

# EMPATHY, SOCIAL VALUES & CIVIC BEHAVIOUR AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN IRELAND



We examined 33 documents to see if empathy and social values are considered important in Irish policy and curriculum (e.g. what is taught in schools). We also asked 11 key informants (e.g. teachers, youth workers) about their opinions on how empathy & social values are promoted in Irish society.

### **Our Irish policy & curriculum review found that...**

- ...Irish policy promotes the inclusion of Social and Emotional Learning in schools, youth work, and home settings.
- ...policy places the greatest emphasis on formal education (i.e. schools) over non-formal and informal education (e.g., youth work, parenting).
- ...Irish policy is more targeted toward the promotion of self-oriented skills (e.g. resilience) than other-oriented skills (e.g. empathy) that help society.
- ...Social and Emotional Learning is not included in teacher training.

### **Our key informants thought that...**

- ...values in society in general have a strong influence on young people.
- ...parents play a key role in promoting youth empathy.
- ...youth work and a positive school climate are good ways to promote empathy & social values.
- ...it would be good if teachers had more training in this area.
- ...schools and parents tend to see educational achievement as more important than empathy and related skills/values.

### **Based on the overall study, our research recommends that...**

- ...parents, youth, schools, communities and governments need to be aware of the important role they play in creating a culture of empathy.
- ...better policy guidelines are needed that support the promotion of youth empathy and prosocial values across parent, school, peer and community/youth work settings.
- ...Social and Emotional Learning needs to emphasise other-oriented skills like empathy, social responsibility and civic behaviour that help society and not just the individual.