



**Wexford
Youth
Action**

Manifesto for the
Local Elections
2014

Who we are

We, the young people of Wexford, are deeply concerned at the high youth unemployment rate in Co. Wexford and the continuing difficulties we face in getting jobs and appropriate training. We have met to discuss this issue and have been working to make our voices heard through the Wexford Youth Action Group, established with the support of Wexford Local Development in September 2013.

Since this date we have recruited members from Wexford, Enniscorthy and Gorey and have prepared a submission to Minister Joan Burton on the European Youth Guarantee. We travelled to Leinster House in December 2013 and put our proposals to our local TDs and Senators in person - they have all pledged their support for our work. We have also showcased our work in a national magazine 'Changing Ireland' and have been invited to speak about our project to a visiting delegation from the European Union.

What we want

We recognise the vital role that local government plays in a number of areas that affect our lives - transport, job creation and access to education and training are some of the main challenges that we face and that can be positively influenced by local politicians. We also want to be involved in local democracy and to engage constructively as active citizens with you in shaping our shared future in Wexford.

With this in mind, we now set out our main concerns in each of these areas and put forward solutions that we hope will be taken up by those elected in the months ahead:

1. Transport

The issue:

Transport is a major problem for many of us who are looking for work or trying to access training. We depend more on public transport than other sections of the population and something as simple as trying to print out a CV in a rural community can mean a bus trip to a bigger town. There is a lack of transport in the areas out of the main towns. In the main towns, the buses do not operate frequently enough. Often services are cancelled. In many cases the only way to travel between small towns is to take 2 or 3 buses. The cost of bus travel is prohibitive.

The solution:

We call on our local elected representatives to develop a local transport policy which makes it possible for people to take up opportunities by having an efficient, reliable public transport system in Wexford including

- ✓ The introduction of services which bring people into the major towns at the times they need - early morning, lunchtime and evening time.
- ✓ The introduction of a bus service which will get students to Carlow IT on time to study there and return in the evening. Make sure that it is affordably priced.

2. Access to employment

The issue:

As young people looking for work and depending on social welfare, we feel a huge sense of embarrassment. We are embarrassed to be dependent on our parents and feel that we are often stigmatised as lazy or uninterested in work. This often comes across in how we are treated by officials in Government departments some of whom we feel look down on us for being unemployed. We feel demoralised and useless - for some people this can lead to severe mental health difficulties, depression and even suicide.

The solution:

We call on our local elected representatives to take the lead on creating opportunities for us to get work in Wexford:

- ✓ Lack of experience is a barrier to finding work - we call on you to take a lead in helping local employers to understand our situation and to become more 'youth friendly'. Give us a chance to show them what we can do and where our skills lie. Encourage them to be more open to giving us opportunities to learn about work and what makes a good employee in their eyes.
- ✓ Develop initiatives to encourage employers to offer work shadowing programmes or work sampling programmes which will help us to make better decisions about our futures - this could be done by local politicians leading a coordinated effort with local business networks and Chambers of Commerce to have a focus on tackling this issue.

3. Meaningful and relevant education and training

The issue:

Many of us feel unprepared for the world of work. In school there is a big emphasis on academic achievement but not so much on what it is like to work and what is needed in terms of life skills once you leave education. While there are different training options out there not all of them are high quality and getting to and from a course can be a big problem in terms of transport.

The solution:

We call on our local elected representatives to:

- ✓ Take steps to ensure that Wexford has more training which focuses on personal and not just academic development - life skills, communication and personal development. Training which treats us as young adults and respects who we are and where we are coming from as people and which gives us an opportunity to discover and build on our own strengths and abilities.

- ✓ Use your influence on the newly formed Education and Training Board to advocate for an increased number of high quality training opportunities for work - apprenticeships in a broader range of areas - vocational and not just academic education.

4. Active citizenship

The issue:

In all the debates about youth unemployment and the future of our county and country the voices of young people are not heard. We are often sceptical about the political process and feel that no one is interested in listening to our stories, experience and proposals.

The solution:

We call on our local elected representatives to:

- ✓ Support us in the work that we are doing through Wexford Youth Action as well as in schools, training centres and projects across the County.
- ✓ Recognise the role that organisations such as Wexford Local Development, Access 2000, Youth Train Community Training Centre, Wexford Vocational College and Bridgetown School Completion Programme amongst others have done to make sure that we can take part in today's forum.
- ✓ Commit to continuing to meet and talk with us after the elections about what we need and how we can all help to improve the prospects of young people in Wexford.
- ✓ Ensure that the voices of all young people in Co. Wexford are clearly heard in the new Local and Community Development Committee and the Public Participation Network

For further information on the work of Wexford Youth Action contact us at wexforyouthaction@outlook.com or find us on Facebook.