



Localise
Youth Volunteering

**A National Proposal:
Providing Immediate and Longterm
Solutions through Youth Volunteering**



Introduction

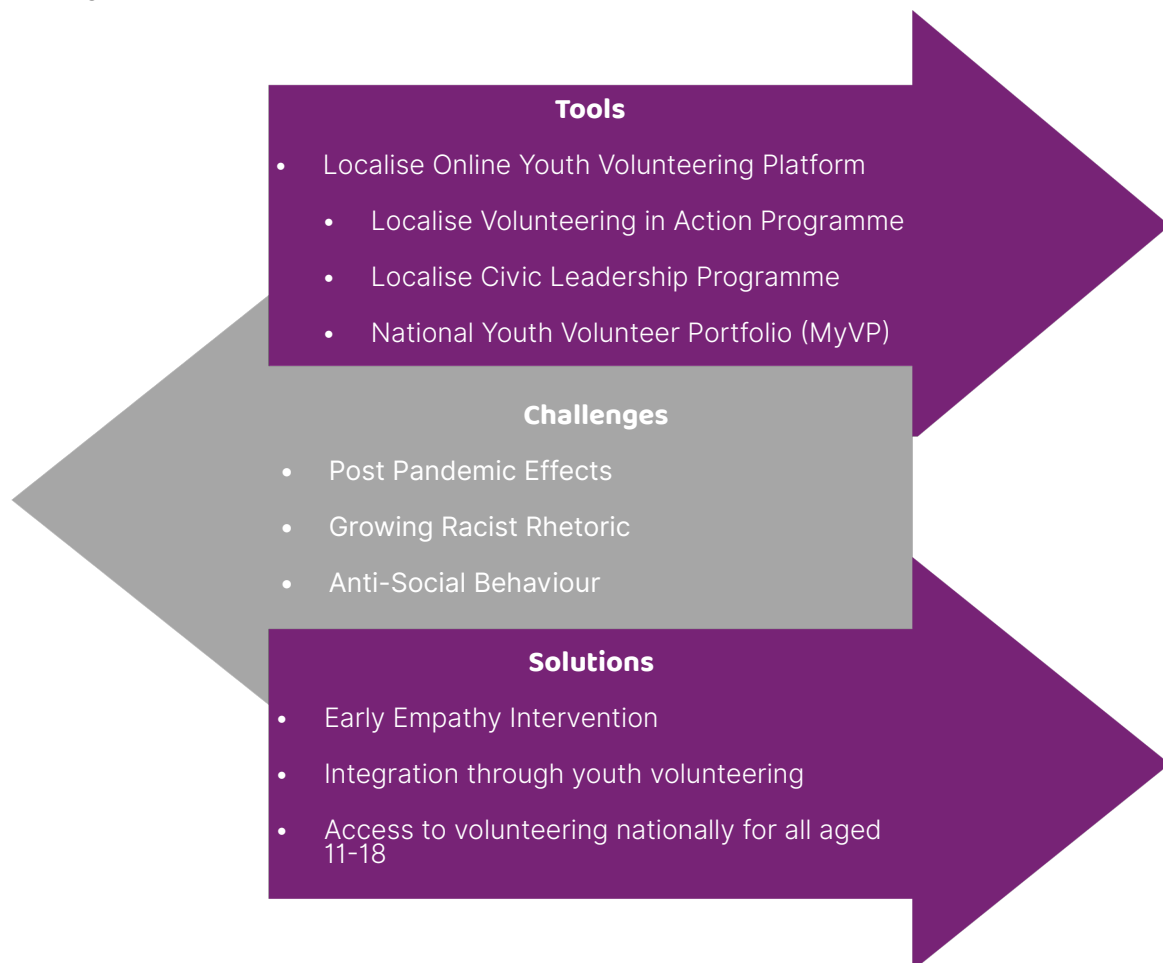
The youth generation of Ireland is facing urgent personal and societal challenges, highlighted and broadened by the impact of multiple crises. These young people have a decreased sense of self-worth, purpose and wellbeing. Increases in violence, post pandemic effects on well-being, education and a growing racist undercurrent in Ireland's discourse all lead to a lack of empathy within society.

