

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



Pupils from Gaelscoil Na Bhfal PS and staff from Boys & Girls Clubs NI pictured with President of Ireland Catherine Connolly

Peacebuilding & Partnership

OUR Generation Partner welcomes Irish President

OUR Generation partner Boys & Girls Clubs NI hosted President of Ireland Catherine Connolly during her three-day visit to Northern Ireland.

President Connolly visited the new Black Mountain Shared Space Project in Belfast, where Boys & Girls Clubs NI (B&GCNI) are now based, and learned about their cross-border work with children and young people on various projects including OUR Generation.

She also met with members of the OUR Generation team and spoke directly with young people from Gaelscoil Na Bhfal PS, to hear about their experiences and reflections first-hand.

It was a proud day for the OG partnership and rounded off a week in which Boys & Girls Clubs also celebrated another historic milestone with an event to mark their 85th anniversary.

During her trip to Belfast, President Connolly also visited Ulster University's Belfast campus, where she delivered a speech praising Northern Ireland as an example of conflict resolution and peacebuilding throughout the world.

WELCOME



Hello, and welcome to Issue 3 of OG News, the third edition of our newsletter, under PEACEPLUS.

It's been a positive start to 2026.

We were delighted to have our impact video featured on SEUPB's social media channels as part of a series highlighting the work of PEACEPLUS Projects.

This showed a snapshot of our achievements at the end of the last calendar year, but we've already advanced considerably since then and are well on course to meeting our project delivery targets.

Some highlights since our last issue have included Children's Mental Health Week in February, AMH's community safeTALK workshops, IY's Mental Health First Aid training, CI's Coercive Control training, YANI's partnership with StreetDoctors, not to mention a visit by the President of Ireland to Boys & Girls Clubs NI and Donegal Youth Service, to hear about their various projects, including OG.

Personally, I had the pleasure of attending Boys & Girls Clubs 85-year celebration event, back in February.

It was a fantastic occasion hearing about the great work they do and seeing young people recognised for their achievements. Congratulations to them!

Also in February, the Ulster University team provided training to our delivery teams on monitoring and evaluation best practice, and Social Identity Complexity, which is an integral element of OG programmes, underpinning the peacebuilding objectives of the project.

In March, members of the AMH team attended a Lead Partner Training and Engagement Day at Black Mountain Shared Space, hosted by SEUPB, where we heard helpful updates about PEACEPLUS and enjoyed the opportunity to network and share our experiences with other Lead Partners.

As we look ahead, we have some exciting projects in the works, including redeveloping the OUR Generation App which will be relaunched this year.

Watch this space!

- Carol Scullion, **Project Manager**

TV.OG

Telling OUR Generation's Stories

We've released a brand new episode of TV.OG - OUR Generation's video case study series. Episode 4 features **Boys & Girls Clubs NI** (B&GCNI) and was filmed in December 2025 at Black Mountain Shared Space. We caught up with Youth Work Manager, Nicola Conlon, at an intergroup event between Crumlin Integrated PS and Bunscoil Phobal Feirste and even heard from pupils and a teacher.

TV.OG was first launched in June 2025, to showcase each organisation and their work as part of the OUR Generation partnership. (Unfortunately the moniker 'OGTV' was already taken, so we went with the next best thing - TV dot OG!)

So far we have covered Co-operation Ireland, PlayBoard NI, Action Mental Health and B&GCNI. The videos have been shared on social media, and added to our website as promo videos for our programmes. Filming for our next episode will commence soon, but until then - you can check out previous vidoes on [YouTube](#).



Youth Panel Surveys



In youth-led developments, members of the **Regional Youth Panel** launched a scoping exercise back in January to determine the mental and emotional health challenges experienced by young people in Northern Ireland. This was shared widely both online and offline, and they received nearly 100 responses with two-thirds of responders aged between 14-17, and the rest aged 18-25. The RYP members and the Action Mental Health team are working through the data to determine major themes and prioritise action, as informed by their peers.

OUR Places, OUR Generation

Pupils from St Patrick's Primary School, Holywood

Children's Mental Health Week ran from 9-13th February and this year's theme was 'This is My Place.'

With that in mind, OUR Generation was inspired to create an activity for children that would link 'Place' to the **5 Ways to Wellbeing**.

We developed a simple worksheet children could complete whilst reflecting on their places to Connect, Learn, Keep Active, Take Notice and Give.

In the lead up to Children's Mental Health Week, OUR Generation Project Workers from **Action Mental Health** invited school pupils to use drawing, writing and colouring-in to fill their maps with places that mattered to them. Some of them completed the task individually, others worked in pairs or small groups. Some even recorded short voice notes telling us about their places.



