

Supporting Access to Irish Language Youth Clubs in Gaeltacht Areas

(Service Delivery to Rural Minority Group)

Language · Culture · Community · Youth

John Curran, Muintearas

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1,500 years of the Irish language & its survival

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About Muintearas (Óige Na Gaeltachta)

Who We Are

Muintearas is a youth work organisation based in Leitir Móir, Co. Galway, serving Gaeltacht communities across the west of Ireland.

We deliver high-quality, youth-informed services entirely through the medium of Irish — supporting young people aged 9–24 and their families. Focused on Gaeltacht Youth Strategy

Our work is rooted in language, culture, participation, and community.

9–24

Age range
served

106k

Gaeltacht
population

20k

Daily Irish
speakers

7

Counties with
Gaeltacht areas

42 Youth Clubs Supported, 3 Core Support Staff, 12 Youth Workers*
150+ Volunteers, 2K Plus Youth Participants

"The objective of Muintearas is to offer a high-quality, youth-informed youth work service in Irish."

Gaeltacht Protest and Advocacy - Across Every Generation

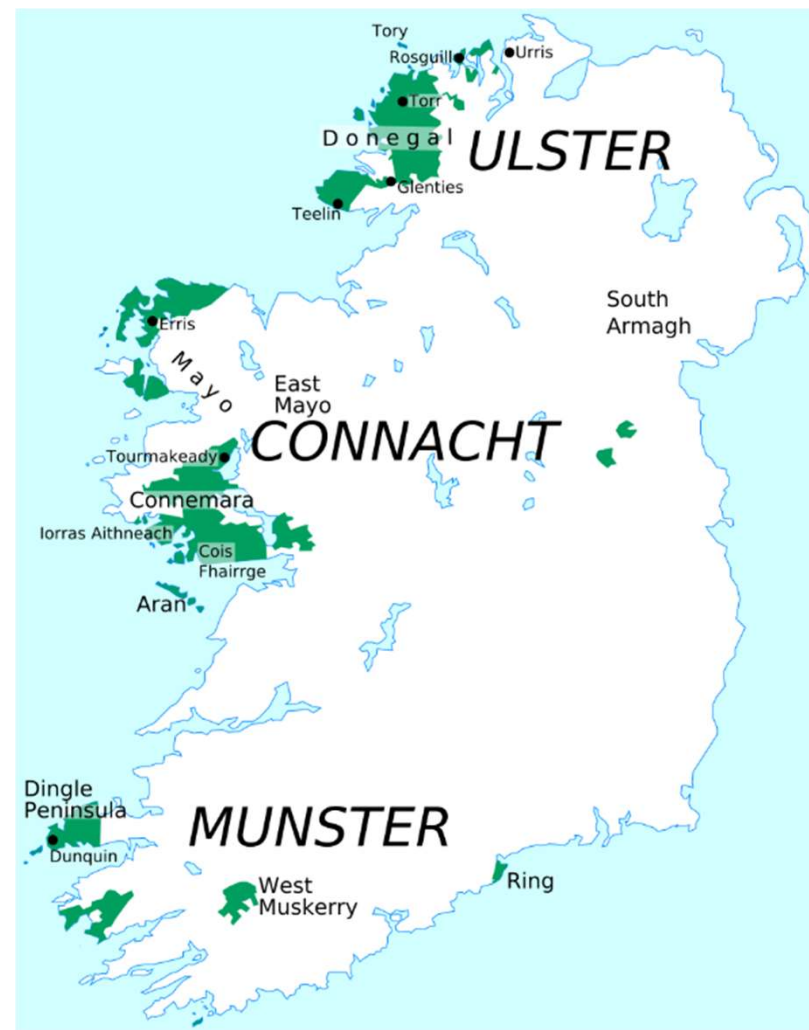
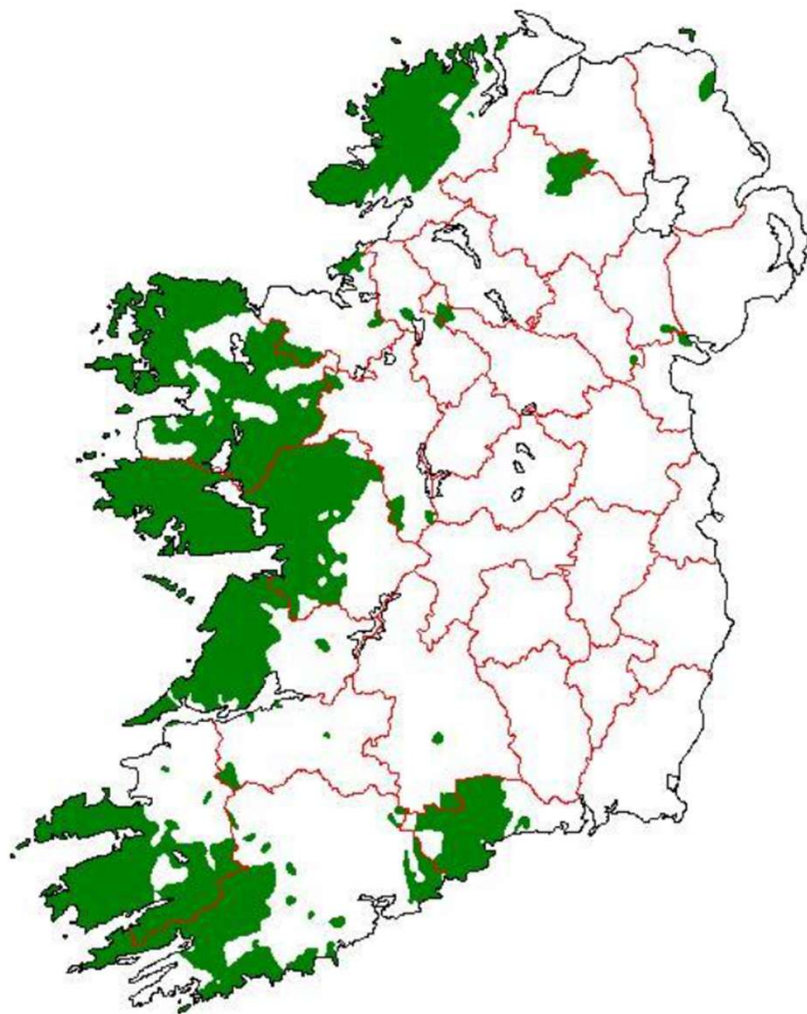


