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Research

An Evaluation of the QQI Co-ordination Programme

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Executive Summary

About the report

This report details the findings of an evaluation of the QQI Co-ordinator Programme. The programme is offered to young people engaged in four Garda Youth Diversion Programmes (GYDPs) located in the midlands.

Programme aim

The aim of the programme is to identify, engage, encourage and support 'at risk' young people with a bespoke, alternative educational setting, in an effort to reduce the likelihood of young people engaging/re-engaging in crime.

Evaluation methodology

The research methodology used for the evaluation included one-to-one interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders from the four projects running the programme. Those consulted for the evaluation included QQI Programme coordinators, Youth Justice Workers, School Completion Programme Coordinators, young people who had engaged with the programme and parents of young people who had engaged with the programme

Key programme statistics

Overall, the four projects have run 26 courses with a total of 136 learners between 2015 and 2019. Of these, 56.6% were male and 43.4% were female. There was a 90% retention rate among learners in the four projects and a progression rate of 92%.

Key issues affecting young people

The key issues affecting young people involved in the programme were early school leaving, learning difficulties, criminal behaviour, drug misuse, involvement in drug dealing, suicide, mental health issues, behavioural issues and intergenerational disadvantage, low educational attainment and unemployment.

What works well about the programme

Alternative to mainstream education

The programme provides an alternative for young people who are out of education and are not suited to mainstream school or Youthreach.

Preparation for the programme

Many young people require a level of preparation before they can participate in the programme due to literacy, numeracy and behavioural and personal issues.

Relationship building

Relationship building between young people and staff is central to the programme. Positive relationships between young people and staff were found to facilitate learning and personal development.

Bespoke approach to learning

The programme has a bespoke approach to learning. This means each young person is provided with an individualised approach to learning to suit their needs. All young people can also learn at their own pace.

Youth work setting

The programme is run in a youth work setting which works well in terms of young people feeling comfortable and relaxed in a familiar environment.

Restorative approach to behavioural issues

The restorative approach to behavioural issues is an important aspect of the programme and allows young people to talk about their issues, to be listened to and to work on changing their attitudes and behaviours.

Life skills development

Life skills development such as budgeting, form filling and learning to drive are part of programme and help prepare young people for life.

Career guidance and jobs skills

The career guidance aspect of the programme allows young people to explore their career possibilities and set goals. Young people also learn job related skills such as interview skills and CV preparation.

Engaging with parents

Engaging with parents works well in terms of the success of the programme.

Interagency cooperation

Interagency cooperation is important for the programme so young people can be referred to support services and staff can work with other agencies for the benefit of young people

Value for money

The programme was considered to be very good value for money insofar as youth workers can use their own skill sets to teach the programme and young people are diverted away from social welfare dependence, offending behaviour and prison.

Key benefits and outcomes of the programme

Increased self-confidence and self-esteem

The evaluation found that the programme increased young people's self-confidence and self-esteem through personal development and learning.

Returning to school

A number of young people returned to school as a direct result of engaging with the programme.

Further education and training

Many young people progressed to further education and training as a result of their engagement with the programme.

Employment

Similarly, many young people progressed to employment after completing the programme.

Reduction in offending behaviour

Overall, the evaluation reported the programme led to a reduction in offending behaviour among young people.

Reduction in drug misuse and drug dealing

The programme helped a number of young people to reduce drug misuse and selling drugs.

Benefits and outcomes for families

The programme provided positive benefits and outcomes for families including changing attitudes to the importance of education, engaging parents and siblings in education programmes, providing role models for siblings and breaking the cycle of educational disadvantage.

Key challenges related to the programme**Lack of tutor hours**

The main challenge identified was a lack of tutor hours in the programme. Due to the unique learning needs of young people, modules often take longer than expected to complete.

Programme administration

The large volume of paperwork involved in the administration of the programme was highlighted as a challenge.

Difficulties engaging young females

Some projects reported difficulties in engaging young females in the programme.

Attendance

Poor attendance among some young people was identified as a challenge by projects.

Restriction in courses

Some projects found the types of courses they could provide to be restricted due to the need for QQI verification.

Key recommendations for the future development of the programme

More tutor hours

The most common recommendation made was an increase in tutor hours for the programme.

Training for tutors

Training for tutors on the bespoke approach to learning was recommended.

Training on a restorative approach to behavioural issues

Training on a restorative approach to behavioural issues among young people for all staff, tutors and parents was suggested.

Payment of young people engaged with the programme

There were mixed views on the payment of young people for participating in the programme. A small number of young people thought payment would work well but the majority of those consulted disagreed.

Funding for transport

Funding for transport for young people engaged in the programme, particularly in rural areas was suggested.

Expansion of the programme

There is potential for the expansion of the programme. However, expansion of the programme should be on a needs related basis for young people. Maintaining the QQI quality standards associated with the programme was also considered to be very important.

Introduction

About this report

This report details the findings of an evaluation of the QQI Co-ordinator Programme conducted on behalf of the Irish Youth Justice Service.

QQI Co-ordinator Programme

The QQI Co-ordinator programme works with on average 40 young people per year to provide accredited and lifelong learning training. The aim of the programme is to identify, engage, encourage and support 'at risk' young people with a bespoke, alternative educational setting, in an effort to reduce the likelihood of young people engaging/re-engaging in crime. There are currently 10 tutors trained to work in the programme.

The service is offered to young people that are engaged in four Garda Youth Diversion Programmes (GYDPs) located in the midlands. These young people often come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have low educational attainment. Young people are engaged through small group work and one to one settings. The service provider and the young people work together to identify suitable courses for the young people.

The programme aims to bring about a gradual development of the young person's self-awareness, self-belief and confidence, via relationship building and an education focus. Young people have the opportunities to avail of QQI levels 2,3,4 and 5. For example, in recent years the young people have taken part in:

- Health related fitness
- Communications
- Information Technology
- Career planning
- Food preparation
- Sound Production
- Beauty Therapy

Interview, C.V. and employment skills are also developed. Progression pathway plans which set out each young person's goals, aims and how they meet their goals are also put in place for young people engaged in the programme. Families and the young people's communities are also engaged during the programme.

Evaluation methodology

The key research methodologies used for the evaluation of the programme were one-to-one interviews and focus groups. Key adult stakeholders and young people were consulted as part of the evaluation.

