



BELIEVE IN IT. ACT ON IT.

The Ireland Funds Help Develop Young Social Innovators in Northern Ireland

Young Social Innovators is a program that fires young peoples' passion to change the world for good. It focuses on empowering young people to use their own talents to be "social innovators", developing their innate sense of justice, responsibility and capacity to create a fairer, more caring and equal society.





WORKING TOGETHER COMMUNITY CHANGE GIVE BACK

“We started out with the idea that social innovation would be a good tool to engage young people to connect to their communities.” explains Rachel Collier, CEO of Young Social Innovators (YSI). “So we came up with a social innovation framework, which is now used throughout Ireland. Over 57% of second level schools in the Republic of Ireland are using it and the program has now reached 75,000 young people across Ireland.”

Now, a grant from The Ireland Funds has helped bring the program to Northern Ireland. “The Ireland Funds have been critical in bringing the YSI experience to Northern Ireland,” explains Sharon Murray, Training, Education and Impact Manager at YSI. “Rather than trying to get young people from Northern Ireland to come to Dublin to have the Young Social Innovators experience, they can experience it here on the ground, surrounded by people from their own community.”

Rachel Collier feels it’s the perfect time to bring the program to Northern Ireland and further explains why. “The politics of Northern Ireland have a turbulent history. Young people want to connect not just to politics but to other issues as well. We’re finding they want to talk about housing laws, and they want to talk about employment. YSI gives them a way of doing that together. It’s time to come to Northern Ireland because young people here, as everywhere, need a way to work together for a better and fairer world. Northern Ireland at the moment is shaping its future. Young people need a voice in that future.”

And so all across the island, groups of young people are coming together to educate themselves and tackle issues as diverse as bullying, eating disorders, homelessness, drug abuse, and LGBT advocacy. At regional YSI “Speak Outs” they have a chance to present their work and share ideas with their peers as well as to the larger community and often government representatives who are in attendance.

Innovative actions have led to some groups actually affecting local legislation, and creating new policies and programs that last long after their involvement with YSI ends. In doing so, young people are finding their voice and finding that even at a young age, they can affect real change in their communities. Youth cafes have been established in communities that previously had no facilities, organ donation has increased thanks to awareness campaigns by YSI groups, and homeless people in Belfast now have more resources on account of young people speaking out together as young social innovators.

CONFIDENCE OPEN YOUR EYES

Elements Of YSI’s Social Innovation Action Programme

CARE: Working in teams to choose a social issue teams they feel passionately about and gain an in-depth understanding of that issue.

COOPERATE: Young people collaborate with each other, involve others within their educational setting and create relevant links within their community and beyond.

CHANGE: Through their understanding of the issue and the links created, teams take action to make a real and lasting change.

COMMUNICATE: Throughout their project, young people communicate their message to raise awareness and influence others.