



ALL YOU NEED
TO KNOW ABOUT
Dáil na nÓg
2009



Delegate
Toolkit 2009

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*'It was good to get the view
of my Comhairle na nÓg
so that I was better able to
represent them at the Dáil.'*

Dear Delegate, Welcome to the DELEGATE TOOLKIT for Dáil na nÓg 2009!

Inside, you will find lots of important information, including:

- background to Dáil na nÓg;
- what to expect as a Dáil na nÓg delegate;
- tips on how best to have your say on the day;
- background information on the two themes or topics for discussion at Dáil na nÓg 2009, which are:
 - **Physical health**
 - **Mental health**
- information on how to be nominated as a Dáil na nÓg Chairperson;
- information on the Dáil na nÓg Council and how to get involved;
- practical information about the event on **Friday, 20th February 2009** and the agenda for the day.

It is important to be prepared for Dáil na nÓg! You should do your best to read all the contents of this Toolkit *before you meet with the other delegates in your area*. You should definitely try and **read it all before 20th February 2009**.

Happy reading and look forward to seeing you in Croke Park!

'A way of being able to express our feelings and concerns and have something done about them.'

The Dáil na nÓg Team

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WHAT DELEGATES

SAID ABOUT

DÁIL NA NÓG

2008

'Dáil na nÓg is a direct link between people and Government. It gives politicians a chance to listen.'

'It was good to get the view of my Comhairle na nÓg so that I was better able to represent them at the Dáil.'

'It was very positive and eye-opening.'

'Dáil na nÓg is a fantastic way to speak my mind.'

'It was great fun and really interesting.'

'A day of fun, chance to meet new people and to get our views across.'

'A chance to voice my opinions and try to shape the legislation that affects young people's lives.'

'A way of being able to express our feelings and concerns and have something done about them.'

'Dáil na nÓg is a chance for teenagers to have a say in what's going on in the country.'



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'Dáil na nÓg is a direct link between people and Government. It gives politicians a chance to listen.'

Part 1: Background to Dáil na nÓg

Who makes Dáil na nÓg happen?

- The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) is responsible for, and funds, Dáil na nÓg.
- The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), in partnership with Foróige and Youth Work Ireland (YWI), organises Dáil na nÓg on behalf of, and in cooperation with, the OMCYA.

What is Dáil na nÓg all about?

- Dáil na nÓg is the National Youth Parliament of Ireland. At Dáil na nÓg, the views of the young people of Ireland will be represented by YOU and the other delegates at national level.
- The Dáil na nÓg delegates will let the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Mr. Barry Andrews, TD (**who will be at Dáil na nÓg for the whole day**), and other important decision-makers know what they think of issues that affect their daily lives.
- Dáil na nÓg is a national version of your local Comhairle na nÓg.

Who are the delegates?

- The young people who have been elected to Dáil na nÓg and will be attending on the day are called 'delegates'. YOU are a delegate, representing your local Comhairle na nÓg or area.

Where are the delegates from?

- Most Dáil na nÓg delegates have come from the Comhairle na nÓg for their local area. They have been elected by the other members of their Comhairle na nÓg. There are 34 Comhairle na nÓg across Ireland. So that the Dáil represents all young people, some delegates come from special interest or minority groups.
- If you would like to find out which young people are representing you, please contact your local authority. You can find contact details on the Dáil na nÓg website (www.dailnanog.ie).

Why is my job as a delegate important?

- As a Dáil na nÓg delegate, you won't just be representing yourself — you will be representing all the young people in your Comhairle na nÓg.
- Through you and the other delegates, the opinions of young people all over Ireland will be heard and will help to inform the Government in its important decisions (public policy) affecting young people.

What to expect as a Dáil na nÓg delegate

- The Dáil na nÓg Team wants to make sure that YOU have a positive experience from the moment you walk into Croke Park. You will have a chance to meet other young people from around the country and share your views with them. We want to make sure that you have lots of opportunities to put your opinions forward as clearly as possible. Most of all, we want you to have fun and enjoy participating in Dáil na nÓg 2009!

Having your say on the day

- With the help of this Toolkit, you will have a chance to really consider your views on the theme you wish to discuss on the day of Dáil na nÓg.
- The **Dáil na nÓg Training Day** – arranged for delegates attending the event – will ensure that you are given practical information on Dáil na nÓg and background information on the two themes. During the Training Day, you will have an opportunity to work together in a group, to practise participating in a discussion session similar to the one that will take place at Dáil na nÓg. This will give you a better idea of how to discuss your theme and how to look at the causes, effects and identify solutions to a particular issue. This 'practice run' will also give you a chance to develop **a clear recommendation** or statement on the theme and one that has **a clear action** (practice will help!).

Brain Teaser: Spot the clearer recommendation!

Which of the two recommendations below is clearer – and why?

(A) Adults need to change their attitudes towards young people.

OR

(B) Increase the number of working speed cameras and traffic police in urban and rural areas in proportion to the population in that area.

Although Statement (A) has a goal, it does not suggest an action plan. It is unclear if the 'adults' referred to are teachers, parents, the Gardaí or everyone over the age of 18. There is no practical suggestion on how a change in adults' attitudes could be achieved.

On the other hand, Statement (B), which was suggested in relation to Road Safety, is much clearer and has an obvious goal and action.

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- The statements from the discussion groups will become the Dáil na nÓg Council's 'TO DO' list for their term of office. Therefore, it is very important that the statements have **one clear goal** and suggest **an action to achieve** that goal.