The following interviews and focus groups were conducted:

- Interviews with programme coordinators from the four projects
- Interviews with Youth Justice Workers from three of the projects
- Interview with School Completion Officer from one of the projects
- Focus group with four parents of young people involved in the programme in one of the projects
- Interviews and focus groups with a total of eight young from the four projects

Ethical considerations

All due consideration was given to ethical issues arising at every stage of the evaluation process.

However, the main ethical issues which were addressed in this research were:

- child protection and well-being;
- informed consent;
- confidentiality and anonymity; and
- record keeping including data protection and security.

The research was conducted in accordance with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011). In terms of consent, informed written parental/guardian consent was sought for young people under 18 years of age participating in the research. Informed written assent was also sought from young people themselves.

No personal information was collected on the young people involved in the research and data was stored in a safe and secure manner. Data used in the report was anonymised to protect the identity of young people involved in the programme.

Report structure

The report takes the following structure:

- **Chapter 1:** provides an overview of the key statistics related to the QQI Coordinator Programme
- **Chapter 2:** details the findings of consultations with key adult stakeholders
- **Chapter 3:** reports the findings of consultations with young people who have engaged with the programme
- **Chapter 4:** provides conclusions and recommendations based on the evaluation findings

Chapter 1: QQI Coordinator Programme Key Statistics

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the key statistics related to the QQI Coordinator Programme. Statistics relate to the period between 2015 and 2019.

Projects running the programme

There are currently four projects running the QQI Co-ordinator Programme:

- The Acorn Project in Edenderry, Co Offaly
- Fusion Project in Tullamore, Co Offaly
- The E.Y.E. Project in Mullingar, Co Westmeath
- The ALF Project in Athlone, Co Westmeath

Number of courses and learners

The four projects ran 26 courses with a total of 136 learners between 2015 and 2019. Of these learners, 77 (56.6%) were male and 59 (43.4%) were female.

Retention rate

There was a 90% retention rate among learners in the four projects. The retention rate can be defined as when a young person engages in the given module and completes it, gaining certifications.

Progression rate:

There was a 92% progression rate among learners in the four projects. The progression rate is where a young person does one of two things:

1. Completes the module/major award and progresses with the help of project staff;

2. Young person through the engagement with the QQI programme shows progression either by going back to school or similar.

Examples of progression as a direct consequence of engagement with the QQI programme include the following:

- Returning back to school
- Attending training centres
- Stepping out Programme – level 4 major award
- Moate B.C QQI level 5 major awareness
- A.I.T Computer Science Degree
- E.V.S based in Valentia and Cyprus
- AMETS – Acorn Midlands Education and Training Services – QQI level 5 major awards (Business Administration, Beauty Therapy, Youth Work)
- Full time employment, e.g.:
 - IFA
 - Lidl
 - Brady Ham
 - Glanbia

Modules Validated for delivery:

Level 3 – Minor awards	Communications Mathematics
Level 4 – Major award: General Learning	Communications Functional Maths I.T skills Work Experience Personal Effectiveness Team working Health Related Fitness Growing Vegetables

Level 5 – Major Award: Hospitality Operations	Communications Work Practice Word Processing Customer Service French Hospitality Operations Food Preparation German
QQI level 5 – Music Box set	Sound Production Music Technology Event production
Additional programmes:	Beauty Therapy Business Administration Nail Technology AMPLIFY – podcasting sessions

Modules completed:

The Acorn Project	Communications level3 Functional Maths Level 4 Personal Effectiveness Level 4 Information Technology Level 4 Communications level 4 Team Working Level 4 Entrepreneurial Skills Level 4 Work Experience Level 4 Health Related Fitness Level 4 Growing Veg
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ALF	<p>Communications Level 3</p> <p>Communications Level 4</p> <p>Information Technology level 4</p> <p>Personal Effectiveness Level 4</p> <p>Health Related Fitness Level 4</p> <p>Functional Maths level 4</p> <p>Team working Level 4</p>
E.Y.E	<p>Health Related Fitness</p> <p>Communications 3+4</p> <p>Career planning 4</p> <p>Sound production 5</p> <p>Event Production 5</p> <p>Work experience 4</p>
Fusion	<p>Nail Technology</p> <p>Communications level 3</p> <p>Health Related Fitness</p>

Ref: NFQ QQI Level 3 – Junior Certificate/level 4 – leaving Certificate

Chapter 2: Findings of Consultations with Key Adult Stakeholders

Introduction

This chapter sets out the findings of consultations conducted with key adult stakeholders involved with the QQI Co-ordinator Programme. Those consulted included:

- Programme co-ordinators;
- Youth Justice Workers;
- School Completion Programme Co-ordinators;
- Parents of young people involved in the programme.

Key issues affecting young people involved in the programme

According to the stakeholders consulted, the key issues affecting young people involved in the programme were early school leaving, learning difficulties, criminal behaviour, drug misuse, involvement in drug dealing, suicide, mental health issues, behavioural issues, disadvantage and deprivation.

- *“He (young person) got a great Junior Cert and is very bright but he had a real problem with school. He was psychology assessed and had counselling and he was very angry and he stopped communicating in school and wouldn’t do anything. He was asked to leave and I didn’t know what to do.”* [Parent]
- *“There have been a lot of suicides in the area. There are a lot of behaviour or anger management issues among young people, ADHD, dyslexia.”* [Youth Justice Worker]
- *“She (young person) had mental health issues like panic attacks and she was so sick in school and was self-harming out of frustration We had to give up on school because she wasn't able for it.”* [Parent]
- *“Most of them (young people) would be at risk of being involved in crime. They would have behavioural issues and wouldn't be able to cope with school.”* [Programme coordinator]

Drugs were identified as a key issue affecting young people in all of the project areas.

- *“Drugs would be the main issue around here. It's also the lifestyle that young people see that drugs can offer. Young people can make thousands a week dealing drugs.”* [Programme coordinator]
- *“Drugs would be a big issue here. We had people in trouble that were running for the drug dealers. It would be also robbing to get money for the drugs.”* [Youth Justice Worker]

Key issues affecting the parents and families of young people included intergenerational disadvantage, social deprivation, low educational attainment and unemployment. Communities were affected by drug dealing and violence.

- *“They (young people) are all from areas of social disadvantage, there wouldn't be much education or focus on education in their families. They wouldn't be able to cope with school.”* [Programme coordinator]
- *“They are coming from a background of low educational attainment and unemployment and you are trying to break that down.”* [Youth Work Midlands]

What works well about the programme:

Key stakeholders consulted identified the following aspects of the programme that work well:

- Alternative to mainstream education
- Preparation for the programme
- Relationship building
- Bespoke approach to learning
- Youth work setting
- Restorative approach to behavioural issues
- Life skills development
- Career guidance and jobs skills
- Engaging with parents
- Interagency cooperation
- Value for money

Alternative to mainstream education

According to stakeholders, the programme works well as it is an alternative to mainstream education for young people who are early school leavers and not suited to mainstream education.

