







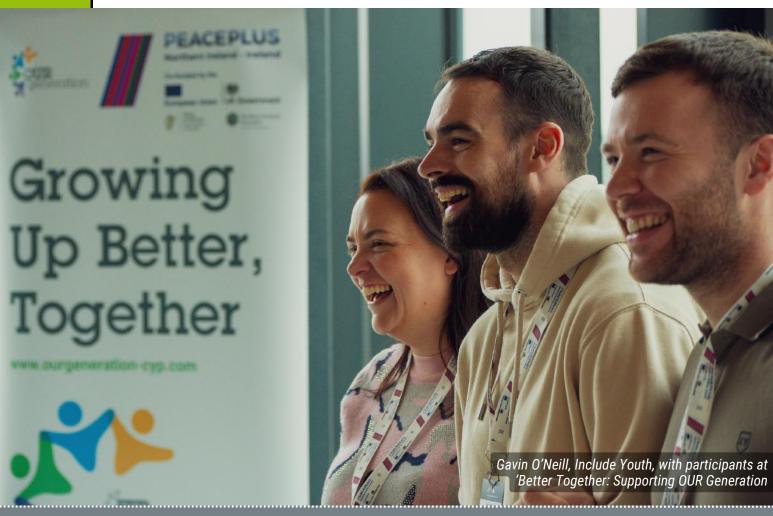
European Union







A project supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).



Together & Connected

OUR Generation's Shared Learning Events

During the month of October, OUR Generation Project Partners held two shared learning events for Key Youth Workers.

Include Youth's 'Connected Minds' event was rooted in mental health learning and explored key themes such as rising anxiety and social isolation, the link between physical and mental wellbeing, and the importance of positive masculinity, whilst Co-operation Ireland brought youth work practitioners from both sides of the border together to delve into themes like technology's impact, trauma-informed practice, emotional regulation, sport-as-therapy, and intercultural understanding. Both events aimed to deepen OUR Generation's collective impact on young people's wellbeing.



WELCOME

Hello, and welcome to Issue 2 of OG News, the second edition of our new look newsletter, under PEACEPLUS.



It's hard to believe we are approaching the end of 2025 already, and what has been our first full year of delivery under PEACEPLUS.

We're delighted with the progress of the partnership to date – you may have seen our impact piece that marked World Mental Health Day, which highlighted some of the great work we have carried out.

As of the end of October 2025, our programmes reached 8,710 participants, from schools, youth groups and community settings across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. We're continuing to build peace through our work with young people and key youth workers, enhancing their capacity to contribute to a more cohesive society.

In the past year, 7,708 children and young people took part in our programmes, and through Joint Training Schemes they had the chance to explore who they are, connect with others, and strengthen the tools they need for emotional wellbeing.

Within that number are 296 young people who have taken part in youth leadership programmes, including OCN NI Youth Leadership and Youth Practice qualifications with Boys & Girls Clubs and YouthAction NI, and the new Action Mental Health Regional Youth Panel, which you can read more about on Page 7.

1002 Key Youth Workers (including educators, coaches and childcare practitioners) have taken part in our programmes, building capacity, confidence and community in their own practice.

A key element of this has been Co-operation Ireland's development and delivery of many training courses through their Learning Labs, based on needs identified through their Scoping Reports. This has included residentials for Key Youth Workers and some impactful shared learning events which you can read all about in this issue.

I'd like to thank all our partners for their work this past year, including their collaboration and support with our new evaluation processes, expertly guided by the Ulster University team, which will help us measure the impact of OG as we progress.

As we approach the end of 2025, we are in a very strong position, and we expect to build on this in 2026, so there's lots to look forward to.

Thank you for your support!

- Carol Scullion, **Project Manager**



Team Day

Back in April, OUR Generation Project Partners came together for a 'Team Day' at Fermanagh House, Enniskillen. This provided project partners with the opportunity to share information on their programmes and build relationships across the partnership.

There were lots of presentations, videos, icebreakers and fun activities, including the common thread with **Co-operation Ireland** and time-travel into the future with **YouthAction Northern Ireland**.

Thanks so much to all of the team who came along and took part, we hope you enjoyed the day as much as we did!







Together & Connected

OUR Generation shared learning events Continued from Page 1



This autumn, OUR Generation brought over 220 youth practitioners together through two shared learning events, both of which aimed to build capacity of those working with children and young people across Northern Ireland and the border region.

