



**IASLT**

*The Irish Association of*  
**Speech + Language Therapists**

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Ireland

(by email: [youthactionplan@equality.gov.ie](mailto:youthactionplan@equality.gov.ie) )

DATE 14<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Dear Officer,

**Re: Public consultation to inform the development of a new Action Plan for Youth Services**

In response to the call for public consultation, I would like to include the attached submission with its recommendations *to enhance access and inclusion, without discrimination* - for vulnerable youth with speech, language or communication needs (often hidden) who can end up on the wrong side of the law, when regular locally organised peer activities within their interests, might really make the difference in choices and life direction, but are not available or may not seem accessible to them, or costly, in their locality.

Also attached is the following document for reference: IASLT Scope of Practice (2023).

We found it difficult to format the document to the templates provided and survey, so please accept the attached documents as our submission in the context of vulnerable youth across Ireland and endorsing the fantastic opportunities, youth initiatives can offer them, when guided and supported, in group and team activities.

The most needy and vulnerable youth at risk, may not present with obvious communication (speech) problems, hearing loss or learning difficulty but hidden or masked communication impairments — they can find social interactions and remembering and following instructions really challenging, *presenting barriers to equality of access for this cohort of young people*, impacting their attendance, performance and achievements. These are the *youth whose voices may never be heard* typically because they may not own up to **not understanding information when asked** or they may **find questions difficult to form** -as they may not fully understand or remember all the information given (spoken or written) and at high risk of being judged as non compliant, non engaging or non cooperative.

There is a wealth of current international research and literature overwhelmingly pointing to **60% youth getting into trouble with the law have speech language and communication needs often unidentified or missed** and up to 89% youth ending up in detention.

To promote high quality and effective services throughout Ireland, we recommend that a pathway be developed within this Action Plan for exploring with IASLT/ representative with youth justice advisory group, optimal ways agencies and local groups can access training/education in identifying, supporting and referring on to SLT, children/youth who may be enrolling but failing to engage with Social Youth activities are often

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naturally language loaded in nature of youth activities (instructions to follow and socialisations to manage) IASLT would prioritise the needs of vulnerable youth with speech language and communication needs (often hidden or masked) which can have them drop out, not engage, or feel excluded from the very peer social activities they need the most and which could be of critical benefit for them.

**A comprehensive youth action plan promoting best practice must include SLT training/education for providers on red flags, identifiers, access, (easy English documentation, informed supports etc) and when and how to call in/ refer on to SLT services, for youth with speech language and social communication problems - who might otherwise drop out of the very organised peer activities they so need and crave, which can provide early intervention, direction and development of their particular talents and interests, and prevention of future troubles for them.**

We would welcome further discussion and all queries related to this submission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paula Bradley', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Caroline Bouse,  
IASLT Professional Development Manager  
CORU Registered SLT SL 012732  
(On behalf of IASLT)

Paula Bradley,  
IASLT Representative on Youth Justice Advisory Group  
CORU Registered SLT SL 018117