A Brief History of the Gaeltacht / Irish Language



Pre-1600s	Irish as the dominant language for over 1,500 years — rich tradition of law, poetry & monastic writing
17th–18th c.	Tudor & Cromwellian displacement, plantation & suppression of Gaelic culture
1831–1900	National Schools Act enforces English; the Great Famine & emigration devastate Irish-speaking communities
1926	Gaeltacht Commission officially identifies Irish-speaking districts for the first time
1950s–1980s	Údarás na Gaeltachta brings jobs & infrastructure investment to Gaeltacht areas
2012	Gaeltacht Act introduces the Language Planning Process (LPP) — community-led 20-year plans

Gaeltacht Maps 1926 & 2026



The Irish Language Today



Strengths

Strong cultural identity & community pride

High levels of community activism & volunteerism

Growing national interest in the Irish language

Rich artistic, musical & storytelling traditions

Dedicated state support agencies, strong partners & language planning framework

The Irish Language Today

Challenges

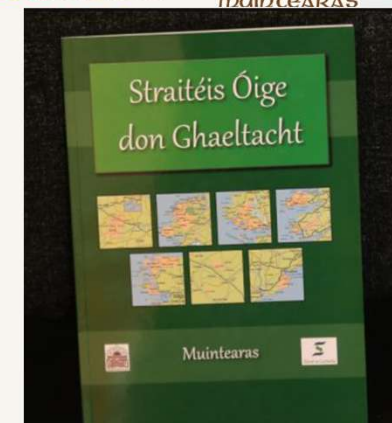
English dominance in media, online spaces & workplaces

Housing crisis — young families cannot afford to stay in Gaeltacht

Out-migration of young people for education & employment

Peer-to-peer Irish use drops sharply after age 12

Social & economic deprivation in rural areas



The Language Planning Process (LPP)

Introduced by the Gaeltacht Act 2012 — community-led 20-year language plans focusing on intergenerational transmission.