Include Youth's 'Connected Minds' was held on 9th October at Shankill Women's Centre, where attendees heard directly from young people and frontline workers about looming challenges such as social isolation, trauma, asylum seeking, and the link between physical and mental health.

Participants took part in hands-on workshops to mark World Mental Health Day and heard from keynote speakers including Ulster University's Professor Siobhán O'Neill, Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland. Speaking at the event, she said:

"As Mental Health Champion, and a member of the OUR Generation team, I am delighted to support today's event. With growing proportions of young people suffering from poor mental health, today's event is more important than ever. The event highlights what can be achieved when the lived experiences of young people are centred, and how creative solutions can emerge when groups come together."









Then at 'Better Together: Supporting OUR Generation' - Co-operation Ireland's conference held at Monaghan Peace Campus on 16th October, leading psychologists and youth-work experts guided us through interactive sessions on resilience, anxiety, trauma-informed practice and the impact of technology.

The event featured expert speakers, Shane Martin, Richard Hogan, and Owen O'Kane, who addressed many of the challenges affecting young people and parents today.

The were also interactive workshops on topics such as trauma-informed practice delivered by the OUR Generation research team from **Ulster University**.

As well as being learning spaces, events like these foster collaboration and offer valuable networking opportunities for the community and voluntary sector, creating a stronger network of support for our young people. For more information visit: www.ourgeneration-cyp.com/newsevents/











Scoping Reports Published

In August we published two important Scoping Reports covering Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. These reports shine a light on the mental health challenges facing children and young people aged 9-25.



Compiled by **Co-operation Ireland**, and drawing on the completion of surveys and interviews with young people, youth workers, educators, and community leaders, the reports reveal common issues across both regions, as well as unique local challenges.

Some of the key findings include:

- Anxiety, low self-esteem and poor resilience are the most common mental health concerns, often linked to school pressures, social media, and post-pandemic isolation.
- Rural isolation, poor transport and poverty make it harder for young people to access support.
- Minority ethnic and LGBTQ+ youth face bullying, stigma, exclusion, and a lack of inclusive safe spaces.
- Transgenerational trauma from the conflict, along with socioeconomic deprivation, family breakdown, and discrimination, continue to impact mental health.
- Growing concerns around online safety, including exposure to sexual and misogynistic content, cyberbullying, and gaming addiction.

The reports also set out community-led recommendations, which include culturally sensitive delivery, trauma-informed training for professionals, and the creation of safe, welcoming spaces for all young people. Project partners have already begun addressing the findings of the reports by raising discussion among Key Youth Workers at recent shared learning events 'Connected Minds' and 'Better Together - Supporting OUR Generation'.

The Scoping Reports will guide OUR Generation's cross-border work until 2027, ensuring that projects address real, identified needs in communities.

Read the full reports here: https://ourgeneration-cyp.com/publications/





The Action Mental Health Regional Youth Panel (RYP) is a group of twenty-two young people aged 15-25 who are passionate about the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people across Northern Ireland.

Under the co-supervision of **Action Mental Health's** OUR Generation and Schools & Community Wellbeing Teams, the RYP will use their voices and experience to spark real conversations about youth mental health, challenge stigma, and build a supportive community where every young person feels seen, heard, and understood. In doing so, they will raise the voices of young people across Northern Ireland.

In practical terms, the panel members will fulfil a number of roles from now until 2027, including research, communications, consultancy, and community engagement. Plans are already underway for a youth-led research piece on the state of youth mental health and wellbeing, with a view to identifying emerging needs as expressed by their peers. This research will enable the panel members to target the most important issues in their communication and advocacy work, which will take the form of a podcast, and centre youth voices during OG programme development to ensure that Project Workers meet the needs of their groups.

Panel members, who were recruited earlier this year, met for their first team-building day on 29th August at YMCA, Lisburn, facilitated by OUR Generation Service Manager Nikki McTaggart and Project Worker Laura Wheatley, alongside Schools and Communities Wellbeing Service Manager Naiobh Adams and Project Workers Matthew Blair and Lynsey Hassin. Some panel members were previously involved with the RYP, while others are new to their roles. They all got to know each other through games, team building exercises, and open and honest conversations. Action Mental Health CEO David Babington paid a visit, throwing in his lot with panel members in their tug of war contest, and listening to their experiences of mental health and mental health services, as well as their hopes and ideas for the future direction of the panel.

