

# **IRISH YOUTH FOUNDATION (UK)**

## **IMMEDIATE YOUTH FOCUS EMERGENCY FUND**

In 2013, a Discussion Day was held with organisations the charity regularly supports to review the changing needs of the young Irish community and their continued need for funding. The following issues were highlighted:

- Young people of Irish heritage continued to arrive in the UK unprepared for life, often in a chaotic state and in dire need, with no access to funds.
- Agencies supporting young people in need were themselves struggling to cope with demand and changes in the welfare system (and reductions in statutory core funding).
- Food and shelter were immediate and urgent priorities and emergency repatriation where appropriate.

Following this consultation a new initiative was launched, "Immediate Youth Focus", to kick-start a life-line for young people caught in a changing climate and who were living in abject poverty. The aim was to provide an emergency safety net over the difficult winter months and beyond for destitute young individuals up to the age of 30. Funding was provided to 5/6 agencies supporting young people of Irish descent, but not exclusively, in London and other inner-City or deprived areas around the country, and which were well-equipped to address these needs.

In 2018 another Discussion Day was held with organisations supported in Britain and Northern Ireland to review the changing needs of the young Irish community in the past 5 years. The main points emerging were:

- Welfare agencies reported an increase in young people coming forward with mental health issues due to problems caused by poverty, job insecurity, low pay and housing challenges.
- A broad definition of Irish heritage was required to reflect the changing nature of the Irish community including mixed heritage, cultures, race, identities and sexualities.
- Holistic support for mental and physical wellness was a priority.
- Youth unemployment of 16-24 year olds in Northern Ireland remained the highest in the UK. IYF continues to work in areas of tension and deprivation with support for good leadership in order to build positive and better relationships within and across communities through schools, youth and community.

These changing needs continue to be addressed with renewed attention and flexibility of approach. This initiative has been welcomed as a truly beneficial and essential resource by the organisations involved. Since 2013, £79,00 has now been awarded to organisations for use at their discretion to provide emergency help for young people in dire need. The following welfare organisations have benefitted since Immediate Youth Focus was established:

Irish Community Care  
Irish Community Care Manchester  
London Irish Centre  
New Horizon Youth Centre  
Solace Women's Aid  
Trustees of the Hampton Settlement (YouthAction Northern Ireland)

In 2020, £11,500 has been awarded in addition to their annual grants to Irish Community Care, London Irish Centre, New Horizon Youth Centre and Solace Women's Aid for emergency assistance to young people.