Towards the end of your discussion session, your group's facilitator will record the statement your group has agreed on. Because there are two tables discussing each topic, your group will also develop a 'reserve statement' which will be used if the other table comes up with a very similar statement. The facilitators from the two tables compare their groups' statements before deciding whether the first statement or the reserve statement will be submitted for the vote.

Your group's statement should be concise (**25 words MAX**) – long, wordy statements might have to be shortened by the Dáil na nÓg Team in order to fit them into the electronic voting template.

To make sure you have your say on the day

- Go to your area's **Dáil na nÓg Training Day!**
- Remember, as a delegate you are representing young people in your area – talk to them about the themes before you come to Dáil na nÓg.

- Have a clear idea of what your opinions are on your chosen theme before coming to Dáil na nÓg.
- Make some notes! Know what points you wish to make during the discussion session.
- Be prepared to listen to, and respect, other people's opinions.
- You will have to work together with your group and facilitator to come up with one clear recommendation and action.
- This recommendation will go forward to be voted on by the entire Dáil na nÓg delegation (200 young people) later in the day and will be developed by the Dáil na nÓg Council during 2009.

Choosing the themes for Dáil na nÓg 2009

- In 2008, each Comhairle na nÓg was asked to choose two themes or topics that were felt to be most relevant for young people in their local area. 22 out of the 34 Comhairle na nÓg returned theme choices. Some Comhairle na nÓg suggested more than two themes for discussion. All the themes suggested were analysed by a researcher at the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The two most popular themes were then identified and these are the themes for Dáil na nÓg 2009 (see Part 2).
- A list of all the themes suggested for 2009 is included in the **Appendix** at the end of this Toolkit.



Part 2: Themes for discussion at Dáil na nÓg

2009

The two themes chosen for discussion at Dáil na nÓg 2009 are:

- Physical health
- Mental health

Because it is such a short day, you will only be able to discuss ONE theme in depth at Dáil na nÓg. **In advance of Dáil na nÓg, your Comhairle na nÓg organiser will ask you to fill out a 'Theme Selection' form, which allows you to choose the theme you want to discuss on the day.** The Dáil na nÓg Team will make every effort to accommodate all delegates with their chosen theme.

Once you have decided on the theme you would most like to discuss, you then meet with the other delegates in your Comhairle na nÓg to make sure your area is evenly represented at the discussions on both themes.

At the Dáil na nÓg event, two working groups (10 delegates per group) will discuss one KEY ISSUE or particular aspect of a theme in depth. (There are 5 key issues per theme, *see below*.) In this way, delegates can inform the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and other important decision-makers what young people are thinking in more detail.

Each working group will agree and decide on two statements relating to the key issue they have discussed (one 'first' statement and one 'reserve' statement). Then, 10 statements per theme will be voted on by all 200 delegates at the Dáil. This means that YOU will get to have your say on every single decision made at Dáil na nÓg.

REMEMBER! When you go into your working group, there are a few important things to remember:

- Everyone's voice should be heard
- There are no right or wrong answers
- Respect each other
- Listen to everybody
- Encourage other people in your group
- Have fun!

The following section of this Toolkit has been designed to give YOU, the delegate, some background information on the two themes selected for discussion at Dáil na nÓg 2009. It will help inform your opinions and suggestions, which you can then share with other delegates at Dáil na nÓg.

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Theme 1: Physical health

The subject of health is very broad. From the information you gave us when selecting the themes, these are the key issues that will be discussed on the day:

- Key Issue 1: Healthy living
- Key Issue 2: Exercise and sport
- Key Issue 3: Substance abuse
- Key Issue 4: Sexual health
- Key Issue 5: Health support services for young people

KEY ISSUE 1: HEALTHY LIVING

Health is something that most of us are lucky enough to take for granted – until we get sick! When we are well, it is very often difficult to imagine a day when we might be sick and the importance of living a healthy life to avoid illness. But health is about more than avoiding illness. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as *'a state of physical, mental and social well-being, and not simply the absence of disease or infirmity'*.

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Healthy living is not about a single area of our lifestyles, but rather about creating a balance between a number of areas, such as a varied diet, exercise, school and a social life. Each area can have implications for the others. For example, studying for exams can mean that you decide you do not have time to exercise, but exercise can actually help you to concentrate and to sleep better at night. Healthy living also means avoiding situations that are likely to harm your health; for example, by not taking up smoking you reduce the risk of developing cancer or heart disease when you are older. Finding a way to balance all the different demands of modern life can be the key to a healthy life.

Key facts

- 16% of 12-17 year-olds smoke (Office of Tobacco Control);
- 78% of smokers surveyed (by the Office of Tobacco Control) started smoking before they were aged 18, and 53% before the age of 15;
- 1 in 8 Irish people is obese; 1 in 5 Irish boys and girls is overweight and 1 in 20 is obese.

Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg

- What does health mean to you?
- What do you need to live a healthy life?
- How do you know when you are healthy?
- What prevents you from living in a healthy way?
- Do young people face different challenges to healthy living than other people?
- What helps you to choose healthier options in life?
- What do you think is the most important factor to be healthy?
- What do you think young people need most in order to have a healthy lifestyle in Ireland today?
- What measures would encourage you to live a more healthy lifestyle?
- If YOU were the Minister for Health, what would you do to promote healthy living for young people?