Localise targets our programmes towards communities and groups that experience isolation, marginalisation, profiling, negative stereotypes and stigma. This is done by referencing *Diverse Neighbourhoods: An Analysis of the Residential Distribution of Immigrants in Ireland* (Department of Justice, 2019) and the CSO. We enable young people to take back the negative rhetoric around them and ownership of their own story within their communities.

This summary document, highlights how the Localise National Youth Volunteer Plan has been and will address these issues. The plan has the capacity to combat these urgent challenges in the immediate, medium and long term. At the core of the approach is the online Localise Volunteering Platform, which will engage over 40,000 young people in year three across Ireland.

Action Plan

Young people growing up in a post-pandemic environment face many complex social and personal challenges. Localise has tools to counteract some of these challenges, awakening empathy and fostering pro-social behaviours. The graphic below lays out the societal context that Ireland is experiencing and how Localise can mitigate these challenges.



Challenges:

Post Pandemic Effects: The Irish Youth Foundation (2021) found that four in five youth workers predict a long-term mental health fallout and a generation lacking in social skills. Success, education and employment prospects have been shattered as a result of the pandemic.

Growing Racist Rhetoric: In the Irish Youth Foundation (2021) report, one in three youth workers have concerns about online engagement with right wing groups. The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (2022) found proliferation of groups that “demean, harass, and inspire violence against people based on their identity traits including race, religion, ethnicity, language, national or social origin, caste, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity” is growing in Ireland.

Anti-Social Behaviours: An Garda Síochána (2023) identified a rise in anti-social behaviours and violence. Crimes against the person, assaults, threats, harassment and other crimes increased nationally for a three-year period before the pandemic struck. This has been a rising trend since restrictions have lifted. The report notes that Parentline has said 42% of its calls related to aggressive, angry or abusive children. Further, according to the US National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2021), young people have the highest rates of substance abuse and dependence. By the time they reach 18 years, nearly half have used drugs at least once. However, a 2011 study published in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence reports that pro-social activities like volunteering act as protective factors against risky behaviors.

Localise Solutions

Why it works:

Our Online Youth Volunteering Platform enables schools and communities to implement our Volunteering in Action Workshop and Civic Leadership Programme quickly, efficiently and effectively. The platform is essential to Localise reaching over 40,000 young people per year country wide. Our structured tools have a proven track record of fostering empathy and community cohesion. Integration and diversity are at the core of our programmes. By completing Localise programming, young people receive recognition of their hard and soft skills externally in the community, working world, and educational institutes.

Early Empathy Intervention

By targeting community groups and schools we can create a kinder Ireland. Pro-social behaviour is formed through participation in volunteering. Young people gain an intrinsic sense of belonging and collective responsibility, resulting in pro-social behaviours. Awakening empathy within young people spreads across all aspects of their lives.

With further support, Localise will be able to meet the demand and engage young people in NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and Probation Services. Localise has met with the Ballyrunners (based in Ballymun, Dublin 11) and there is now a demand for a partnership going forward. This specific programme has anecdotally noted that when their young people are engaged in pro-social behaviour, they are less inclined to have court appearances.

Access Nationally for All Young People Aged 11-18

The process of changing the lived realities and experiences for young people to become integrated and the future civic and community leaders begins with our proven, effective mainstream integration programme. We at Localise acknowledge that the opportunities for civic engagement are not easily accessible for those with various intersectionalities, including social class and ethnicity.

We open opportunities for young people to expand their self-esteem and confidence through self-belief by being of service to others. Young people recognise their own talents, abilities and actions and the impact they have on others. Educational institutions will recognise these skills and talents through the National Youth Volunteering Portfolio. Young people begin to envision themselves in a different role to what society says they are and will be.

Our programmes work in partnership with community groups and primary and secondary schools engaging young people from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and nationalities in voluntary local community service. Each Localise programme is designed to combine education, youth volunteering and integration to maximise the experience and learning for young people by uniting in the service to others.