If twenty-two adults were asked for their opinions and experiences of mental health, there would be twenty-two different answers. The same can be said of the youth panel members. Some of them have personal experience with mental ill-health, while others have supported friends and family members on their mental health journey.

"I want to make a difference in today's society by tackling stigma and raising awareness of mental health", commented one panel member, who is studying Mental Health Nursing at University. "I want to show others that mental health conditions don't define us." "I first got involved with [youth mental health] work as a teenager when I joined the local youth council," said another member, whose personal experience with



mental ill-health and disability motivates their activism. "The area I'm from has a huge crisis of youth suicide and substance misuse, and I am passionate about advocating for greater services and support."

Other panel members have not experienced mental ill-health but are keen to advocate for those who have. "I want to make a difference," said one panel member in response to being asked why they wanted to join the Youth Panel. Another panel member responded by saying, "I would like to see what we can do to help people who need help [with their mental health]."

This work began in earnest on the 18th September at the Mullaghdun Community Association in Enniskillen. Panel members ran an information stand with AMH Deputy Director of Operations, Caroline Ferguson, as part of their Mental Wellbeing Evening. Together, they promoted AMH services and participated in the evening's discussions, in what is just the first of many opportunities for the RYP to make a much-needed difference in their communities.







Young singer-songwriter Ally Brett struck a chord at Vantastival as part of the OUR Generation showcase.

At the end of September, OUR Generation brought the power of youth and music to the stage at 'Vantastival', one of Ireland's most vibrant independent music festivals. The cross-border collaboration saw **Donegal Youth Service** team up with Boomerang Youth Café (Louth), and the Magnet Centre (Newry) to showcase six young musical acts, giving young people a rare opportunity to share their talents.

Ally, aged 18, stepped out onto the Tow Bar Stage on Saturday 20th September, and proved that music has the power to unite people across borders and generations when she was joined on stage by her dad Seamus Brett, who provided accompaniment on keys. The young singer and musician from Co. Louth described playing at the festival as an "unforgettable experience."

Ally said: "I have played music for my whole life and have been working on my own material for a long time, so to get the chance to showcase it on a big stage like Vantastival was a dream come true."

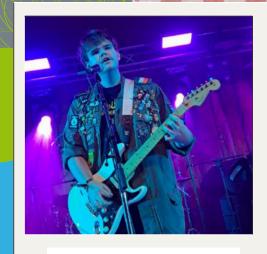
She added: "I feel so grateful to everyone at Boomerang Youth Cafe and OUR Generation for allowing me this opportunity and for giving me the confidence to play my set in a professional environment, it's incredible that they are putting young Irish artists on the map."



> Sean McCluskey, OUR Generation Youth Worker from **Donegal Youth Service** based in Drogheda, was one of the organisers of the OUR Generation stage at Vantastival.

He said: "We want to say a huge thank you to Vantastival for providing such an inspiring platform, and to everyone who came out to support and encourage our young performers." He added: "Events like this are about much more than music: they build confidence in young people, create lasting cross-community connections, and celebrate the creativity and diversity of youth culture across the island."

Other acts who performed on the OUR Generation stage at Vantastival were indie-pop outfit The Cassettes, singer-songwriter Shane G, Newry four-piece Headcase, punk/metal band Stainless Steel and indie-rock group Dirt Tax.



James, from Stainless Steel



Bobby from Dirt Tax





Letterkenny Town Park came alive on Friday, 18th July, as **Donegal Youth Service** hosted its biggest Party in the Park to date in partnership with the Earagail Arts Festival.

The family-friendly event featured 25 young bands and solo performers on the Paul Mooney Stage, alongside festival face painting, art workshops, sports activities and intercultural dance, creating a vibrant celebration of youth creativity and community spirit.

This year also had a strong cross-border dimension, with young musicians from Donegal, Louth and Armagh taking part, supporting the OUR Generation Project's aim of building positive relations under the PEACEPLUS programme. Members of the OUR Generation team from Co-operation Ireland also delivered arts and crafts activities on the day.

Frankie McGreevy, Donegal Youth Service manager and founder of the original Party in the Park, praised the talent of the young performers. He said: "The Party in the Park has been an invaluable creative platform for our local youth, having showcased promising young talent throughout the years. It takes real bravery to step up on stage, and the young people truly shone."

A huge well done to everyone involved in making the event such a success – we hope to see you there next summer!