Useful resources

- Department of Health and Children (www.dohc.ie)
- Health Promotion Unit (www.healthpromotion.ie)
- Office of Tobacco Control (www.otc.ie)
- Spun Out (www.spunout.ie)
- Teenage Health (www.teenagehealthfreak.org)

KEY ISSUE 2: EXERCISE AND SPORT

We all know that we should exercise regularly for a healthy life. Exercise helps to reduce stress, control weight and can lower blood pressure. Other benefits include protecting us from serious illnesses, like heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis and diabetes. Yet in spite of all these benefits, many of us do not exercise on a regular basis. Less than half of teenagers aged 15-17 take part in regular physical activity (Department of Health and Children).

Research shows that as young people get older, more boys than girls participate in sport regularly. The Irish Sports Council in its report *School Children and Sport* says: 'Boys spend more time at sport, enjoy it more and are more enthusiastic about its rough and tumble aspects. Of course, some girls enjoy sport and are competitive about it, and some boys avoid or dislike sport, but overall there is a considerable gulf between the way boys and girls approach sport.'

Other activities compete with sport to take up our time – watching television, surfing the Internet and playing computer games. A lack of facilities or safety concerns might also mean that playing sport or exercising is not an option for all young people.

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states: *'Every child has the right to rest and play and to have the chance to join in a wide range of activities.'*

Through participation in sport and physical activity, young people can have fun, learn and develop life skills, make new friends and experience life in a way that will enhance their personal growth throughout the course of their lives.

Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg

- Are sport and physical activity important for young people?
- What types of sport and physical activity are currently made available through schools?
- Do young people have a say in school sporting activities?
- Is enough being done to accommodate sport and physical activity through schools?
- Do you have enough opportunities to participate in sport and exercise outside of school?
- What things prevent/encourage you to participate in sports and physical activity?
- Is there too much emphasis on winning in sports and not enough emphasis on enjoyment?
- Why do more boys than girls participate in sport? What could be done to change this trend?
- If YOU were the Minister for Health, what would you do to encourage young people to exercise?

Useful resources

- Basketball Ireland (www.basketballireland.ie)
- Football Association of Ireland (www.fai.ie)
- Gaelic Athletic Association (www.gaa.ie)
- Irish Sports Council (2007) *Ballpark Figures: Key research for Irish Sports Policy*. Available at: www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/pressandpub-iscpub-research.aspx?ObjID=news
- Irish Sports Council (www.irishsportsCouncil.ie)
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (www.ncca.ie)

KEY ISSUE 3: SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Some facts:

- Alcohol causes significant health, social and financial problems to many people.
- 28% of all A&E cases in hospitals are alcohol-related.
- Not everyone drinks. In fact, there are a large number of people in Ireland who do not drink, but there are also a lot of people who do – and drink too much.
- Alcohol is a drug. It depresses or slows down our brain and body reactions, which is why people should not drink and drive.
- Alcohol does not affect everyone in the same way. It affects people differently depending on whether they are male or female, young or old, heavy or light, tall or small, and so on.
- Harmful drinking does not have to mean getting drunk. Men are not supposed to have more than 4 units per day and women no more than 3 (one unit of alcohol is approximately equivalent to a half pint of beer, a small glass of wine or a pub measure of spirits).
- Advertisements about alcohol are misleading – they do not show the negative facts about alcohol. According to the ads, alcohol leads to happiness, fun, joy, celebration – but sometimes it doesn't.
- The more you drink, the more you are putting yourself and others at risk.
- There is widespread fear among parents and the general public about the dangers of drug use by young people.
- Surveys suggest that more than 50% of young people in Ireland have tried illegal drugs.
- The use of drugs among young people is a cause for concern for health reasons and also because of the link between alcohol/drug misuse and anti-social/criminal behaviour.
- Research shows that most problem drug-users are usually young, unemployed, have left school early and are living in economically disadvantaged areas.



→ 10 Protecting the interests of young people

Everyone has a role to play to ensure that young people are kept safe, informed and aware of the facts and risks associated with drugs and alcohol. There have been a number of educational campaigns developed for schools to tell young people about drugs and alcohol, such as the Drugs Info Programme, Teenhelp and On My Own Two Feet (for Leaving Certificate Curriculum).

Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg

- What are the most important issues for young people in relation to drugs and alcohol?
- Are alcohol and drug misuse big problems in your area?
- What do you think about alcohol advertising?
- Do you think that young people would know where to go to seek help about drugs and alcohol concerns?
- What do you think about the provision of education and information targeted at young people on drugs and alcohol?
- Do you think enough is being done to tackle the issues of drugs and alcohol?
- If YOU were the Minister for Health, what would you do to address the issue of drugs and alcohol in Ireland?

Useful resources

- Addiction Ireland (www.addictionireland.ie)
- Alcoholics Anonymous (www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)
- Ana Liffey Drug Project (www.aldp.ie)
- Aware (www.aware.ie)
- Childline (www.childline.ie)
- Drugs and Alcohol Programme (www.drugs.ie)
- Mental Health Ireland (www.mentalhealthireland.ie)
- Merchants Quay Ireland Project (www.mqi.ie)
- National Advisory Committee on Drugs (www.nacd.ie)
- National Documentation Centre on Drug Use Directory (www.ndc.hrb.ie)
- National Youth Health Programme (National Youth Council of Ireland) and Health Promotion Unit (Department of Health and Children) (2003) *A Guide to Rethinking Your Drinking*. Available at: www.youthhealth.ie (Publications)
- National Youth Health Programme (National Youth Council of Ireland) and Health Promotion Unit (Department of Health and Children) (2003) *Drugs*. Available at: www.youthhealth.ie (Publications)
- Samaritans (www.samaritans.ie)
- Spun Out (www.spunout.ie)

KEY ISSUE 4: SEXUAL HEALTH

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines sexual health as *'physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality'*. Being sexually healthy is about having safe and respectful relationships and not feeling pressured to do anything sexual that you don't want to do. It is not simply about avoiding infections or unplanned pregnancy, but is also about emotional well-being. Not everyone is comfortable talking about sex and sexual health. Among young people under the age of 25, two-thirds of men and almost half of women said they did not find it easy to talk to their parents about sex (Crisis Pregnancy Agency). This can make it difficult for young people to ask for advice and information if they have questions about their sexual health.