Working Toward Integration

Localise is a mainstream integration programme engaging young people from a variety of diverse backgrounds and nationalities. The programme encourages participation from migrant young people and young people that are children of or dependents of migrants.

Localise is currently working in partnership with a youth service who work directly with unaccompanied minors and those in Direct Provision centres. With further support, Localise will be able to meet the demand and engage this cohort further.

Localise and the National Volunteer Strategy

Localise is working to fulfill **Strategic Objective 1.2** through our targeted approach: “The diversity in our communities and of people of different backgrounds and circumstances reflected more proportionately within the volunteering community.”

The Localise National Youth Volunteer Programme can deliver **Strategic Objective 1.4**: “Deliver an educational programme in partnership with youth organisations and Educational Bodies. While many young people volunteer through youth work and sports groups there is need to change the perception and encourage participation of volunteering among younger people, including those in higher education.”

MyVP is working towards **Strategic Objective 3.30**: “Explore the potential for the introduction of a formal qualification in recognition of the skills, knowledge and competencies acquired from volunteering.”

Localise Tools

How it works:

Online Youth Volunteering Platform

Our new online youth volunteering platform allows schools and community groups from around Ireland to register to partake in our workshop and civic leadership programme. This platform can engage over 40,000 young people per year across Ireland. The easy-to-use platform and our new Customer Relationship Management database allows Localise to manage, oversee and support all groups.

Volunteering In Action Workshop

Our Volunteering in Action workshop is designed to introduce the core values of volunteerism to young people in community groups and in Primary and Secondary schools. This programme sees young people explore what volunteering is, how it relates back to themselves and the wider community. The programme applies their knowledge and skills into action by completing an act of service for others. It leads groups on a journey of empathy and planning for their act of service and first volunteering experience. The workshop then allows young people to open their National Youth Volunteer Portfolio (MyVP)

Civic Leadership Programme

Our Civic Leadership Programme is a 10 week in-depth programme that facilitates secondary school aged young people to be actively involved in their communities through volunteerism. Participants develop a range of transversal skills, build competencies and confidences, and become change makers through voluntary action while exploring the needs of their community. Participants develop a greater level of empathy for themselves and others, exemplifying how our diversity makes us stronger as a whole.

National Youth Volunteer Portfolio (MyVP)

The National Youth Volunteer Portfolios (MyVP) provides the opportunity to record and recognise the social capital, educational development and employability skills that are all developed through youth volunteerism. Working with primary, secondary and further and higher educational institutions, we are piloting pathways that will utilise the MyVP as an educational route.

Localise has placed a working group in action that has been tasked with examining alternative pathways to further and higher education and employment through youth volunteerism. The group comprises representatives from the Higher Education sector (Dublin City University, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, University Galway), the Further Education sector, youth services, and members of the National Volunteer Strategy.

Why Localise?

For over 50 years, Localise has been at the forefront of providing proven and effective solutions nationally for youth volunteering.

The process of changing the lived realities and experiences for young people to become the future civic and community leaders begins with our established mainstream integration programme. Localise programming uses a targeted approach where communities are known to have higher populations of migrant peoples referencing *Diverse Neighbourhoods: An Analysis of the Residential Distribution of Immigrants in Ireland* (Department of Justice, 2019) and the CSO.

Localise has the resources of a trained and experienced team, a track record with its partners, a vision and a strong implementation plan. Our tried-and-true methods and programmes in targeted schools, communities, parishes and universities are only amplified through the Implementation Plan.