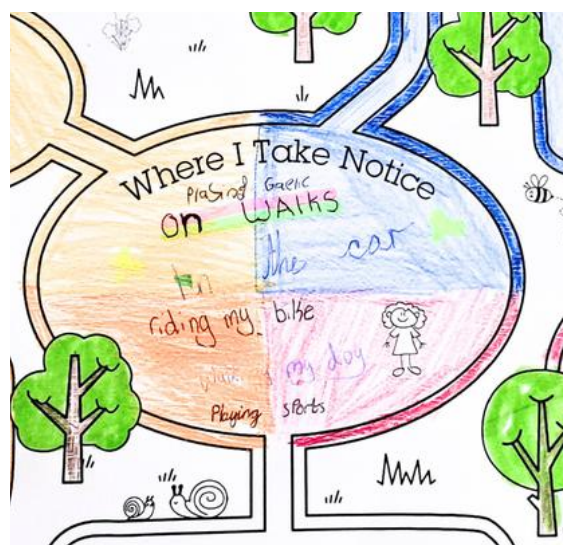
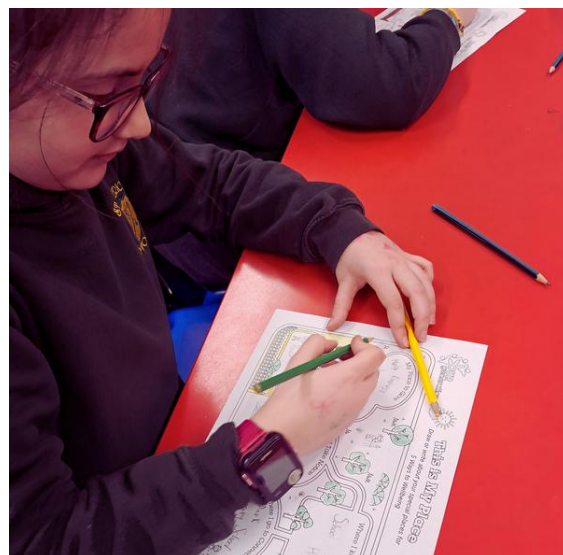
The aim was to encourage children to think about how different places support their wellbeing, helping them to name feelings, spaces, and activities that make them feel safe and positive, supporting emotional literacy through creativity and discussion.

“When I take notice, is when the rain is dropping and the leaves are blowing in the wind...” – P7 Pupil

Throughout Children’s Mental Health Week we shared thumbnail images of the childrens’ work on social media, including a short video featuring the children voices.

For more information on the campaign - visit our blog here: <https://ourgeneration-cyp.com/our-places-our-generation/>

We’d like to thank all the pupils from St Patrick’s Primary School Holywood, Ballynahinch PS and St Patrick’s Ballynahinch, who took part and shared their creativity with us for Children’s Mental Health Week.



'We wanted to help others'

In OUR Own Words...

Students from Rathmore Grammar School have written this article reflecting on their journey as Mental Health Ambassadors...



▶ As a team, we believe that we have grown so much this year - through taking part in the 'OUR Generation Project and completing Mental Health Ambassador (MHA) training with **Action Mental Health**.

Over six weeks, we completed a range of training sessions that helped build our confidence and understanding of mental health. This included an accredited suicide awareness SafeTALK workshop, as well as an intergroup workshop with pupils from Victoria College, Belfast. Through this, we explored ideas like social identity theory, helping us to better understand diversity and how a stronger sense of belonging can be created within schools.

We were the first cohort in our school to complete this programme, and we believe that it has benefited us, both personally and in the different roles we have at school. We hope that other groups in our school will be able to enjoy the same experience as us.

When we first joined the group to become Mental Health Ambassadors, we were all very different, but we soon bonded with one common goal – wanting to help others. The training has been foundational in our approach and we now feel equipped to support our peers and signpost them towards help when they need it.

One of the most impressive aspects of the MHA programme has been how it has managed to take very serious subject matter but deliver it in a way that is positive and educational. Playing games, discussing scenarios and working with others have all been key aspects we have enjoyed the most.

The best part of the training was the experience of working with pupils from another school and seeing how we all have different, yet shared experiences and approaches.



Our facilitator, Ciara, was excellent, and we felt listened to and respected at all times. The team provided a safe space for conversations that could have been difficult.