Other factors that might influence how young people deal with issues related to sexual health are their personal, family, religious and social values. Research by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency suggests that attitudes to sex and sexuality vary depending on whether the young person is male or female: 'Young men were more likely to believe that sexual intercourse was acceptable irrespective of whether or not they were in a relationship ... Females were more likely than males to associate sex with relationships, and relationships and emotionality were more important to them.'

Facts

- In 2006, there were 2,352 births to teenagers (aged 15-19), equivalent to 0.4% of total births that year (Central Statistics Office).
- The majority of teenage births occur among girls aged 18-19. In 2006, for example, 76% of all births to girls under 20 were to 18 and 19 year-olds; 48 births were to girls aged 15 and under (Central Statistics Office).

Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg

- Who do young people ask for information about sexual health – parents? their GP? other young people?
- What would make it easier for young people to discuss sexual health?
- If YOU were the Minister for Health, how would you promote better sexual health for young people?
- Do you think that education about sex and sexual health should be the responsibility of schools or parents, or both?
- Is the sex education provided by schools and youth organisations sufficient?
- If YOU were designing a sex education course for young people what topics would you include?

Useful resources

- BeLonG To (www.belongto.org)
- Clued Up (www.cluedup.ie)
- Crisis Pregnancy Agency (www.cpa.ie)
- Healthy Respect Sexual Health Information (www.healthy-respect.com)
- HSE Health Promotion Information (www.healthinfo.ie)
- Spun Out (www.spunout.ie)
- Teenage Health (www.teenagehealthfreak.org)
- Youth Health Talk (www.youthhealthtalk.org)



*'A day of fun,
chance to meet new
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KEY ISSUE 5: HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

At some point in our lives, all of us will experience some form of sickness – from the common cold to a more serious illness. Depending on the level of illness, we might require a number of different services. For example, after an accident a young person might need surgery, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and counselling. Other young people with different medical conditions might require ongoing health support. For some young people with chronic illnesses, multiple health supports are a part of their daily lives since they were born.

Sometimes asking for help in the first place is the hardest step, particularly if the young person feels that they are the only one suffering from their particular problem or they feel embarrassed about it. Asking medical experts questions about medical conditions can be intimidating for some young people. A variety of voluntary organisations linked to specific medical conditions offer information and support to young people and their families (e.g. Arthritis Ireland, Asthma Society, Irish Wheelchair Association). Other ways for young people to access services include through a GP or family doctor, in the Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department of a hospital or through telephone helplines.

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Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg

- Where do young people go for support or advice on health issues?
- What would make it easier for young people to ask for help?
- How could health services be made more youth-friendly?
- What kind of support services do you think young people would use?
- If YOU were the Minister for Health, what steps would you put in place to make access to health support services easier for young people? How would you publicise these services?
- How could chronically ill young people be better supported by the health services?

Useful resources

- Arthritis Ireland (www.arthritisireland.ie)
- Asthma Society of Ireland (www.asthmasociety.ie)
- Brainwave – The Irish Epilepsy Association (www.epilepsy.ie)
- Canteen Ireland – Young Peoples Cancer Support Group (www.canteen.ie)
- Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland (www.cfireland.ie)
- Diabetes Federation of Ireland (www.diabetesireland.ie)
- Eczema Ireland (www.eczemaireland.org)
- Irish Heart Foundation (www.irishheart.ie)
- Irish Kidney Association (www.ika.ie)
- Irish Wheelchair Association (www.iwa.ie)
- Muscular Dystrophy Ireland (www.mdi.ie)
- Youth Health Talk (www.youthhealthtalk.org)





Theme 2: Mental health

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‘Emotional and mental health for young people’ was a theme discussed at Dáil na nÓg 2008. Mental health was chosen again as a theme for 2009 by a significant number of Comhairlí na nÓg. Because it is such a large subject, it was decided that it should be a separate subject to the more general topic of ‘Health’. The 5 key issues to be discussed for the 2009 theme of Mental health are:

- Key Issue 1: Suicide
- Key Issue 2: Bullying
- Key Issue 3: Peer pressure
- Key Issue 4: Stress
- Key Issue 5: Mental health support services available to young people

KEY ISSUE 1: SUICIDE

Some facts:

- There are at least 2 suicides every day by young people under the age of 25 in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.
- In Ireland today, more people die by suicide than by road traffic accidents. In 2006, there were over 450 deaths by suicide in Ireland.

- Suicide accounts for 1 in 4 deaths of 15-24 year-old males.
- Ireland has one of the highest suicide rates of young people in Europe.
- People who make suicide attempts or threats are not just ‘attention-seekers’, but are at risk of harming themselves.

There is no simple explanation for suicidal behaviour. Constant rows with someone close, abuse, bullying, stress over exams, worries about the future – these are just some of the things that, in some young people, can cause feelings of anxiety, low self-esteem, hopelessness and isolation.