Community Organisations

Coops, development groups, youth services — the grassroots heart of language planning – Advocacy, Services and Protest

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Regional development authority providing funding, infrastructure & economic, community and arts investment.

Parent Body of Muintearas

Language Planning Officers

1-2 Staff appointed to each of the 26 Language Planning Areas to support the development of the language in those areas

Good Jobs, Good Salary, Very Poor Staff Retention

Youth as Priority Domain

Everyone of the 26 language plans identify YOUTH as a priority — clubs, camps & informal spaces are essential



Current Realities

"The Gaeltacht is at a crossroads — pressures are real, but so are the opportunities."

Social & Economic Pressures	Linguistic & Cultural Pressures	Community Resilience
Cost of living & housing crisis displacing young families	English-dominant digital world — streaming, gaming, social media	Strong volunteerism and community spirit
Limited local employment opportunities	Reduced natural peer-to-peer Irish use among teenagers	Cultural festivals, arts, sports & youth groups
Rural isolation and transport barriers	Need for safe, fun, Irish-language social spaces	Partnerships between schools & community groups
Economic & social deprivation	Identity pressures on young Irish speakers	Growing national appreciation for Irish

(OUR) Youth Work Approach

Why youth work is one of the most powerful engines of language survival:

1 Irish-Only Staff & Youth Clubs

Safe, fun informal spaces where Irish is the natural medium — arts, music, drama, coding & sports

All Staff and Services are Irish Language Only

2 Youth-Led Practice

Young people co-design programmes, take leadership roles & build ownership of their language

Youth Voice is key to our practice
Cross Gaeltacht Events and Trips

3 Intergenerational Work

Projects with local musicians, storytellers & craftspeople; céilithe, folklore, heritage walks

Securing our culture across generations

4 Digital Youth Work

Podcasting, short-form video, VR gaming clubs & digital storytelling — Irish in spaces where teens live

5 Volunteer Development

Irish-medium youth work training, leadership courses & mentoring to build sustainable capacity

6 Strategic Partnerships

Partner with Govt Dept(s) Community & Gaeltacht, Education & Youth, Údarás Na Gaeltachta, Local Education Boards, Language Planning Officers, Schools, Volunteers & Arts organisations for local and national impact

Inclusion & Impact

Who We Serve (Gaeltacht)

- Focus on All Irish Speaking Young People
- Families who want Irish-medium services
- Children with Irish from non-Irish-speaking homes
- Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Gaeltacht youth aged 9–24 across rural areas

Why It Matters

Language becomes ALIVE

Irish is normal, fun & social — not just a school subject

Identity & Belonging

Young people build confidence as Irish speakers

Community Resilience

Youth work is a protective factor for language & community

Intergenerational Bridge

Connecting young people with cultural heritage & tradition

"Youth work is where Irish becomes alive — spoken by young people, for young people, with young people."

Future Vision

"We have future plans to enhance the quality and range of youth engagement and will continue to leverage our partnerships..."

Expand digital youth work — podcasting, video & online Irish content

New Youth Worker supported Irish-language youth clubs in underserved Gaeltacht areas (4 New Roles Currently Advertised, more in the pipeline)

Cross-Gaeltacht youth networks connecting communities across Ireland

Enhanced leadership programmes for young Gaeltacht speakers

More Irish-medium volunteer/ Youth worker training to grow community capacity

Partnership and Integration with Language Planning Officers – connection and funding (50:50 scheme)

Stronger partnerships with, funders (Local, National & EU) local communities, arts, technology & sports organisations

Advocacy for youth-led Irish-language initiatives at Gaeltacht, Government and EU level

Key Message

Youth work is essential to sustaining Irish as a living community language in the Gaeltacht.

The challenges are real — but so is the resilience and creativity of Gaeltacht communities.

With the right support, youth-led and community-driven Irish-language initiatives can ensure that Irish thrives not just as a heritage language, but as a living, breathing, social language for the next generation.

Go raibh maith agaibh · Thank you

john.curran@muintearas.com · muintearas.com