- *“The QQI programme fits the young people’s needs who attend and school doesn’t really suit them. They usually start dropping off late first year, early second year. They usually get a reduced timetable, suspended or expelled.”* [Programme Co-ordinator]
- *“I think it’s (programme) a godsend because my job is to keep young people in school and it is not possible to keep 100% in school. There are 7-10% that won’t stay in school. It’s great to have the QQI programme because it’s an alternative to school for them. The alternative education they get with QQI is invaluable”* [School Completion Programme Co-ordinator]

The programme also provides an education alternative for young people who are too young for Youthreach and have additional educational support needs.

- *“Some young people are too young for Youthreach and they would be sitting at home or out on the street if they could come here. We try and get them in here before they get thrown out of school because it looks bad on their record.”* [School Completion Programme Co-ordinator]

Preparation for the programme

According to programme co-ordinators, some young people require a certain level of preparation to participate in the programme. This may include numeracy and literacy supports as well as personal development work.

- *“A lot of work goes into preparing the young people to be ready for the QQI programme.”* [Programme co-ordinator]
- *“Sometimes when young people come in here we learn they have literacy and numeracy issues and that’s why they haven’t been doing well in school. We have one young person who should be in second year but he is really only able for fifth class, he can barely write his own name. We do the literacy support with him. He isn’t able for QQI yet. We are doing basic numeracy and literacy with him at the moment.”* [Programme co-ordinator]

However, according to stakeholders, the key preparation for the programme is young people being ready and willing to participate in the programme and to re-engage with education and learning.

- *“It's about young people coming here with their own free will and reflecting and exploring that with them. Once you get them to sit in the chair and knowing what they want to do is the real success.”* [Programme co-ordinator]
- *“If they are brought to a point where they have to make up their minds whether they want to get back to education and how they can do it. Education brings with it personal development and it works better that way.”* [Programme co-ordinator]

Relationship building

Relationship building was considered central to the success of the programme by all stakeholders. This involves young people building positive and trusting relationships with programme coordinators and youth justice workers where they can feel comfortable, can get support and engage in personal and social development. Without a positive and trusting relationship, young people are less likely to engage fully in education and learning.

- *“The relationship is the most important and then the education will come.”* [Programme co-ordinator]
- *“Our system is based entirely on building a relationship with them. If we get them a level 3, 4 or 5 that's brilliant but the personal social development has to be done in tandem with the education. If we give them a sense of themselves the education will come.”* [Programme co-ordinator]
- *“It works better here because we have built up trust and a relationship with them. If they say ‘I can't do that’, and they close up, so the relationship is built up and they try it and find they can do it.”* [Youth Justice Worker]

The contrast between the relationship with youth workers compared to teacher was highlighted by all stakeholders.

- *“We are not teachers so they are not embarrassed. They have built up a relationship with us. They know we are youth workers and they trust us.”* [Programme co-ordinator]
- *“If there is no sign of her (young person), the programme always ring and see is she OK and in school they wouldn’t hardly notice she wasn’t in.”* [Parent]

Some stakeholders felt that having programme coordinators, youth justice workers and tutors from the same area as young people are from works very well as young people can relate to them.

- *“Because he [Youth Justice Worker] is from the town the lads would have a good relationship with him.”* [Programme co-ordinator]

Bespoke approach to learning

One of the unique aspects of the programme judged to work well was the bespoke approach to learning. As many young people have learning difficulties such as dyslexia, behavioural issues such as ADHD and poor attention spans, the bespoke approach to learning works very well.

- *“There would be issues with anxiety, poor attention span, behaviour issues. Some modules take longer because of the attention span and way of learning for young people.”*
[Programme co-ordinator]
- *“We had one guy with very bad behaviour in school. He was dyslexic we helped him to write things down to remember it. We gave him different pens and he realised he could see blue pen better than black and it really helped him and he went on to do a fitness course.”* [Youth Justice Worker]
- *“It’s a totally different way of learning here.”* [Parent]
- *“She (young person) wants to do a few subjects here but she is not able to go back to school. It doesn’t suit her to go from class to class.”* [Parent]

Young people are allowed to learn at their own pace and programme coordinators and tutors are patient and understanding in relation to young people's unique learning needs. Smaller classes and one to one work allows for this bespoke approach to learning.

- *“The programme works well because it’s at their pace. Like we have four young people at the moment, one is flying it, two are doing OK and one is weak so we have to basic numeracy and literacy with that young person. We are working organically with the young people’s needs.”* [Youth Justice Worker]
- *“They (young people) might be all the same age but they aren’t able to be at the same type of work. They are coming from school where it wasn’t working so you have to do it at their level.”* [Programme co-ordinator]
- *“The programme works really well for her (young person) because she is able to go at her own pace and it is more relaxed and she is able to manage the work better than in school.”* [Parent]

Youth work setting

All stakeholders involved with the programme identified the delivery of the programme in a youth work setting as being central to the success of the programme. It was agreed that young people generally feel more relaxed and comfortable in a youth work setting.

- *“Bringing the tutors here works well because young people are in their own environment and they are more comfortable.”* [Youth Justice Worker]
- *“Our work is youth led and in a youth work setting There are only a few young people here at a time and we can work to their needs. If they are in a class setting of 15 young people they are not going to survive and they don’t have the same support.”* [Programme Co-ordinator]

Some young people would also have been previously engaged with the youth service or project where they were attending the programme.

- *“It’s not intimidating for young people as they are learning in a building that they are familiar with and they have been in before.”* [Programme Co-ordinator]
- *“Most of them would have been involved with the youth service here and they would be accessing it their area.”* [Programme Co-ordinator]

One programme co-ordinator gave an example of a young person who progressed to a community training centre but was unable to cope in that setting as he did not receive the same time, attention or level of support as in the QQI programme setting.