Depression and despair can also be caused by specific events, such as someone’s death, parents splitting up, an unwanted pregnancy, a relationship ending or a violent incident such as an assault. Sometimes young people, like adults, can feel deeply unhappy for no obvious reason at all and believe that they will feel that way forever.

Suicide is often described as a '*permanent solution to a temporary problem*'. Deep down, many young people feeling suicidal may not really want to die, but at the time, they feel that death is the only way of dealing with their problems. This is not the case.

Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg

- How might young people recognise other young people in distress?
- Anyone who talks about killing themselves, or tries to do it, is deeply unhappy and needs help. What could YOU do to help?
- Identifying risk factors – who is most vulnerable?
- What actions can Government, youth organisations, schools and young people themselves take that will help in the prevention of suicide?

Useful resources

- Aware (www.aware.ie)
- Childline (www.childline.ie)
- Console – Suicide Bereavement Support (www.console.ie)
- Department of Health and Children (2005) *Reach Out: National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention*. Available at: www.dohc.ie/publications/reach_out.html
- Department of Health and Children (2006) *A Vision for Change: Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy*. Available at: www.dohc.ie/publications/vision_for_change.html
- Irish Association of Suicidology (www.ias.ie)
- Mental Health Ireland (www.mentalhealthireland.ie)
- National Office for Suicide Prevention (www.nosp.ie)
- Samaritans (www.samaritans.ie)
- Spun Out (www.spunout.ie)

KEY ISSUE 2: BULLYING

Some facts:

- Bullying affects everyone involved. It can take place anywhere – in school, at home, in the street or in a youth organisation. Bullying has damaging effects on the lives of young people in terms of their social, emotional and educational development.

- The effects of bullying can be either short-term or long-term, and can impact on the person being bullied, the bully and the people who know that the bullying is going on but are too afraid to tell someone.
- There are many effects of bullying for all involved. The bullied person may suffer from symptoms ranging from disturbed sleep to depression. The bully may feel isolated and have no friends. Others may suffer from a fear of being bullied and feelings of guilt at knowing that another person is being bullied and that they are too afraid to tell anyone.
- In 2006, the Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre, Trinity College Dublin, conducted research into the issue of bullying and young people in Ireland in an attempt to help identify the scale of the problem. In total, 2,345 students from 33 primary schools across the country took part in the research. The study found that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 3 boys had been bullied within the last 3 months. Other findings showed that new forms of bullying have emerged in recent years: for example, about 1 in 10 primary school children had received nasty text messages within the last 3 months.

Suggested areas of action in preventing bullying (from *Let's Beat Bullying, 2006*)

- devising and implementing an anti-bullying policy;
- encouraging an ethos of telling;
- team-building;
- raising awareness of bullying;
- running workshops on the issue;
- including information in newsletters and on bulletin boards;
- developing a code of behaviour;
- conducting annual surveys/questionnaires;
- implementing a buddy system in the youth organisation or school;
- devising an anti-bullying committee.

Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg

- What can be done to highlight the issue of bullying in schools, in the home and in youth organisations?
- How do young people feel that bullying should be dealt with in schools and youth organisations?
- Do young people know where to go to get help or talk to someone if they or someone they know are being bullied?
- What actions can Government, youth organisations, schools and young people themselves take that will help prevent bullying?

Useful resources

- Anti-Bullying Centre, Trinity College, Dublin (www.abc.tcd.ie)
- www.bullying.org
- www.bullyonline.org
- www.kidscape.org.uk
- National Youth Health Programme and the Child Protection Unit of the National Youth Council of Ireland (2006) *Let's Beat Bullying*. Available at: www.youthhealth.ie OR www.childprotection.ie
- Spun Out (www.spunout.ie)
- www.sticksandstonesireland.com
- www.stoptextbully.com
- www.webwise.ie

KEY ISSUE 3: PEER PRESSURE

Nearly everyone wants to be liked and to feel they belong. This often means wanting to fit in with the crowd – having similar clothes, liking similar music, doing the same things and going to the same places. There is nothing wrong with this as long as you don't feel under pressure to do something that you cannot afford or feel uncomfortable doing. Doing your own thing and going against the crowd can be very difficult.

The relationships a young person builds with his or her peers are strong and influential, and can be good or bad, positive or negative. For example, do you ever feel pressured to do something you are uncomfortable with, such as:



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'A chance to voice my opinions and try to shape the legislation that affects young people's lives.'

- smoking or perhaps taking drugs?
- fighting or stealing?
- having a boyfriend or girlfriend when you don't really want to?
- skipping classes?

Peers can influence each other in positive ways too, for example, getting involved together in a sporting activity or volunteering.

There are some tried and tested ways available to young people to help deal with peer pressure. These include having a mentor or a 'buddy' system, supports through guidance counsellors in a school or a club, or by contacting a confidential public helpline.

Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg

- Do young people consider other young people – their peers – as an important influence in their lives?
- In what ways do young people influence other young people?
- What supports are currently available to young people to deal with negative peer pressure?
- What sort of supports do young people feel are needed to deal with the effects of negative peer pressure?