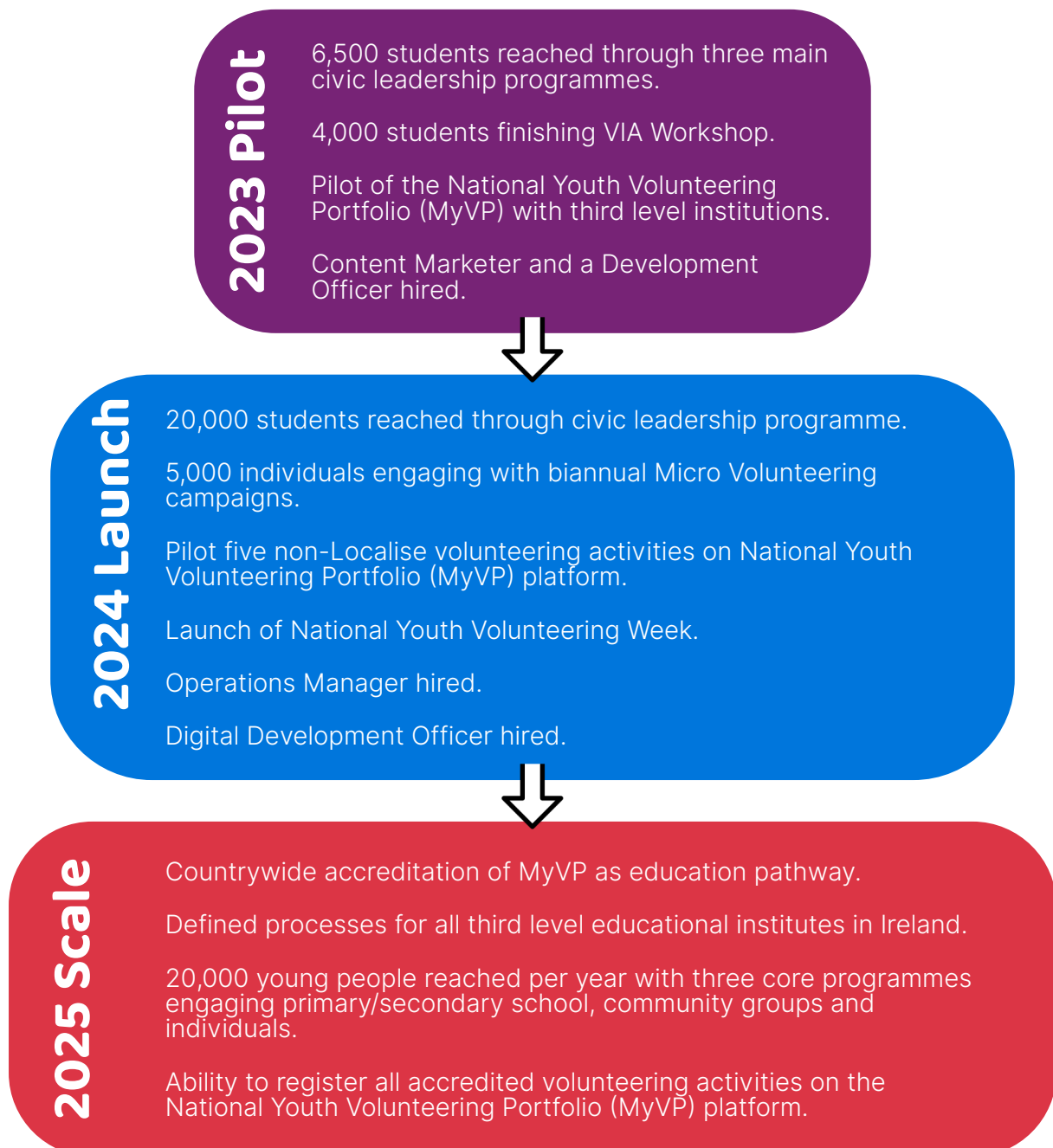
Three Year Growth Strategy

Localise has embraced a hybrid model, integrating technology to create a scalable and accessible platform, capable of reaching every young person in Ireland.

Currently Localise engages 6,500 young people per year. With this investment we can grow this reach to over 60,000 in a three-year period.

This growth needs to be supported by a multi annual investment of €250,000 per year to €850,000 in year three (2023 - 2026).