- *“It (programme) works better in this setting. We have had a young person who has progressed on and he had level 3 and he thought he was doing great and he went up the community training workshop but it didn't work out for him. He was let down and he is doing nothing with himself now. That young person had that nurturing here but the tutors don't have the time and resources to do the same in the ETBs.”* [Programme Co-ordinator]

Restorative approach to behavioural issues

The restorative approach to behavioural issues taken in the programme was judged to be very effective. Many of the young people engaged with the programme have behavioural issues such as ADHD and other issues which may lead to behavioural challenges. Therefore, taking a restorative approach to these behavioural issues works very well as young people are not suspended or expelled from the programme as they would be in school. Instead, programme coordinators listen to and talk to young people about the reasons behind their behaviour and help them to learn from it.

- *“When they (young people) are in a temper and very angry you leave them off but then you challenge them about their behaviour the next day and that works well.”* [Youth Justice Worker]
- *“In the years she (young person) was with us, I'd say there were fifty times she walked out the door. We always maintained the same stance which was, ‘you are brilliant and when you are ready we will be there.’”* [Programme co-ordinator]

Certain modules of the programme, such as communications, also allow for young people to be challenged on their behaviour in an educational setting which can also be very effective.

- *“In the communications part of the project, you can challenge their behaviour in an education setting, like printing out their favourite song and it might have terrible language in it or about drugs and that.”* [Youth Justice Worker]

The difference between the programme and school with regards to dealing with behavioural issues was starkly highlighted. Parents also noted the difference in the way their children's behaviour was dealt with in the programme compared to school.

- *"It (the programme) is different to school but also different from traditional youth work. For behavioural issues we are used to dealing with them here. We had one young person here that got in a fit and threw things around the room, and if that was school he would be gone, but we discussed it the next day and we moved on."* [Programme co-ordinator]
- *"We had a young lad in here and his mother couldn't handle him anymore and we were left trying to manage him. If he was in a school at that stage that would have been the end of the deal."* [Programme co-ordinator]
- *"We thought he (young person) had a problem with aggression but he just needed someone to talk to him and build up his confidence. When he would talk to people in school they wouldn't believe him but they did here."* [Parent]

Positive impact on parents

The positive impact of the programme on young people's behaviour was highlighted by all of the parents consulted. According to parents, the programme has helped their children in terms of reducing aggressive behaviour which has resulted in less conflict and stress in the home and better communication between parents and their children.

- *"It took him (young person) a while to settle in but he has settled now and he knows what he wants to do now and he is an awful lot easier to live with now and he was very disruptive at home and school."* [Parent]
- *"My child, you couldn't look sideways at him but he is a very different child. Now I am not asking for homework or getting him out for the bus in the morning and there is a lot less conflict."* [Parent]
- *"I have the height of praise for the programme. It has made my life so much easier. I am a lot less stressed as well. I'm not under stress at all now because it affects the whole house when they are not happy."* [Parent]

Life skills development

The programme works well in terms of developing the skills of young people. This includes developing life skills such as budgeting, using a bank machine, the driver theory test, form filling and cooking.

- *“We work on life skills like how to use a bank machine. So we bring them (young people) out to show them how to do it because some parents might not even have that.”* [Youth Justice Worker]
- *“There is an activity in the communication on shopping lists and we bring them (young people) out shopping and teach them life skills, shopping, cooking and communication skills.”* [Youth Justice Worker]
- *“We help them (young people) learn to fill out bank forms that they might not know how to do these things.”* [Programme co-ordinator]

Career guidance and jobs skills

According to stakeholders, the career guidance aspect of the programme works very well. Many young people do not know what career they would like to pursue in the future and the programme helps them with regard to career guidance, career information and goal setting.

- *“They (young people) don't have a clue what they want to do and we help them identify things they might like to work at and put them in the right direction.”* [Youth Justice Worker]
- *“Now he (young person) knows what he wants to do. He wants to own his own gym and he knows what courses to do to get qualifications on fitness and he is doing very well here.”* [Parent]

The programme also helps young people develop job skills such as interviews and CV preparation.

- *“We would have helped him (young person) in what he wants to do next and looking at strengths and weaknesses and mock interviews. It helped him with his interview to get into the training centre.”* [Programme coordinator]

Engaging with parents

According to programme co-ordinators, engaging with parents of young people involved with the programme is very important. It was felt that involving parents in the programme made it more successful and easier to engage the young person. One project found it difficult to engage parents from the Traveller community initially.

- *“The link with the parents is everything. If you don't have that involvement it is more difficult. You need parents on board as well.”* [Programme coordinator]
- *“There are issues with engaging parents more than young people. If they are second or third generation parents from the Travelling community we have to engage and work with then the value of education. We have to work with them and keep them on our own side.”* [Youth Justice Worker]

In addition, many parents are also early school leavers themselves and may have literacy and numeracy issues which have to be taken into consideration when engaging with them.

- *“We would have three or four parents that wouldn't be able to read or write themselves. We have to be able to know who to text and who to ring.”* [Youth Justice Worker]

Also, for many parents the programme is often the first positive engagement they have had with an educational institution in relation to their child's education. This can have a very positive effect on parents and young people and their relationship.

- *“The thing about parents is that they might be early school leavers themselves as well. When kids get in trouble it rankles with the parents. It's a light bulb moment when the kids come here and the parents can engage with them positively again.”* [School Completion Programme Co-ordinator]
- *“The awards night is very important for parents to see the young people in a different light. The parents say they have a lifetime of their child being suspended, getting in trouble and the teacher or principal might have been their teacher or principal, and we are inviting them down here and it is very positive.”* [Programme coordinator]

Consultations with parents affirmed these points:

- *“It’s different than dealing with principal and teachers. (The programme coordinator) is brilliant with the kids. After two week they know they kids inside out and they are all brilliant here.” [Parents]*

Interagency cooperation

Programme coordinators talked about the importance of interagency cooperation in relation to the smooth running of the programme. The programme regularly links in with other agencies such as schools, School Completion Programme, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), the Department of Social Protection, Tusla, the HSE, Drugs Treatment Services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Jigsaw in terms of referrals and ongoing communication on the support needs of young people.

- *“We have a very good relationship with the ETBs and they help us out a lot. We have good relationships with the schools, the School Completion Programme and the Department of Social Protection as well. We have a huge network that we have developed over seven years.” [Programme co-ordinator]*
- *“There are a lot of behaviour or anger issues among young people, ADHD, dyslexia. We would refer them on to CAMHS and Jigsaw if they haven’t been referred already.” [Youth Justice Worker]*
- *“If there were issues affecting young people we would signpost them on to other agencies. We have a young person who is depressed so we would link in with their doctor. We link in with schools and social workers as well.” [Youth Justice Worker]*

Value for Money

All of the stakeholders consulted agreed the programme represented very good value for money. There were a number of reasons given including using the skills set of programme coordinators, youth justice workers and other youth workers in projects to teach modules.