Useful resources

- Aware (www.aware.ie)
- Childline (www.childline.ie)
- Heads Away Just Say (www.heads-away-just-say.com)
- Mental Health Ireland (www.mentalhealthireland.ie)
- Samaritans (www.samaritans.ie)
- Spun Out (www.spunout.ie)

KEY ISSUE 4: STRESS

Stress is something that will affect all of us at some stage in our lives, whether we experience it at school, at home or socially. Although we cannot live life without experiencing stress at some point, there are ways in which we can manage it. Stress can have positive effects – it can motivate hard work or better planning to avoid creating stressful situations. However, if it is allowed to build up, stress can be harmful to mental and physical health. It can produce physical symptoms, such as headaches, tense sore muscles in the neck, shoulders and back, upset stomach or insomnia (difficulty in sleeping). It can also lead to self-medicating with alcohol, tobacco or drugs as a way of relieving the stress and its symptoms.

Healthier ways of dealing with stress include doing exercise, practising relaxation techniques and learning to recognise the causes of stress in order to avoid it or deal with it before it builds up. Often talking about problems with parents or friends can help to relieve stress – sharing a problem often halves it.

Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg

- What causes stress?
- What are effective ways of dealing with stress?
- What organisations can help people to deal with stress?
- What stressful situations do young people face in Ireland today and how can these situations be better managed?
- What practical advice would you offer to your friend if they were stressed about something?

Useful resources

- Childline (www.childline.ie)
- Grow, Mental Health Movement in Ireland (www.grow.ie)
- HSE, Your Mental Health (www.yourmentalhealth.ie)
- Mental Health Ireland (www.mentalhealthireland.ie)
- Samaritans (www.samaritans.org)
- Spun Out (www.spunout.ie)

KEY ISSUE 5: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people can experience all sorts of pressures and difficulties. Some problems can have a serious and significant effect on a young person – it is not easy growing up in today’s complex society.

Most young people cope well enough; with the support of those around them, they can enjoy and make the most of their opportunities. Some, however, do not do so well. With the right circumstances and support, a young person can be equipped to deal with any serious difficulties they may face in their lives.

It is important that young people are aware of the help available to them should they ever find themselves in a situation where they are feeling down or unable to cope. Support services currently available include those provided by the State and those run by the voluntary sector.

Some examples of support services include:

- General practitioner (GP) or doctor.
- Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments in main hospitals.
- Adult, adolescent and child psychological services, providing assistance and support on mental health and well-being.
- Counsellors.

Support organisations/services available in the voluntary sector

- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Aware
- Bereavement Counselling
- Grow
- Mental Health Ireland
- Rape Crisis Centre
- Schizophrenia Ireland
- The Samaritans
- Spun Out
- Suicide Bereavement Support

Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg

- Where do young people go to seek help on mental health issues?
- How accessible are the support services?
- What type of services are most attractive to young people (e.g. GP, helplines, support groups, counselling, text message services)?
- How can young people be encouraged to use these services? What prevents young people reaching out to services?
- What actions are needed to improve support services for young people with emotional/mental health difficulties?
- How can positive mental health be promoted? Can you think of any effective campaigns, advertisements, education programmes? Why were these effective in your opinion?
- If YOU were the Minister for Health with a large budget to develop a new support programme on mental health for young people, what services would you provide? What staff would you have for the programme? When and where would you operate these services?

Useful resources

- Alcoholics Anonymous (www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)
- Aware (www.aware.ie)
- Bereavement Counselling (www.barnardos.ie)
- Bodywhys (www.bodywhys.ie)
- Console – Suicide Bereavement Support (www.console.ie)
- Department of Health and Children, Health Promotion Unit (www.dohc.ie)
- Grow (www.grow.ie)
- Health Service Executive (www.hse.ie)
- Mental Health Ireland (www.mentalhealthireland.ie)
- Rape Crisis Network Ireland (www.rcni.ie)
- Samaritans (www.samaritans.ie)
- Schizophrenia Ireland (www.sirl.ie)
- Spun Out (www.spunout.ie)

Part 3: Role of Young People in

dáil
na nÓg

You have now been introduced to the two themes that you will be discussing at Dáil na nÓg 2009. You should be able to come up with lots of great ideas and plans after looking at the information given in this Toolkit and doing some research yourself from the 'Useful resources' sections. But what happens to all of the fantastic work and ideas generated from the Dáil na nÓg event?

Every delegate plays an important role at Dáil na nÓg. There are, however, a few vital roles that require additional time and commitment, and YOU can choose to be involved in these. You could become a member of the Dáil na nÓg Council or you could be one of the two Chairpersons directing the Dáil itself. Interested? Then read on ...

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Dáil na nÓg Council

Remember that Dáil na nÓg is not just a one-day event! The ideas and recommendations that you and all the other delegates put forward on the day will be followed up throughout the year by a group called the Dáil na nÓg Council.

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Mr. Barry Andrews, TD, along with other important decision-makers, will be at Dáil na nÓg 2009 to listen to what you have to say. It is, however, very important to have a group of young people dedicated to making sure your ideas are heard, followed up and implemented.

The main job of the Dáil na nÓg Council is:

- to give young people the chance to follow up on what was agreed by delegates at Dáil na nÓg;
- to meet and present the outcomes of Dáil na nÓg to Ministers, TDs, Government officials and representatives of the Taoiseach's Office;
- to represent Dáil na nÓg at relevant conferences.

In 2009, there will be 34 places available on the Dáil na nÓg Council – one young person for each Comhairle na nÓg. In addition, 4 members of the current Council will remain on, in an advisory capacity, to share their knowledge and know-how with the new members and get them started.

How do I get involved?

Elected representatives from Comhairle na nÓg, as delegates to Dáil na nÓg, have an opportunity to be nominated as Dáil na nÓg Council members. This election process takes place through your local Comhairle na nÓg. For further information, contact your Comhairle organiser.