We explored different ways to disseminate the information we received through our training and promote good mental health and wellbeing within the school. Reflecting the 'Take 5' steps to wellbeing, we started with 'Connect' and 'Give', organising a lunchtime club for younger pupils, teaching them strategies to support their own wellbeing.

Some of us worked with Wellbeing Champions in Year 9 and 10, supporting them to promote good mental health across their year groups. Our team delivered assemblies to Years 8, 9 and 10 to highlight ways of looking after themselves and



signpost to services that could help them if they needed to talk. As part of 'Be Active', one member of the team started a 6th Form running club promoting the benefits of exercise. Each initiative has been met with enthusiasm and we feel we are making a difference to others within our school.

As the year draws to a close, we are finishing with a 'Form Time Takeover'. Using our training from the programme, we've planned and delivered a pastoral period for different tutor groups in Key Stage 3. Using fun and interactive methods, we highlighted the benefits to them of looking after their mental health and wellbeing, and how they can find help and support. Form Tutors and pupils have responded really well to this, and we received positive feedback about how they will use some of the strategies shared.

We're really looking forward to further developing our roles in school during the next academic year and we hope that others will get the opportunity to take part in the OUR Generation Project too.



Mental Health Ambassadors from Rathmore Grammar with pupils from Victoria College



Breaking New Ground



The new academic year saw the **Action Mental Health** (AMH) team back in schools across the country, some returning to familiar classrooms filled with brand new faces, while others broke new ground by bringing AMH OUR Generation programmes to the Mid-Ulster council area, which has not had an AMH programme since delivery commenced in January 2025.

Between October and December 2025, we engaged 1,173 CYP across both primary and post-primary age brackets, with the final count still to come for our current delivery period.

The team have adapted our programmes for different levels of understanding in order to meet (and work with) a range of presenting needs. As time goes on, engagement with SEN young people has increased, both in mainstream (Connect classes) and non-mainstream settings (specialist schools). More recently, one of our Project Workers flexed her language skills in West Belfast and delivered our Peer Mentoring programme in English and Irish, while another project worker adapted our high-energy, activity-packed intergroup for young people with various mobility, communication and sensory needs, both to great success.

Our Youth Leadership Training, Mental Health Ambassadors (with safeTALK), has been taken up by 159 young people since its launch in July 2025. (Read about our Mental Health Ambassadors on Page 6.)

We have also continued with our Key Youth Worker training, offering safeTALK and Building Resilient Futures in schools, youth centres, sports clubs, and colleges. We have successfully run a number of community safeTALKS in Belfast, Kircubbin, Lurgan, Newry, Larne, and Belcoo, reaching a total of 90 KYWs between October and December 2025. Three of our team members are currently undergoing their Train the Trainer for a Trauma Informed Approach, which will add a third core KYW training to our catalogue.

We are now commissioning artists, facilitators and practitioners to run creative projects with selected programme participants, including local children's illustrator, Ellan Rankin (*The Secret Elephant, Our Wee Place*). We are excited to move into this phase of deliverables, where we hope to create art pieces that leave a lasting legacy of OG values for future generations.





Health Champions Strengthen Connections

It's been a busy period for **Boys and Girls Clubs NI (B&GCNI)** who have been delivering their Stronger Together Programme in 13 schools across Belfast, Omagh and Dungannon.

B&GCNI have also delivered the programme in youth organisations across Northern Ireland. In Belfast, sessions took place in Marrowbone Youth Club, Woodvale Community Centre and Hammer Community Centre. Further programmes were delivered at Bovalley in Derry/Londonderry, Clann Éireann in Lurgan, Seagoe Youth Club in Portadown, and Galbally in Dungannon.

Their 'Health Champions' (pictured above) also played a key role in planning and organising the B&GC 85th Anniversary celebrations in February. During the event, they were presented with certificates for completing ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) training and were congratulated for their dedication and hard work throughout the programme.



They also participated in a team-building day, providing an opportunity to strengthen connections, get to know one another, and begin planning a forthcoming 'Youth Talks' residential, where they will collaborate to design and deliver events for the year ahead.

In total, over 600 young people have participated in and benefited from the programme. Through engaging activities and workshops, participants have been empowered to take active roles in promoting peace within their communities.

B&GCNI also featured in the latest episode of [TV.OG](#) and had a visit from the President of Ireland Catherine Connolly- which is our cover story for this issue of OG News.



Building Capacity for Key Youth Workers

In December, the OG team at **Co-operation Ireland** (CI), delivered a Coercive Control session at Shankill Women's Centre and were joined by Community & Voluntary sector colleagues who participated in a full day of training delivered by Lindsey Browning.