- *“It’s very good value for money as we can teach modules ourselves and it’s great to have tutors to get in to do the modules we can do ourselves.” [Programme Co-ordinator]*

According to stakeholders, many young people who have completed the programme have progressed to education, training and employment and have been diverted from unemployment and crime which has many economic benefits in terms of social welfare etc.

- *“She (young person) was heading in one direction where she was going to be a burden to the state, and in terms of value for money, she is going to be a net contributor to the state. She told us she was going to go on the dole and she was selling drugs to augment that. If only two of them transferred from the dole and it is the shift from dependence to independence.”*
[Programme Co-ordinator]

Stakeholders also compared the value for money related to investment in a programme such as the QQI Co-ordinator programme with the funding required to detain a young person with offending behaviour in Oberstown Children Detention Campus.

- *“The cost of keeping young people like these in an institution is around 150k and for the cost of a third of it we can help keep sixteen of them here.”* [School Completion Programme Coordinator]

Key benefits and outcomes of the programme:

Key benefits and outcomes of the programme identified by stakeholders included:

- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem
- Returning to school
- Further education and training
- Employment
- Reduction in offending behaviour
- Reduction in drug misuse
- Benefits and outcomes for parents

Increased self-confidence and self-esteem

All of the stakeholders agreed the programme helped improve young people's self-confidence and self-esteem through personal development, goal setting, learning and achievements. Parents in particular highlighted the increase in self-confidence and self-esteem among their children as a result of participating in the programme.

- *“It would improve their (young people’s) confidence and they can see a future for themselves.” [Programme coordinator]*
- *“I think it (the programme) has helped his (young person) confidence brilliantly. He is a totally different child and he would chat away to you now.” [Parent]*
- *“I think the programme has really helped improve her (young person) confidence. To see her smile and in good form is massive for me.” [Parent]*
- *“We thought he (young person) had a problem with aggression but he just needed someone to talk to him and build up his confidence.” [Parent]*

Returning to school

Stakeholders identified a small number of young people who returned to mainstream school as a result of their involvement with the programme. This involved working with young people out of school on their academic development, personal development, communication skills as well as career guidance which resulted in them wanting to return to school.

- *“He (young person) came to us and we worked with seven months and he is back in school now.” [Programme Co-ordinator]*
- *“He (young person) got into trouble in school and he has been here for the last seven months but now he is back in school and doing very well. He is now doing his homework and he is able to communicate with the teachers because he got used to communicating with the programme people here.” [Parent]*
- *“He (young person) has gone back to school and wants to get his Junior Cert and go on to do an apprenticeship and hopefully he will go on to do the Leaving Cert Applied. Him wanting to go back to school came from coming here.” [Parent]*

Further education and training

Many young people involved in the programme have progressed to further education and training. The programme was described as a stepping stone for some young people to move on to further

education and training in an area they are interested in.

- *“One young person is about to go on to the Youth Employability Scheme which is a stepping stone and it is all a progression.”* [Programme Co-ordinator]
- *“He (young person) is now self-motivated and bringing home work and by next year he will be ready to go on to college and go do work experience.”* [Programme Co-ordinator]
- *“We have one girl who is doing eight level 4 modules which is equivalent to the Leaving Cert and she would never have gone back to school so the programme works well for her.”*
[Programme Co-ordinator]

While some young people go back to school and progress to further education and training, stakeholders noted that not all young people progress on after engaging with the programme.

- *“It does help some of them but not them all. They are all doing something more positive now than they were before. One is back in school, one is back in a probation training centre. Then two or three wouldn't have completed and they are doing nothing at the moment.”*
[Programme Co-ordinator]

Employment

Stakeholders provided a number of examples of young people who had progressed to employment after engaging in the programme.

- *“You see a lot of young people that have gone on to jobs. We had one lad that was an apprentice for a celebrity chef. We have a corporal in the army now and we helped with the application forms.”* [Youth Justice Worker]

Reduction in offending behaviour

All of the stakeholders agreed that the programme had helped reduce offending behaviour among the majority of young people.

- *“It would help in terms of offending behaviour because education is one of the risk factors in offending behaviour. It would help some young people in terms of their attitude to crime but*

not for all." [Programme coordinator]

- *"Some of the successes we have had are amazing. We had a guy who wasn't suited to school and he was very disruptive. His family were the main drug dealers in the area and he would have followed that road and through engaging here and through patience and resilience he has gone on to further training and employment. Now he volunteers here two nights a week doing football with other young people."* [Programme coordinator]

Reduction in drug misuse

A reduction in drug misuse was identified as another key outcome of the programme. A reduction in young people's involvement in selling drugs was also noted by stakeholders. Young people's involvement in taking and selling drugs was addressed directly by the programme through the health related fitness module and also through working directly with young people on issues.

- *"The fitness course really helps young people because some were doing drugs and they realised the effect of drugs and alcohol on their fitness. It's called health related fitness but it was actually so many other things like drugs and alcohol preservation course without the young people knowing."* [Youth Justice Worker]
- *"She (young person) was leaving here to sell drugs and that slowly changed."* [Programme co-ordinator]

Benefits and outcomes for families

The evaluation highlighted a number of positive benefits and outcomes for families. This included projects helping parents to fill out forms, parents valuing education more and the siblings of young people involved in the programme looking up to, and wanting to emulate them, in terms of educational attainment. One programme effectively engaged the parents and siblings of a young person involved in the programme in other educational courses at the same time which has helped the family "break the chain of disadvantage."

- *"We have parents that drop in to us that can't read or write and they come to us for help to fill in forms which shows the level of trust and relationship we have built up with parents so it has a knock on effect on the wider community."* [Youth Justice Worker]

- *“She (young person) has a sister who is now looking up to her and is so proud of her and is now talking about going to college.” [Programme Co-ordinator]*
- *“We also work with the families of young people. Last year we had on three different courses, a mother, her nineteen year old daughter and 15 year old all doing courses in different courses in the project here. They were a family who didn't value education and now the chain of disadvantage had been broken and they see the possibilities and they can do things differently.” [Programme Co-ordinator]*

Key challenges related to the programme:

A number of challenges related to the programme were highlighted by stakeholders including:

- Lack of tutor hours
- Programme administration
- Difficulties engaging young females
- Attendance
- Restriction in courses

Lack of tutor hours

The main challenge related to the programme identified by stakeholders was the lack of tutor hours. It was suggested that more tutors are needed to successfully deliver the programme. Due to the nature of the bespoke approach to learning, teaching some modules can be more time consuming than others. Programme coordinators stated they often work additional hours due to the unplanned nature of the work with young people.