What makes a good Dáil na nÓg Councillor?

If YOU would like to be a member of the Dáil na nÓg Council, you should have the following qualities:

- an interest in youth issues (concerns of young people in schools, the local community, politics, etc);
- be prepared to work with others in a team;
- be enthusiastic about the job;
- be able to speak up for yourself, yet respect the opinions of others.

Also, you should:

- have the time to be involved in Dáil na nÓg for about a year. If you are very involved in other things (like sports, hobbies, meetings) or are in an exam year at school, maybe you do not have time to be on the Council. If you don't attend the Council meetings, you will be replaced by another delegate from your area. So please don't sign up unless you are really committed!
- be prepared to travel to meetings about 8 times a year, usually in Dublin, usually unaccompanied;
- be prepared to travel on school days (sometimes);
- have permission from your parents or guardian to be involved and to travel to meetings.

Maybe you don't have enough free time to be a member of the Dáil na nÓg Council. But would you like to be a Chairperson at Dáil na nÓg?

Chairpersons of Dáil na nÓg

There are two Chairpersons who run the group sessions at Dáil na nÓg every year. One is female and the other male. One Chairperson comes from the 2008 Dáil na nÓg Council (so they will have some experience in the job) and the other Chairperson is selected from among this year's delegates. It could be YOU if you want ...

As mentioned, the Chairpersons are in charge of the group sessions at the Dáil, i.e. when all the delegates meet together. Thus, the Chairpersons will take turns to announce the next event or happening of the day, speaking with a microphone from the stage. They are in charge of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies; they introduce the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and other guest speakers; they make any important announcements that need to be made. Most importantly, they chair the electronic voting session in the afternoon, when all 200 delegates vote on the top statements of the two themes from the working groups. They also keep everybody on time and ensure that everyone remains respectful of each other when speaking at Dáil na nÓg.

Would YOU be right for the job? Are you ...

- willing to listen to others?
- able to speak to a large group of young people and adults?
- enthusiastic for the job?
- not afraid to put forward ideas to the group if they need them?

- able to encourage everyone to have their say?
- hardworking?
- able to represent other people's views as well as your own?
- willing to talk to journalists about Dáil na nÓg and the themes that are being discussed?

Practical stuff! Can you ...

- give extra time to reading and learning about your role as Chairperson?
- get permission from your parents or guardian to travel to Dublin some day before the Dáil to get training for the job?
- arrive early (9am) at Croke Park on 20th February 2009 to get ready for the BIG DAY?

Will the Chairpersons take part in the group discussions?

Yes! The Chairpersons will not miss out on having their say at Dáil na nÓg. Once they've done their general announcements, they are included as normal delegates in the group discussions.

Will there be training for the Chairpersons?

Absolutely! A trainer will talk you through everything you need to know, including running order of sessions, leading the Q&A session, introducing guest speakers and generally coordinating the day's events. This is an excellent opportunity to gain confidence in public speaking and acquire leadership skills.

I would like to be a Chairperson. What do I do now?

- Fill out the Dáil na nÓg Chairperson Application Form and write, in less than 200 words, why you want to be Chairperson and what qualities you would bring to the job.
- Send this application form, together with the completed Parental/Guardian Consent Form, to the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

If you have any questions about the job of Chairperson at Dáil na nÓg, please contact Meadhbh Hand at the Dáil na nÓg office in the NYCI:

Tel: (01) 425 5946/425 5958

E-mail: meadhbh@nyci.ie



→ 20 Part 4: Practical Information

- **When?** Friday, 20th February 2009, 10.00am – 4.30pm.
- **Where?** Hogan Stand Conference Centre, Croke Park Stadium, Dublin.
- **How to get there?** The organisers of your Comhairle na nÓg will be in touch soon to let you know the details of the travel arrangements for getting to Dáil na nÓg.
- **What do I bring with me?** Just yourself! Pen, paper, lunch and anything else you need will be provided on the day.
- **What do I wear?** Dáil na nÓg is an important event, but it is also important that everyone is comfortable on the day. Therefore, the dress code is **casual**.
- **How do I prepare?** To prepare for Dáil na nÓg, you should find out what other young people in your area think are the important issues about the two themes to be discussed this year and also what solutions they might suggest for resolving the problems. There will also be a Training Day meeting **BEFORE** the Dáil, when all the delegates in your area will meet together. This is an important meeting because it will help you prepare your ideas and opinions before the Dáil. Your local organiser will be in touch to let you know the details of this meeting. You should read all the information in this Toolkit before the meeting!
- **What happens on the day?** People will start arriving from 10am. You sign in (register) and collect your badge, delegate information and official delegate bag. The Dáil will then officially start at 11am (*see Agenda*).

AGENDA FOR DÁIL NA NÓG 2009

10.00am	Arrival of Delegates and Registration Photographs and Refreshments
11.00am – 11.15am	Dáil na nÓg Opening Ceremony: Welcome from Chairpersons and Housekeeping Rules Minister's Address
11.15am – 12.40pm	Discussion Groups
12.40pm – 1.30pm	LUNCH
1.30pm – 2.00pm	Dáil na nÓg Council Update
2.00pm – 3.15pm	Questions & Answers Session
3.15pm – 4.00pm	Electronic Voting Session
4.00pm – 4.15pm	Evaluation of Dáil na nÓg by all delegates
4.15pm – 4.30pm	Minister's Closing Remarks Dáil na nÓg Closing Ceremony

What now?