Resilient Futures

Since our last issue, the **Action Mental Health** team has delivered programmes to 2,400 children and young people in both primary and post-primary age groups. They've worked in a number of settings including sports clubs, youth clubs and E2T centres and reached settings in ten of the eleven council areas in Northern Ireland.

action mental health

By the end of September the team had worked with 120 young people on the Mental Health Ambassadors programme, including pupils from Dromore High (pictured) who featured in **Episode 3 of TV.OG.** The delivery team have also begun Key Youth Worker Training, and have developed a brand new, trauma-informed training series, 'Building Resilient Futures – A Person-Centred Approach'. The pilot was delivered to sports coaches at Crusaders Football Club, Belfast, and to CEOs of YMCA National and Local Associations in Newcastle, with positive reception and feedback.

Our safeTALK trainers have begun delivering community-based workshops for KYWs across a number of council areas: Lisburn & Castlereagh, Newry, Mourne & Down, Antrim & Newtonabbey and, most recently, Mid-East Antrim.

To mark World Suicide Awareness Day (10th September), AMH ran a safeTALK workshop in Ballynahinch which brought together a diverse mix of community members, sports coaches, volunteers, and classroom assistants, reflecting a strong cross-sector commitment to suicide prevention and community resilience within a locality with elevated rates of suicide-related deaths.

In August, AMH kicked off the Regional Youth Panel (RYP) with an exciting in-person team day, bringing together 12 of the 25 panel members from across Northern Ireland. The day was packed with high-energy team games, Mindset training, and collaborative planning for the year ahead. Their first priority is a youth-led research project, set to launch in January, which will gather vital insights into the emotional health and wellbeing needs of children and young people across NI. You can read more about the regional youth panel on Page 7.

Building a Stronger Generation



The **Boys and Girls Clubs**' OUR Generation: *Stronger Together* programme has kicked off an exciting new phase, bringing activities to both schools and youth groups across the community.

At Crumlin Integrated Primary School, young people explored themes of identity and created their group contract, setting the tone for a year of teamwork and respect. Bunscoil Phobal Feirste and Holy Child Primary School embraced team-building and identity shield activities, celebrating what makes each person unique.

Meanwhile, Brownlee and Forthill Primary Schools focused on wellbeing and self-care, learning ways to look after their mental and emotional health. In a fantastic example of cross-community collaboration, Sandy Row and Divis Community Centres came together to make healthy pizzas and discover all that unites them.

At Tullymore Youth Services, discussions centred around stress and coping strategies, while Jim's Youth Centre in Kilkeel created Take 5 Wellbeing Packs, with special thanks to the Southern Trust Promoting Wellbeing Division for their support.

The team are also very proud to celebrate 12 Key Youth Workers from PlayBoard NI who recently completed their Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training - a huge step in supporting young people's wellbeing.

Well done to all the young people and youth workers involved for their teamwork, creativity, and courage. Together, we're building a stronger, more connected generation.













Community & Collaboration

Co-operation Ireland has delivered a wide-ranging programme of support for youth workers and young people across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. This work continues to respond to the evolving needs of communities and the challenges young people face today.

Since March, the team has delivered 52 capacity-building trainings, including 17 online and 35 inperson sessions, reaching approximately 600 youth workers. These sessions addressed key themes identified in OUR Generation's scoping reports, such as Supporting Children who are Neurodiverse, Managing Anger with Compassion, Back to School Anxiety, Responding to Racism and Cross-Cultural Understanding, and Safety in the Digital World.

In addition, they hosted four residentials, engaging around 80 youth workers from counties including Fermanagh, Donegal, Sligo, Down, Derry/Londonderry, Louth, Monaghan (pictured), Cavan, Leitrim, and Armagh. These residentials offered immersive training experiences focused on promoting mental health through sport and the use of music in youth settings to support wellbeing.

The project also prioritised community engagement, delivering events within marginalised groups to foster inclusion and dialogue. This included 18 direct sessions for children and young people, reaching around 150 participants across 10 counties. Groups engaged included those in IPAS (International Protection Accommodation Service) centres, young carers, early school leavers, cadets, rurally isolated youth, and LGBTQ+ communities.

To further strengthen collaboration, the team hosted a shared learning event with 100 key youth workers from Northern Ireland and the border counties, creating space for cross-border knowledge exchange and professional connection. You can read more about that on Page 5.



working for a future together



Across the Border Counties



The team at **Donegal Youth Service** have been keeping busy across the border counties.