- *“There isn't enough tutor hours in the programme. A lot of people put in more hours than they should here but that is the nature of it. A lot of the work with young people is unplanned.” [Programme Co-ordinator]*
- *“We could do with more funding for tutors hours. Like you might be doing a healthy eating class and the issue of sexual health comes up and then you concentrate on that for the two hours and the time is gone. It is important to the young people at the time if they bring it up so you go with it but you sometimes need more hours because this happens a lot.” [Youth Justice Worker]*

- *“There would need to be more funding and more hours if the programme was to be rolled out around the country.” [Youth Justice Worker]*
- *“The only thing that doesn't work for us is the restriction in the hours and the funding. If we had 100 hours a year it would work better. If I had a magic wand I would like flexibility with the hours.” [Programme Co-ordinator]*

Programme administration

Another challenge identified by stakeholders related to programme administration. Some stakeholders consulted felt there was a lot of paperwork involved in administering the programme and that the number of forms and roll books to be completed could be reduced.

- *“There can be a lot of paperwork involved in the programme. Some of the paperwork is very repetitive. There are three sheets that could be done in one sheet.” [Programme co-ordinator]*
- *“There are different roll books for different modules so maybe if there was just one roll book.” [Youth Justice Worker]*

Difficulties engaging young females

According to one programme coordinator, it can sometimes be more challenging to engage young females in the programme than young males. The majority of the projects had more males than females engaged in the programme.

- *“In general, we have more young lads engaged with the programme than girls.” [Programme coordinator]*
- *“With girls it's harder to find something that keeps their engagement. I meet with them and see what is going on with them and we offer them something and they can take it or not. The girls did the nail art and it worked well to get them in and interested. ” [Programme coordinator]*

Attendance

Poor attendance among some young people can be a challenge according to stakeholders. Poor attendance is usually linked to other issues in the young person's life.

- *"The attendance can be down everyone now and again. Something might happen and they might not tell us and then the attendance might be up and down."* [Youth Justice Worker]

Restriction in courses

Finally, restrictions on the number of different types of courses the QQI programme can provide was discussed as a challenge. This is due to the restriction of courses being QQI verified. The cost of running some courses was also identified as a challenge.

- *"We would like to run other courses but they have to be verified and that is a drawback. While QQI is brilliant, if we were able to provide woodwork it would be great, but the cost of providing materials and a tutor would be difficult for us."* [Programme coordinator]

Recommendations for the future development of the programme

Stakeholders consulted made a number of recommendations for the future development of the programme including:

- Training for tutors
- Training on restorative approach to behavioural issues
- Payment of young people engaged with the programme
- Transport
- Maintaining quality standards
- Expansion of the programme

Training for tutors

The importance of training for tutors on the unique approach to learning was recommended.

- *"We deliver tutor training here twice a year around our methodology because it is around patience and the relationship building and the bespoke nature of it. It is not a one size fits all."* [Programme Co-ordinator]

Training on restorative approach to behavioural issues

One of the programme sites has developed a training programme called 'Understanding Difficult Behaviour in Young People' which they deliver to staff, volunteers and tutors. They recommended this restorative approach to behavioural management training be delivered to staff, tutors, volunteers and parents in all sites where the programme is delivered as it creates a common response to dealing with young people's behaviour.

- *"We developed our own programme here called Understanding Difficult Behaviour in Young People and we roll it out to all our employees and community employment people, staff and volunteers. I think it's something other areas should do down the line. We are going to deliver it to the parents this year. If you delivery across the board to parents and staff there is a commonality to how we deal with behaviour and the chain impact is we are all together and it is not fragmented. I think it is essential training."* [Programme Co-ordinator]

Payment of young people in the programme

All of the stakeholders recommended that young people should not be paid for participating in the programme in the future. It was felt that paying young people would take away from the personal development aspect of the programme where young people are motivated to pursue their own education.

- *"I think young people should not be paid for an education because they would never be encouraged to reflect on their situation. If you are given money for education at 13 or 14 they don't have to think about it."* [Programme Co-ordinator]

Transport

It was suggested that there should be funding for transport as part of the programme. As many young people are living in rural areas, often there is no public transport available. In addition, if two or more projects are running modules collaboratively between areas, transport would be required for young people to attend.

- *"There is no transport and if girls want to travel to other areas to do courses if there aren't enough in one area you need to fund more transport for them."* [Youth Justice Worker]

Expansion of the programme

Key stakeholders agreed the programme could be expanded to other projects and areas. However, they recommended that the programme should only be provided to young people on a needs related basis. The importance of maintaining the QQI quality standards associated with the programme was highlighted. It was also felt that expansion of the programme would not require much additional resources.

- *“The programme is not for everyone. It's on a needs basis. Not everyone in a Garda Youth Diversion Project should be doing a QQI programme.”* [Programme coordinator]
- *“The success of the programme depends on quality standards. QQI, no matter where it is delivered, the quality of it has to be sacrosanct.”* [Programme coordinator]
- *“Certainly, the IYJS would need another part time worker for paperwork but in a broader sense it would cost very little and they need very little. You only have to be educated to a level above the one you are teaching.”* [Programme coordinator]

Chapter 3: Findings of Consultations with Young People

Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings of consultations with young people who have engaged with the QQI Co-ordinator Programme. A total of eight young people from the four projects were consulted as part of the evaluation.

Key issues affecting young people involved in the programme

There were a number of issues identified by young people from the QQI Co-ordinator programme. All of the young people consulted were out of education for various reasons before they engaged with the QQI Co-ordinator programme. This included being expelled from school, being asked to leave school and early school leaving. Some young people left school for other reasons such as bullying, anxiety and mental health issues.

- *“I was kicked out of school in sixth year.”*
- *“I left school in first year and this was the last place to try. I was 14 and I have done level 4 and I am moving on to level 5 now...When I first came here I wouldn't put pen to paper but they helped me to get through it.”*
- *“I left school because I was suffering from anxiety and my mum told me about here and I gave it a try.”*

Other issues affecting young people consulted included criminal behaviour, drug misuse and mental health issues.