They also welcomed a group of children and young people from TAMHI to a thrill-seeking evening at Eddie Irvine's Bangor, and hosted a Train the Trainer session with Chest Heart & Stroke on their new Vaping programme in conjunction with Harvard University.

In January they hosted several online training sessions. These included 'Inclusion Begins With You' delivered by Ronan from FITminds, and an awareness raising session by Dyspraxia UK on how dyspraxia can impact young people. Childhood bereavement training was delivered by Winston's Wish and had such huge demand that they will be running subsequent sessions.

Throughout January and February, CI hosted two Key Youth Worker residentials in Antrim and Derry/Londonderry. Themes included Music, Mindset and Movement, Positive Masculinity and Risk-Taking Behaviours. These were attended by a number of different organisations, helping them to build capacity and network with other professionals working with children and young people.

Katrina attended the Family Comfort Belfast celebration event at City Hall in January and is looking forward to working with their children and young people over the coming months.

CI are delighted to welcome two new team members Charles and Amira who joined the OUR Generation team in December and January.

For details of upcoming training from the CI team, please keep an eye on the OUR Generation social media channels.





Empathy, Creativity & Celebration



It's been a busy and rewarding time for the team at **Donegal Youth Service (DYS)**.

In Co. Louth, Better Together workshops have been delivered at Castletown Girls School and Kilcurry NS in Dundalk. Pupils explored empathy through fun, interactive activities and left with a deeper appreciation of friendship and gratitude.

Also in Louth, youth workers Ferdia and Sean facilitated Provoking Thought sessions with second-year youth work students at Dundalk Institute of Technology (pictured below) sparking meaningful discussions and fresh perspectives. Meanwhile in Donegal, creativity took centre stage during a Mental Health & Wellbeing Songwriting Workshop led by Maria McCormick. Students who had previously taken part in Provoking Thought explored music as a powerful way to express emotions and manage stress.



Transition Year students from the Royal and Prior Comprehensive School in Raphoe also completed Provoking Thought with Peter from DYS (pictured above). To celebrate, they joined over 200 students at the 'Youth Generation Live' gig in the Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny on March 27th, a fantastic event marking the achievements of young people involved in OUR Generation programmes.



Pupils from St Genevieve's High School

include
YOUTH

HeadsUP

Over the past quarter, **Include Youth** (IY), have been making strong progress in the delivery of their HeadsUP programme. A further 170 young people have been recruited to the programme and are engaging well through schools and youth clubs across Belfast, Derry, Donegal, and Carrickfergus. Alongside this, 17 Key Youth Workers have completed and gained accreditation in Mental Health First Aid, delivered by Marie Dunne, strengthening the programme's capacity to support young people's mental health and wellbeing.

The team has also been working closely with Include Youth's Give and Take programme, engaging with care-experienced young people across Derry, Belfast, Ballymena, Omagh, Armagh and Lisburn. Staff have further enhanced their skills through training in monitoring and evaluation and social identity complexity, led by Ulster University. In addition, collaborative work is underway with Donegal Youth Service to develop a cross-border activity, with plans progressing to showcase a young people-led event in the coming months.



Positive Feedback For 'Spaces to Be'



It's been another busy and impactful period for the **PlayBoard NI (PBNI)** OUR Generation team, with their programme going from strength to strength for both children and Key Workers. 100% of participating Key Workers reported that:

- Training will have a positive impact on their practice
- They will apply what has been learned in real-life work situations
- They would recommend PlayBoard training to schools and settings
- The trainers were excellent

Feedback from Key Youth Workers highlights the quality and impact of delivery, with one participant commenting:

"The training was really informative, interesting and really enjoyable. It was very engaging, particularly as there were practical aspects and is entirely relevant in both my personal and professional life. The training team from PlayBoard were knowledgeable, easy to approach with any questions and committed to their roles. I believe this project should be provided to parents/carers and professionals and should be provided for children and young people across all schools in Northern Ireland."

A core element of 'Spaces to Be' is supporting children to reflect on their past, understand their present and feel hopeful about their future. This approach fosters a strong sense of belonging and supports positive mental health and well-being.

Children achieve the most positive outcomes when they are placed at the centre of the experience. Play provides valuable opportunity for children to explore identity and belonging in a safe and meaningful way. Loose parts (free and found materials), recycled materials, and old clothing continue to be the most popular resources for children within Spaces to Be. These open-ended materials enable children to explore who they are and who they can become, expressing their interests and taking control of the outcome. Some comments from children have been gathered by the PBNI team:

"This is one of the activities I will remember when leaving this school next year. It has been so fun."