- Think about the theme you have chosen to discuss at Dáil na nÓg.
- Answer some of the questions on the 5 key issues given under the headings 'Questions to consider for Dáil na nÓg'.
- Read up on the issues by checking the websites listed under 'Useful resources' and also do some research in your local library.
- Do some of your own research — ask other young people what do they think of the issues.

Remember, young people are an important part of every community and it is important that you are valued, respected and listened to.

It is up to YOU to make the best of Dáil na nÓg. We hope it gives you a chance to let your voice be heard, but we also hope that you will enjoy the day, meet new friends and have fun!

Look forward to seeing you in Croke Park on Friday, 20th February 2009.

IMPORTANT!

Make sure you have filled out and returned all your forms to the Dáil na nÓg office:

- Parental/Guardian Consent Form
- Dáil na nÓg Chairperson Application Form
- Theme Discussion Form

Check with your Comhairle na nÓg organiser if you are stuck in any way or telephone Dáil na nÓg office at (01) 425 5946/425 5958 or e-mail meadhbh@nyci.ie or check the Dáil na nÓg website www.dailnanog.ie



Acknowledgements

Many thanks from the Dáil na nÓg Team to all colleagues and staff in the key organisations listed below who kindly contributed to the development of the Dáil na nÓg Delegate Toolkit 2009:

- Research and Social Policy Team, National Youth Council of Ireland
- National Youth Health Programme Team, National Youth Council of Ireland
- Research Unit, Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
- Student Council of Ireland
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
- Curriculum Development Unit
- State Examinations Commission
- Youthreach
- Irish Sports Council of Ireland

'Dáil na nÓg is a chance for teenagers to have a say in what's going on in the country.'



Appendix: List of themes chosen by Comhairle na nÓg

The following is a list of the 2 themes chosen by each Comhairle na nÓg around the country and submitted for selection to be discussed at Dáil na nÓg 2009. (Physical health and mental health were the two chosen.) The topics put forward give a good picture of the concerns in local areas and the issues affecting them.

Comhairle na nÓg	Theme 1	Theme 2
Carlow	Substance abuse	Environment
Cavan	Teenage health	Rights of young people in employment
Clare	Secondary schools – need for student discount card <i>Also suggested:</i> 'Teenagers out of control' – discuss	Widening youth participation Exam pressure: Creating life balance
Cork City	Substance abuse <i>Also suggested:</i> Facilities for young people	Education
Cork County	Taking Action – Young people as decision-makers and being active in their communities	Healthy lifestyles – Healthy bodies/ Healthy minds
Donegal	<i>No themes suggested</i>	
Dublin City	<i>No themes suggested</i>	
Dublin South	Mental health and suicide <i>Also suggested:</i> Education – Points system Alcohol and drugs	Sexuality and homophobia Youth facilities – locations Politics and environment
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	Health	Transport/Amenities
Fingal	<i>No themes suggested</i>	
Galway City	<i>No themes suggested</i>	
Galway County	<i>No themes suggested</i>	
Kerry	<i>No themes suggested</i>	
Kildare	Racism – Challenge of change	

Comhairle na nÓg	Theme 1	Theme 2
Kilkenny	Racism/homophobia <i>Also suggested:</i> The environment Increasing awareness of cultural diversity	Education – Evaluating teachers
Laois	<i>No themes suggested</i>	
Leitrim	<i>No themes suggested</i>	
Limerick City	Mental health – ‘Pay it Forward’ (title based on film and encouraging random acts of kindness in the community) <i>Also suggested:</i> Safety on social network sites	Young people owning/developing spaces in the community
Limerick County	Health services and healthy living	Anti-social behaviour – Legislation and young people
Longford	Lack of leisure and recreation facilities in schools/training centres and in the community	Drugs and alcohol
Louth	Places for young people	Attitudes to young people
Mayo	Substance and alcohol abuse	Betterment of education system for young people
Meath	Young people and mental health	Young people and rural transport
Monaghan	Health services and healthy living	Rights of young people in employment
Offaly	Teen suicide	Mental health, focusing on bullying and pressures on young people
Roscommon	The cause and effect of stress in young people’s lives	The legal rights of people under the age of 18
Sligo	Teenage alcohol and drug use	Youth facilities
Tipperary N.R.	Facilities for, and attitudes to, young people	Interculturalism
Tipperary S.R.	<i>No themes suggested</i>	
Waterford City	<i>No themes suggested</i>	

Comhairle na nÓg	Theme 1	Theme 2
Waterford County	The Environment: (1) the individual; (2) global issues	Health: (1) role of sport and physical activity in health promotion; (2) healthcare in an Irish context
Westmeath*	Policing in Ireland (including personal safety, attacks on people, speed of service and Gardaí response, if guns should be issued to members of An Garda Síochána, numbers of members within the policing service) <i>Also suggested:</i> Sex education and contraception in Ireland (including contraception availability, classes being incorporated into the Department of Education curriculum, support for young people in this area)	Personal safety (including first aid for all young people, sex education class in schools, defibrillators for schools, extra buses to ferry young people, having more services in large areas and housing estates, more police, self-defence classes)
Wexford	<i>No themes suggested</i>	
Wicklow	Lack of affordable/free activities and facilities for young people	Health: (1) promotion of physical activity, including the availability of alternative sport; (2) affordability of physical and mental healthcare for young people; (3) dedicated mental health support for young people

* Theme choices received after the deadline and thus too late to be included in the theme selection process.



'It was very positive and eye-opening.'



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