In Donegal, they've been working with Scoil Colmcille in Letterkenny, whilst over in Monaghan, the team is with Gaelscoil Lorgan in Castleblayney, and in Louth, they're linking up with Dundalk Community Training Centre.

County Cavan has been keeping the team on their toes too, where they are running sessions in St. Aidan's National School (Bawnboy), Drumcrave National School (Cavan), and Swanlinbar National School. Meanwhile, Lauren has been busy in Leitrim and Sligo, delivering 'Provoking Thought' with the Mohill Youth Group and kicking off 'Healthy Me' with Calry National School in Sligo.

Lots happening, plenty of great conversations, and amazing young people getting involved every step of the way!





Include Youth Expands Training and Capacity



It has been a busy and exciting period for the OUR Generation team at **Include Youth**, who were delighted to host a large, shared learning event in October, with 127 participants joining on the day. Attendees took part in workshops on progressive masculinity, anxiety and isolation, physical and mental health, and the challenges facing young people seeking asylum. You can read more about that on Page 4.

Care Awareness & Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Training Include Youth's OUR Generation (HeadsUp) Youth Workers delivered Care Awareness and UASC sessions to first-year Stranmillis students and Youth Work students from Ulster University. These sessions highlighted the importance to future youth workers and teachers of understanding the experiences of the young people they will support.



Team Expansion

Include Youth are pleased to welcome three new staff members to the team: Jamielee (North Coast) Carla (Derry) and Paul (Lifford). All three have now begun delivering the programme across their respective areas.



Programme Delivery

This quarter also saw the successful completion of six-week groupwork sessions in the Belfast City, Lisburn, and Castlereagh areas. Youth workers have also started delivering one-to-one support sessions with young people across these regions.



Staff Development

Staff participated in Trauma-Informed Approaches training delivered by Ulster University. This will allow the team to progress to the Train the Trainer programme, enabling them to deliver Trauma-Informed Approaches training within Include Youth in the future.





PlayBoard NI have had a busy and rewarding period delivering their Spaces to Be programme. From March to September 2025 they've engaged 356 children and 57 key youth workers across 16 schools/settings. Members of the team were featured in **Episode 2 of TV.OG** with St.Joseph's Primary School in Crossgar (pictured) which was released to mark PlayDay in August 2025.

The team were recently commended by Ulster University for "designing such a well-structured and thoughtfully developed programme that effectively addresses all project indicators across the 3-Tiers." Some of the activities used in the Spaces to Be programme are now being shared with OUR Generation partners as examples of best practice.

The programme has been positively received by school leaders and staff, with some school staff commenting: "Amazing programme, we would like to have it implemented across the school." "One of the best programmes ever implemented in school" and: "Children are so happy returning to the class."

Feedback from the children themselves has highlighted the peacebuilding and inclusion aspects of the programme, with one child commenting: "I learned how to play with a protestant...be friends with a protestant." It also highlights how the programme has helped them to build resilience and better regulate their emotions: "I learned all about resilience. I used this while we were playing." "We learnt how to cope with our emotions through our breathing and our tame it toolkit."

For more information about the Spaces to Be programme please contact Roberta Johnson at: Roberta.Johnson@Playboard.co.uk

To learn more about the programme, visit our website: www.playboard.org/resources/our-generation/





Ethics & Excellence



Ulster University continues to make strong progress across all key areas of the Project and are pleased to announce the completion of the OUR Generation Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which has now been shared with all partners.

Ethical approval for the overall Project was granted in August 2025, with data collection for the Project evaluation officially commencing on 1st September 2025. Ethical approval for the Project's sub-studies, comprising a questionnaire and focus groups investigating the influence of Social Identity on wellbeing and peacebuilding outcomes, was also secured in September 2025.

Alongside this, the team have been actively reviewing and observing both the Children and Young People and Key Youth Worker programmes. To date, the UU team have completed programme reviews for 13 programmes and observations for 3 programmes, with this work on-going.

They are also delighted to share that the Social Identity training package has now been launched and shared with partners. This resource includes information. videos. activities. and recommendations support the to implementation of the Intergroup tier within programmes.