"The more different groups we are part of, the more different people we can meet and get to know."

"The more connections we have the better it is for us."



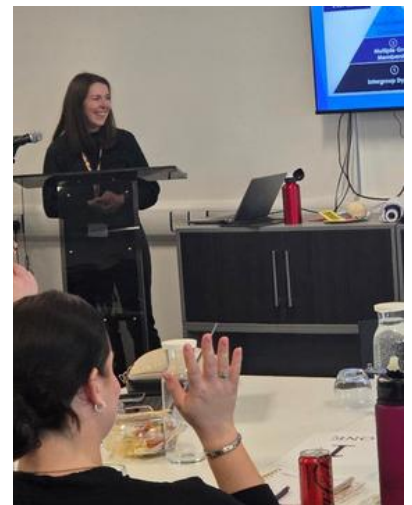


Learning Better Together

Ulster University (UU) have been actively implementing the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework across the project. The team continue to review programme resources whilst also on the road observing six of the programmes in action, that's over 30 observation sessions! The UU team have also developed 'OG Insights: Learning Better Together', an internal document which collates best practice from reviews and observations with the partners across The Project. It is anticipated that further editions will be shared with partners throughout The Project.



Monitoring and Evaluation, and Social Identity Training was developed and delivered by the UU team across 2 days of training in Belfast and Cookstown. This was delivered to 36 project staff with a further "mop up" training day to follow. Following this training, further guidance was shared with all project teams on administering pre- and post-surveys and on communicating the meaning of the Tier 3 Intergroup questions on the surveys with children and young people.



YOUTH VOICES MATTER

Are you 14-24 and living in NI or the border region? We want to hear from you to help shape youth policy and support services

Parent/guardian consent needed for under 16s (NI) and under 18s (RoI)

⌚ Takes 5-7 mins
👤 Anonymous & Confidential
🎓 University research



Tell us what it's really like growing up here



SCAN TO TAKE PART

Fully anonymous, we don't even need a name!

As part of a wider research programme, the UU team is currently carrying out additional studies to explore Social Identity Complexity in young people, and its links to belonging, difference, and wellbeing. These studies will help further develop tools to support young people in coping and connecting with others. Finally, the team are also developing a framework for an updated version of the OG App, supporting AMH in the development of an animation and have begun work on the first Quality Assurance Report for the Project.

Empowered Youth Get Streetwise

Young people from OUR Generation partner **YouthAction Northern Ireland (YANI)** recently took part in a three day training programme with **StreetDoctors**, a national charity dedicated to educating young people about the physical and psychological impacts of street violence.

Delivered by a network of healthcare volunteers and youth workers across 18 UK cities, the programme combines practical knowledge with real-life experience, offering participants relatable role models and building their confidence to respond in challenging situations. Its core aim is to empower young people to stay safe and take positive action within their communities.

Following the training, participants are now equipped to deliver the programme themselves, passing on vital skills and knowledge to their peers. As the first group in Northern Ireland to complete this training, they are well placed to lead the way as ambassadors for this important initiative.





Students Lead Successful Social Action



Youth Work Ireland

Transition Year students from Ballinamore Community School hosted a fantastic Bingo Fundraiser in Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim on Monday, February 23rd.

As part of **Youth Work Ireland's** (YWI) Rise Up programme, the students organised the event in support of their local 'Tidy Towns' initiative, helping to make a positive impact in their community. Their hard work truly paid off, with an impressive €910 raised on the day!

The event featured three exciting bingo rounds, each with multiple prize winners, along with plenty of snacks, refreshments, and a brilliant atmosphere filled with fun and laughter.

Well done to the students, teachers, and school staff for ensuring everything ran so smoothly. Special thanks also to the local Ballinamore businesses who generously donated items and vouchers for the prize hampers. The event was an inspiring example of teamwork, community spirit and taking action, well done to everyone involved.

In other news, pupils from St Louis Secondary School, Carrickmacross, and Gairmscoil Chú Uladh, Co. Donegal, enjoyed a trip to Todd's Leap in February after they completed the Rise Up programme with YWI - both groups are pictured below.



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.

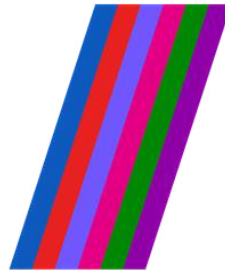


Children and young people and their key youth workers will co-design a range of digital resources including a mobile app, animations and podcasts to support their own needs and those of the wider communities.



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: ourgeneration-cyp.com



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#GrowingUpBetterTogether