The Localise National Youth Volunteering Programme will enable an estimated 831,000 volunteer hours to be completed over the three-year period. **By applying the CSO metric of the current youth minimum wage (€7.91/hour), the monetary value of this volunteer work is estimated to be €6,573,210.**



Outcome Projection

The three core pillars of our approach are:

1. Recognising Volunteering Skills as a Pathway to Further Education and Employment. Localise Youth volunteerism will be recorded and recognised for educational development and employability. All students in Ireland will have access to the National Youth Volunteering Portfolio (MyVP) that will demonstrate their skills and breaking through the barriers to further education and employment.
2. Access for All - Removing Barriers through digital engagement. Our mission is to engage all eligible young people in Ireland. Current initiatives reach young people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, bridging gaps between communities. The digital platform expands this across a geographical vertical increasing our reach nationwide.
3. Building Empathy through Volunteering increasing pro-social behaviour "Youth who showed higher levels of aggression, bullying, and antisocial or delinquent behaviour tended to show lower empathy and prosocial behaviour" (UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre NUI Galway, 2019).

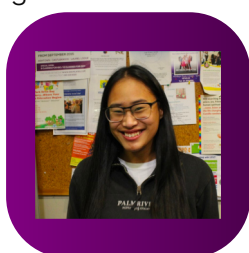
Outcomes for young people:

Tackling Inequalities and Developing Empathy: Our programme offers a space where diversity and integration at a local community level is fostered and nurtured through youth civic engagement. We specifically target areas of socio-economic disadvantage, where we can make a real and lasting impact.



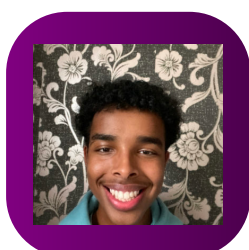
"Volunteering as a young person definitely helps to develop a lifelong culture of volunteering. Volunteering, it's not only a thing you do, it's a way of living your life, of giving back to others" - Monica

Transferable Skills: develop soft and professional skills, including presentation, communication, active listening, confidence, interpersonal, cooperation, social, planning and organisation.



"I really love being part of Localise as it's given me a great boost of confidence and I've made friends for life! Due to the work that I've been involved with, it's also given a sense of purpose and a sense of personal maturity and growth." - Thị Thảo

Civic Leadership: record and recognise the social capital, educational development and employability skills that are all developed through youth volunteerism.



"It [the Localise programme] plays a huge role in influencing the community, and once we're doing something in the community those who follow behind do the same thing, which not only benefits us ourselves but the community, as well it would also help in future career goals" - Hanad

Outcomes of Investment:

From 2023 - 2026, the Localise Volunteering Platform has the capacity to scale the number of young people reached by over 6 fold by Year 3. Traditionally in volunteering there is a linear proportionality between staffing and young people engaged.