In addition, all OUR Generation partners are currently completing the Safeguarding NI Trauma Informed Approaches (TIA) training, with both modules scheduled for completion by the end of November 2025. Looking ahead, the team are excited to strengthening continue the **Project** through further training and evaluation activities. In the next few months, the team will deliver training sessions on Monitoring & Evaluation and Identity & Intergroup indicators to support programme delivery, enhance data collection and strengthen impact measurement across the Project.



Making Waves for Change



From Pride parades to Tall Ships adventures, YouthAction NI is guiding young people to steer their own course, building confidence along the way.

The YANI team have been playing an active role in promoting peacebuilding and building positive mental health through a number of campaigns. They supported Cori Strain (who you might remember from the OUR Generation launch event) to be a keynote speaker at an International Women's Day rally in Belfast on the 8th March, and in July, young people came together from their regional bases and marched together at Belfast Pride demanding diversity, inclusion and togetherness under the Youth Action and OUR Generation banners.

Back in June, during Men's Health Week, youth workers Adam and Ryan took a group of 10 young men from St Patrick's Youth Club (Keady) on a 2-night residential trip, not on land, but at sea! In partnership with Tall Ships, the group sailed from Belfast Marina to Larne (anchoring a few miles off the coast for the night), to Bangor Marina and back to Belfast.

Other highlights have included their annual youth comic book convention YANICon, which gathered young people from YouthWork Ireland, Foroige, the north west and Belfast, and the Peacebuilding Cup in July, which brought young people from St Malachy's Youth Football Club together with other young people from Newry, Armagh, Belfast, Crossmaglen and Enniskillen. The youths from St Malachys YFC also completed an OCN level 1 in Youth Work, and now these young coaches will use their new skills to support peers at their own football teams, directly supporting 200 young people in different communities throughout north Belfast to promote mental health, wellbeing and good relations.











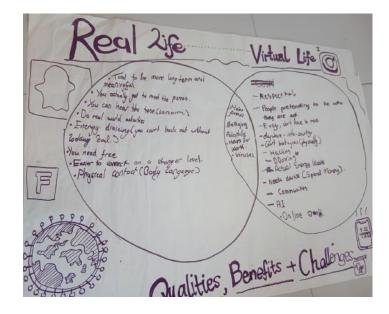
Over recent months, the **Youth Work Ireland** team has been actively strengthening connections with community organisations and expanding the delivery of their newest programmes, Mind Matters, CHOICE, and Stand UPP. These initiatives have been rolled out across a diverse range of youth groups, schools, and community settings, reaching young people in multiple counties.

Rise Up Project - New Groups Launched

Youth Work Ireland are delighted to share that four new groups have begun the Rise Up programme, which is a 15-session social action initiative empowering young people to spark positive change in their schools and communities.

New groups have launched in:

- St Louis Secondary School, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan
- Gairmscoil Chú Uladh, Co. Donegal
- Ursuline College, Co. Sligo
- Ballinamore Community School, Co. Leitrim





About us...















OUR Generation is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). It is a partnership led by Action Mental Health, which aims to empower and invest in children and young people. OUR Generation brings together the expertise of nine partner organisations, and is committed to delivering impactful initiatives under the PEACEPLUS investment area of 'Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing.'

The cross-border partnership consists of: Action Mental Health, Boys & Girls Clubs NI, Co-operation Ireland, Donegal Youth Service, Include Youth, PlayBoard NI, Ulster University, YouthAction NI, and Youth Work Ireland.

The Project is developing and delivering programmes to increase mental health literacy, enhance emotional resilience, build the leadership skills of children and young people (aged 9-25) and leads research in mental health and the impact of trauma on our communities. The project runs in education, youth and community settings across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland (Cavan, Monaghan, Sligo, Leitrim, Louth and Donegal) to contribute to peace and reconciliation through a range of cross-community and cross-border youth mental health and wellbeing models, peace and youth leadership programmes.



33,000 children & young people will improve their emotional resilience and empathy, building skills to help themselves and others, gaining greater intercultural awareness and community cohesion whilst increasing capacity and desire to be active citizens in their communities.



5,000 key youth workers of children and young people including teachers, childcare practitioners and volunteers will be equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence to support their mental health and wellbeing.



Children and young people and their key youth workers will co-design a range of digital resources including a mobile app, animations and podcasts to support their own needs and those of the wider communities.



Joint Training Schemes will be co-designed and implemented, applying two theoretical frameworks in trauma informed approaches to youth work and social identity perspective as a mechanism for peacebuilding.

For more information visit: <u>ourgeneration-cyp.com</u>







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