- *“Before I came here I was put on bail and I went and bought a big TV and stayed in my room for around a year and smoked weed.”*

What works well about the programme:

Young people consulted identified aspects of the programme they considered to work well. These included:

- Alternative to mainstream education
- Alternative approach to learning

- Youth work setting
- Positive relationships with programme co-ordinators
- Restorative approach to behavioural issues
- Job preparations skills
- Career guidance

Alternative to mainstream education

All of the young people consulted thought the programme was a good alternative to mainstream education for those who are not suited to school or Youthreach. Many of the young people acknowledged they were not suited to mainstream education. A number of young people described the programme as the last place for them to access education.

- *“I had a chance to go to Youthreach but I knew myself I wouldn't survive there because it's the same as school, the same hours as the same type of classes. QQI is more open and open minded and they look at you as a person not a whole classroom. It would be good for other young people to have the same experiences.”*

Bespoke approach to learning

Young people felt the bespoke approach to learning taken in the programme was very effective. Young people identified a number of aspects of the learning approach to the programme that worked well compared to school. These included individualised learning, young people learning at their own pace, self-motivated learning, project based work instead of exams, smaller classes, one to one work, not moving classrooms, less pressure and no uniform.

- *“You know all the work you are putting here is going towards your overall score and it's not like exams so it takes the pressure off.”*
- *“It was different from school. It's really good because you are learning here at your own pace.”*
- *“I like the way QQI works. It focuses on one subject, say if you were doing communications and I was struggling with it, they slow down, break it down and help you with it which they wouldn't do that in school. They take into account the way people deal with things and learn differently.”*

Youth work setting

Running the programme in a youth work setting was judged to be one of the most important aspects of the programme's success. Young people liked attending the programme in a youth work setting as it felt more relaxed than school and they felt more comfortable in a youth work environment. A number of young people had previously been engaged with the young services where they were attending the programme.

- *"It's a lot more relaxed here."*
- *"I used to come here before as well so it's more relaxed than school and you just feel more comfortable."*

Positive relationship with programme coordinators

The positive relationship young people developed with the programme coordinators was considered to be a very important part of the programme's success. Young people talked about programme coordinators being patient, kind, understanding, non-judgemental and open-minded. Importantly, young people felt their co-ordinators believed in them and never gave up on them which had a very positive effect on them.

- *"He (co-ordinator) has great patience. He took us all in and took us under his wing."*
- *"He (co-ordinator) has great belief in us all. He tells us, 'you are going to go so far in life so don't give up now.'"*
- *"You have to be patient, understanding and open minded. If we are going to give up he (co-ordinator) won't let you. It's very important to have someone to not give up on you because then you are going to push through it."*

All of the young people consulted made comparisons between programme coordinators and teachers. They felt the relationships developed with co-ordinators were more positive than those with teachers when they were in school. Young people felt the coordinators cared more about them than teachers in school, listened to them more, had more time for them and gave them more attention.

- *“I would walk in here and they would have hot chocolate waiting for you every morning, and there are not many people that would do that. You wouldn't get that from a teacher in a school.”*
- *“It's way better than school. There are 30 students in one class with a teacher and they might not care what you are saying.”*

Restorative approach to behavioural issues

The restorative approach taken in the programmes in relation to behavioural issues and discipline was deemed to be very effective. Young people liked that the co-ordinators listened to them, were kind and understanding, didn't shout at them and talked to them about why they behaved in a certain way afterwards. This was in contrast to young people's negative experiences in school of teachers shouting at them, not listening to them and sometimes being suspended.

- *“Sometimes in school they are giving out to you and I couldn't hold me temper back then. You aren't going to let a man roar into your face. Here there is none of that roaring, they are more kind and they listen to you more.”*
- *“All they did in school was suspend you for a few days and that is three days out of education. There is a way better approach here If you get in trouble they talk to you about why you did it. They don't care about you in school.”*

Job preparation skills

According to the young people, the job preparation aspect of the programme, especially interview preparation, worked very well. Young people did mock interviews which helped them feel less stressed and more confident doing interviews. Some young people stated the interview preparation helped them prepare for real interviews for work placement programmes, employment schemes and in their workplace.

- *“They do practice interviews with you until you feel confident. The biggest thing was that I hated doing anything like that. Now I have to be interviewed in my job and they helped me there with that again I really struggled with presentations but they really helped me. I am more confident now and I say I did that.”*

- *“I did an interview here for a scheme I am going on. It was over in a few minutes and after I said, ‘what was I worried about?’ They really help you with it here.”*

Career guidance and goal setting

According to the young people, the career guidance and goal setting part of the programme worked very well. Some young people had an idea of what career they would like in the future and the programme helped them through providing modules in this area and information on how to pursue this career path, for example how to get an apprenticeship. Other young people had no particular career focus and the programme helped them realise what future career they would like to pursue. A number of young people gained an interest in a particular area through participation in programme modules, for example the health related fitness module.

- *“I thought I wanted to do construction but I realised it was difficult to get a job so it made me want to go back to school and go into the army.”*
- *“It (programme) actually helped me find what I’d like to do. I’d like to do personal fitness but I never thought I could do it. I’m doing the health and fitness part of the programme at the moment and its really good.”*
- *“I always wanted to do carpentry. We have carpentry classes once a week here. They give you information about how to get an apprenticeship and all that here.”*

In terms of goal setting, some young people talked about their aspirations for their future education, careers and lives

- *“I want to finish school and have the job I want and everything I wanted.”*
- *“I want to work towards having a good job, having money to buy what I want and have my own apartment.”*
- *“In the future I want to own my own gym.”*

Key programme benefits and outcomes:

Young people consulted outlined key benefits and outcomes related to the programme. These included:

- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem
- Returning to school
- Further education and training
- Employment
- Reduction in offending behaviour
- Reduction in drug misuse

Increased self-confidence and self-esteem

All of the young people consulted agreed the programme helped increase their self-confidence and self-esteem. Increased self-confidence has helped young people to be more sociable and make new friends both inside and outside the programme. It has also encouraged young people to go on to further education and training.

- *“Its (programme) increased my confidence loads. I am more independent and standing on my own two feet. I am more confident in myself. I aim to be fully qualified as well.”*
- *“It (programme) has boosted my confidence a lot. Before I came here I wouldn't even talk to people and I was very shy and now I'd chat to everyone.”*
- *“It would make you more confident and you wouldn't be as judgemental when you meet new people coming in here.”*

Returning to school

One of the outcomes of the programme was young people returning to mainstream school. A small number of young people consulted returned to school with the help of the programme. Engaging with the programme helped these young people realise they wanted to go back to school and do their Junior and Leaving Certificate, supported them educationally and worked through issues which contributed to them leaving school.

