activities identified by the respondents in each town. These young people in East Cork tell us that 82.2% of them spend time 'hanging around' (with friends) when they go out. This was a consistent pattern right across all the five areas consulted.

Clearly this was a popular activity for the respondents in the survey. This finding is supported by several research studies on young people's lives (see literature review by de Roiste and Dineen, 2005). As discussed by these researchers, "hanging around" is a normal aspect of young people's social worlds and important for adolescent development (p.47). Some of the themes that emerged in their detailed review represent this activity as intrinsically connected to young people's lifestyles and an important site for accessing membership and negotiating their role within their peer group, but also a source of enjoyment, fun and fulfilment (pp.47-48). For further discussion of this activity refer to Appendix 6.

What the validation groups said about "Hanging Around" (with friends):

**"My mam asked me why I hang around town and I say where else am I meant to go"**

This raises the issue of parents' attitudes to hanging around. The following comments from the validation groups convey parental attitudes, elements of risk and danger from these young people's perspectives:

**" Hanging around da place with my friends and smoking and drinking getting into shit cos of hanging around in big gangs"**  
**"Im not allowed to go out because im not allowed to hang around"**  
**" you cant socialise outside school cause your parents don't allow" Parents don't understand**

In the Youghal validation group, **they felt a youth café was the answer to this as "parents would know where you were going"**

For 20.5% of respondents, the cinema was named as an activity when they go out. In Midleton this figure is highest (32.9%), and this was before the traditional and smaller cinema was replaced by a more modern 5 Screen Cinema. In Cobh only 1 person names going to the cinema, reflecting the lack of any cinema facilities in that town to date.

The validation groups comments provide further insights:

#### **"Cinema too expensive"**

"Money is an issue. If you work it affects school but if you don't then you don't have any money and must rely on pocket money- there should be student discounts- cinema should be cheaper- swimming pool good value is only €3.50"

#### **"In cobh it (cinema) wouldn't be the only solution- need for other things to happen too"**

**Cinema** "is the main thing really.....not a big omniplex but as part of overall like amusement centre.... We have to go to Cork now, not Mahon - no direct bus"

"If you aren't into sport and just hanging around then everything is so costly... buses, cinemas and we're not supposed to work ...because it interferes with study"  
"Bus fares – reduced only up to 15...when we're in school not supposed to work, no money of our own"  
"Everything is money"

#### **"Whats the point in having a cinema with no money.. young people don't have money"**

Overall 7% of respondents mentioned being involved in sports when they went out. The percentage was highest for Cobh (19.8%) and about 10% of respondents in Glanmire and Midleton indicated that they were involved in sports "training".

The issue of money was also raised by the validation groups in relation to sports:

**"you even need money for that, we're charged for everything"**  
Comments from the Glanmire group **were similar to above with comments on charges for Astro Pitch of €50 per hour.**

As highlighted by these comments, lack of money limits young people's options and in effect, can exclude them from accessing commercial leisure facilities. Access to transport is also a factor **"...the buses don't run a lot, so you can't go to town, etc."**

Six percent of all respondents referred to drinking as an activity when they go out. This figure is higher in Youghal at 16.6% and comments included: **"At The Weekend: Go cruising around the place, Then just hang around the streets, fairly pissed usually. Or sometimes out to perks but we always get kicked out. Or hang around green park"**  
**"Drinking in places where no-one can Find me and i can't be sayin where + Bushing. Coz dere's noting betta 4 us ta do".**

The comments of 5.7% of respondents from Carrigtwohill indicate that when they are out they drink alcohol. As one young person commented: **"Hang around by the shop or around the streets or lanes. We go drinking on strands or bushes to pass the time. I have also witnessed 12/13 year olds smoking drugs and drinking at this early age because of lack of amenities"**

The Carrigtwohill validation group expressed the view that **"Young people might not have told everything for fear teachers would see questionnaires"** This comment ties in with comments in the Youghal validation group when asked why they thought drinking is mentioned more in their town than in others in the survey.

The Youghal group commented, **"Parents telling us not to go into pubs.... Not to go drinking but we want to for the socialising side of it..just a few drinks to relax"** The members of the validation group in Youghal felt that this quote, **"At the weekend: Go cruising around the place, then just hang around the streets, fairly pissed usually or sometimes out to perks but we always get kicked out"** (13-15 year old in response to question two) **"is like what adults think young people get up to more than what we do"**

When asked why they thought drinking was mentioned more in Youghal than in other towns, they agreed the following **"we don't really care what people think; so better to be honest about alcohol"** They made reference to another town in East Cork having a worse reputation **"but maybe they hide it or try to."** Clearly the attitude in this group was that if there is an issue around young people drinking alcohol it is better to be honest if we want to do something and get something going for young people.

In response to the following quote **"Well in the night time I don't really go out, my friends go to Perks on a Friday night.I don't drink but most of my friends do. And I don't see the point, I'm ashamed to hang around with them when they are drinking"** (13-15 year old in Youghal) the validation group commented, **"It takes a lot for someone to say no I don't want to drink. That person should have somewhere to go. This quotation should be focussed on".**

Few of the young people mentioned hobbies such as dance, art or music in the context of 'going out'. As our focus was on young people's activities when they go out, home based hobbies would have been excluded.

As the Table shows, 13.4% were involved in 'other activity' and in Carrigtwohill this figure is highest at 20%. For example: **"spinning around in cars with fella's" and spinnin around ad place with different people, nothing to do really!"** This was also mentioned by Youghal and Midleton repondents (**"...go spinin in cars"**)

The Youghal validation group explained this activity to us as follows: **"All the younger girls spin around in cars with fellas, they might not know the fellas, they do it whether they have something to do or not but (having something to do) does lessen the risks"**.

The validation group responded to the comment **"Hang around or else go spinning in cars"** (response from a Youghal respondent to question 2) with **"Cool people go spinning,some people get picked up in cars and think its cool to drive around town- showing off"**. The validation group talked about the element of danger and speeding to impress.

Other respondents in Youghal, Cobh and Midleton told us that they do not go out at all or only sometimes because of lack of activities. One Midleton respondent expressed **"A lot of nights I stay home watching TV. I would like to go out more but there is nothing to do"**.