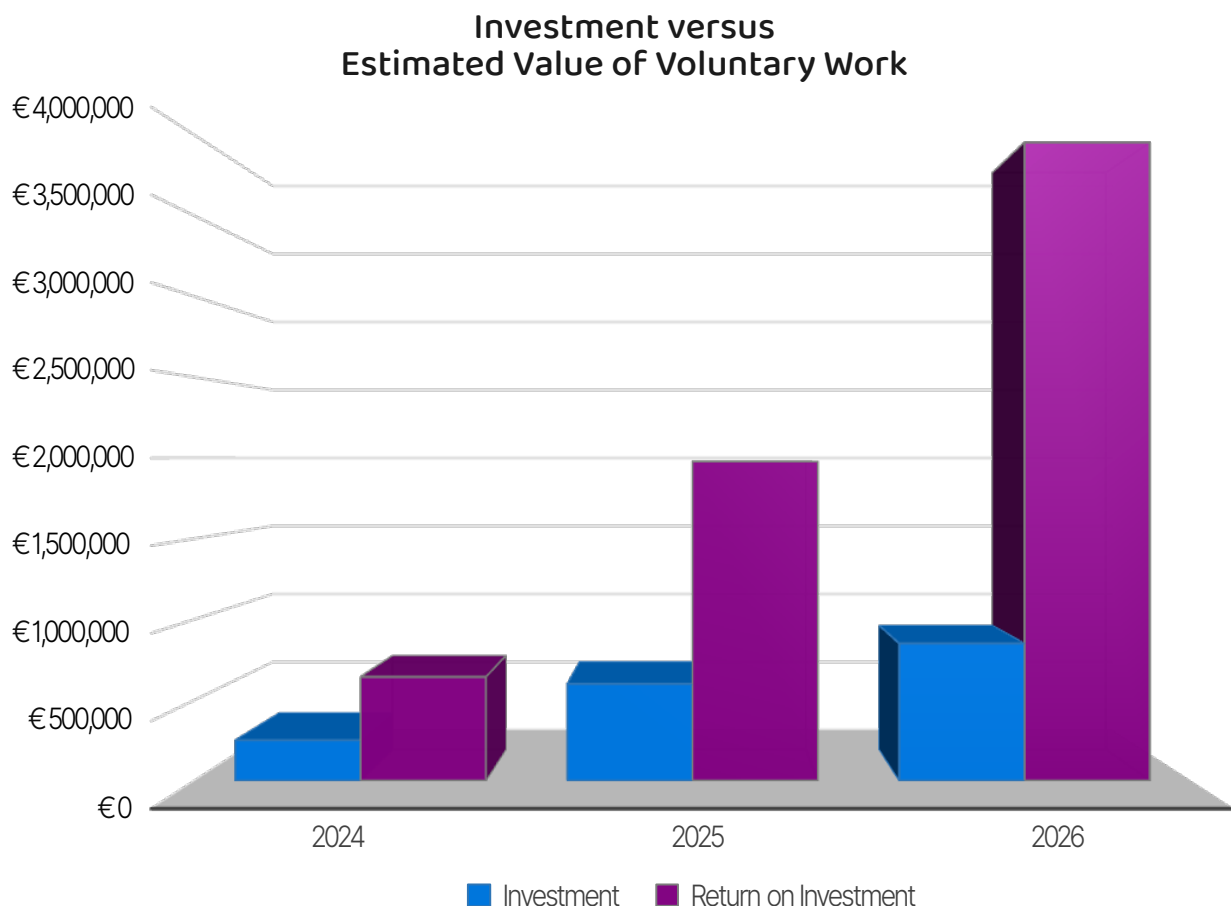
*** Due to the scalability of the Localise online platform, exponential growth cannot be reached without heavy investment.**

By increasing investment per annum from €250,000 to €850,000 we can scale our young people reached metric from 6,500 per year to 40,000 per year.

Year	Number of Localise Staff	Number of Participants	Total Investment
2024	4.5	6,500	€250,000
2025	8	* 20,000	€600,000
2026	12	40,000	€850,000

In the most recent Localise Annual Audited Accounts of 2021, Localise engaged 3,335 young people, and received €268,794 in various funding. This means Localise spends €80.59 per young person in our programming. The Localise National Youth Volunteer Plan when at scale means €21.25 invested per young person in 2026.

The Localise Volunteering Platform enables an estimated 831,000 volunteer hours completed over the three year period. By applying the CSO metric of youth minimum wage at the current €7.91/hour, the **monetary value of this volunteer work is estimated to be €6,573,210.**



Conclusion:

In conclusion, the youth generation in Ireland is currently facing urgent personal and societal challenges exacerbated by multiple crises. Issues such as decreased self-worth, purpose, and well-being, increased violence, post-pandemic effects on well-being and education, and a growing racist undercurrent in society have led to a lack of empathy within the community.

However, the Localise National Youth Volunteer Plan offers a comprehensive approach to address these challenges. By targeting marginalized communities and groups, Localise aims to empower young people to take control of their own narratives and counteract the negative rhetoric surrounding them.

The plan utilizes an online youth volunteering platform to engage over 40,000 young people annually, fostering empathy and pro-social behaviors. It also emphasizes early empathy intervention and access for all young people aged 11-18, providing opportunities for personal growth, recognition of skills, and envisioning alternative roles for themselves. By working towards integration and leveraging partnerships with community groups, schools, and educational institutions, Localise strives to create a kinder Ireland and develop future civic and community leaders.

The plan aligns with the goals of the National Volunteer Strategy, contributes to the recognition of volunteering skills, and aims to remove barriers through digital engagement. With the support and investment outlined in the three-year growth strategy, Localise can significantly increase its reach, engage more young people, and contribute to the development of a more inclusive and empathetic society.

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