- *“I came here last year because I got told to leave school. I was here for seven or eight months and did my level 3...It made me want to go back to school. It made me realise I shouldn't*

have left”

- *“It changed how I think about school. When I left I thought I’d get an apprenticeship but I didn’t realise you needed your Junior Cert so I’ve gone back and I might stay for the Leaving Cert now.”*
- *“It (programme) got me to actually work and not to go into school and just mess.”*
- *“(The co-ordinator) was the main man that got me back to school. If he wasn’t here I wouldn’t be even back in school.”*

Further education and training

A number of young people went on to further education and training as a result of participation in the programme.

- *“I have done concreting and stone walling courses and now I have gone back to do my leaving cert.”*
- *“I’m going on the Youth Employment Scheme and they helped me here to find out about it.”*

Work experience and employment

Some young people who engaged in the QQI Co-ordinator programme have progressed to the Work to Learn Programme. One young person consulted had progressed to long-term employment with a Work to Learn Programme employer and was still studying through the QQI programme to gain their qualifications in their area of employment.

- *“I started doing the QQI programme, then the Work to Learn and now I’m working. I left school when I was 13, maybe 14 and I came here and they were doing the QQI and it was hit and miss at the start and I would walk out but they were great to come and get me and they put in the work and they stuck with me and I got my level 4 and they put me in the Work to Learn. The job in Work to Learn kept me on and I am studying for my level 5 here now. I work three days and study the rest of the time.”*

Reduction in offending behaviour

A number of young people said the programme helped them in relation to offending behaviour. Young people stated that programme coordinators and youth justice workers had helped them look at their offending behaviour, explore the future consequences of this behaviour, set goals and helped them “cop on.”

- *“The programme helped me a lot to be honest with you. If I seen a car before it was, how do I rob it. Now I would walk clean by a car now and not even think about it. I am a changed man now.”*
- *“(The co-ordinator) grew up in the town and he seen what happened to people here and he sat me down and had a direct chat with me about where I was going.”*

A number of young people talked about the programme helping them “go down the right path.’ One young person said the programme “saved them” and another thought they would be in prison if it wasn’t for the programme.

- *“I want to say a big thanks to them (programme coordinator and youth justice worker). They are the two main reasons I got back into my life and went down the right road. If it wasn't for them I would probably be doing armed robberies and be in prison by now.”*
- *“People keep saying the programme saved me but the programme helped me save myself.”*

Reduction in drug misuse

A number of young people who had issues with drug misuse in the past said the programme helped them overcome these issues. This was achieved through talking to young people about why they were misusing drugs, setting goals for them to stop using drugs and motivating them in other areas of their lives.

- *“Before I came here I had a problem with drugs and I don't really do that anymore. I am more motivated to do stuff now.”*
- *“I was doing bad shit when I came here. I was on coke and robbing and everything and they sat me down and made me realise I was going down the wrong path.”*

Some young people said the health related fitness aspect of the programme helped them in terms of ceasing their drug use.

- *“Once I got back into fitness it really helped keep my mind active and out of trouble and away from drugs.”*

Recommendations for the future development of the programme:

Paying young people participating in the programme

Young people had mixed views on whether or not young people should be paid as part of participation in the programme. Some young people thought being paid might increase the number of young people engaging in the programme and increase attendance rates. However, other young people consulted thought participants shouldn't be paid as it would take away from the programme's value in terms of personal development, education, motivation and goal setting.

- *“You would get a lot more people coming here if you got paid for it like in Youthreach.”*
- *“If you got paid for coming here it would be brilliant and you would see every single one of us here every day.”*
- *“I don't think you would appreciate it the same if you were being paid. Like Youthreach get paid to go there but it is school and they are basically going there for the money but we are going here because we want to get somewhere and do well for yourself.”*

Expansion of the programme

Young people thought it would be a good idea to expand the programme to make it available to more young people around the county. Overall, young people considered the programme to be a good alternative for young people who are not suited to mainstream education.

- *“It would be good to give other people a chance that aren't doing well in school and have nowhere else to go. It's somewhere different for them.”*

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Overall, the QQI Co-ordinator Programme was found to work very well and has resulted in many benefits and outcomes for young people who have engaged with it.

The evaluation shows the programme has met all its key aims and objectives with regard to increasing young person's self-awareness, self-belief and confidence, via relationship building and an education focus. The programme has also developed interview, CV and employment skills among young people as well as helping them develop progression pathway plans to meet their goals.

The evaluation highlighted the unique aspects of the programme including the youth work setting, the bespoke approach to learning, the personal development of young people, the relationship building with staff and the restorative approach to behavioural issues which are key to its success.

In particular, the evaluation highlighted the relationship building aspect of the programme which is central to its effectiveness. The relationship developed between young people and staff involved in the programme builds trust, facilitates learning and personal development. Staff can also challenge young people in terms of their attitudes and behaviours in relation to education, substance misuse and offending behaviour. For many young people, programme coordinators and youth justice workers become the 'one good adult' in their lives.

Youth workers have a unique set of skills to provide this kind of programme and youth services are a unique setting to facilitate this. The programme would not work the same in other settings and with other approaches to learning, relationship building and behaviour. The contrast of the programme to the school setting and approach to learning and behaviour was very stark.

In terms of the future development of the programme, the evaluation found that the programme has the potential to be expanded to other projects. However, the maintenance of the quality standards associated with the programme and the other unique aspects of the programme must be maintained. Training and support for those running the programme was also deemed to be essential.

Finally, the programme should only be provided to young people on a needs related basis. However, for young people who are out of education and are involved in Garda Youth Diversion Projects, the programme offers a great opportunity to return to education and to avail of the many benefits and outcomes it can provide.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the evaluation findings:

Youth work setting

- The programme should continue to be provided in a youth work setting.

Tutor hours

- There should be more funding for tutors hours in the programme.

Programme administration

- The volume of programme administration should be reviewed and reduced if possible.

Engaging more females

- The programme should examine ways of engaging more young females.

Variety of courses

- The programme should explore the possibilities of providing a wider variety of courses.

Transport

- The programme should provide funding for transport for young people to attend courses in other areas

Programme training

- All tutors should receive training on the bespoke approach to learning in the programme.
- All staff, tutors and parents should receive training on a restorative approach to behavioural issues among young people.

Expansion of the programme

- The programme could be expanded to other areas.
- The quality standards associated with the programme should be maintained to the highest standard.
- The programme should only be provided to young people on a needs related basis.