

Signs of New Directions

BOND EVALUATION REPORT

2000 → 2002

JUST OUT

GETTING OUT

STAYING OUT



BOND
Blanchardstown Offenders
for New Directions

PERV... ANALY... • PRIS... PROFESSIONAL... RT SUPPORT • OUTREACH • FAMILY SUPPORT • PR...
GRAMM... INTENSIV... NEEDS...
EACACY • COURT SUPPORT • OUTREACH...
IAL SUPPORT • INFORMATION...
INDIVIDUAL PERSONAL... • INTE...
LINKS • INDIVIDUAL NEEDS...
CONSELLING • ONGOING CONTACT

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Foreword to BOND Evaluation

By Dr. Ian O'Donnell

There are two significant problems besetting the criminal justice system today. The first is the huge expense associated with keeping people in prison. Last year it cost an average of €84,750 for every person held behind bars. It is questionable whether this is the best way to use taxpayers' money to deal with the problem of crime. The second is the lack of emphasis placed on the resettlement of prisoners. This is despite the fact that successful reintegration is essential if the damaging effects of incarceration are to be minimised and the community is to be protected.

There are a number of modest, but encouraging, signs that our infatuation with the prison may be waning slightly. These include a reduction in the number of committals to prison by the courts; the requirement in the Children Act 2001 that incarceration be used only as a measure of last resort for those aged under eighteen; and the growing interest in restorative justice.

In addition a number of community-based initiatives have begun to engage with the critical issue of offender reintegration. The BOND Project is to the forefront of this trend and in the short time since its establishment has made significant strides. Some of its more noteworthy achievements include raising funds successfully for an unpopular cause and providing advocacy for those without a voice.

The Project's ethos is defined by the following characteristics:

- Adopting a holistic approach to the needs of its client group.
- Moving away from a narrow preoccupation with re-offending as the sole criterion of programme success.
- Focusing on the local.
- Taking advantage of existing resources and trying to avoid duplication of effort.
- Remaining optimistic about the capacity of individuals to change.

The BOND Project it is to be congratulated for having the courage to invite independent scrutiny of what it does. Evaluation can be a nerve-racking business but it is essential if an organisation is to identify strengths and weaknesses and take a strategic view of its future. This report by Phagos Training will help to clarify the next steps. It marks the beginning of a new phase in BOND's development. In these uncertain times one thing cannot be doubted. This is that any effort to reduce the harms of imprisonment deserves our encouragement and support.

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The management committee of BOND Project; the Project Manager; the staff of the Project; the participants in the Project; parents of participants; staff in St. Patrick's Institution; Probation and Welfare Officers and representatives of local organisations linked to the Project.

The BOND Project would like to thank the following for their contributions and support:

Phagos Training for carrying out the evaluation; the participants of the project and the local agencies for their contributions to the report, Marie Dooley Assistant Principal Officer (PWS), Tony O'Riordan SJ, the Probation and Welfare Service who provided the main funding throughout BOND's pilot phase, County Dublin VEC, the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund for their ongoing support, and the Allen Lane Foundation for the necessary funding to complete the evaluation.

Executive Summary

The BOND Project is a community-based initiative targeting young people aged sixteen to twenty-one years who are returning to Blanchardstown from prison or place of detention. The Project is now approaching the end of its three year pilot phase and this report aims to evaluate the work of the Project to date, the lessons learnt and progress made. Phagos Training, an independent consultancy organisation which works extensively with the community voluntary and statutory sectors, was chosen to carry out the evaluation, following a tendering process.

The methodology used by Phagos Training to carry out the evaluation process included documentary research, workshops and interviews with the various stakeholders in the BOND Project, in addition observations on the day to day service deliver from time spent in the project. The following is a summary of the evaluation:

Since 2000 BOND has worked with 82 participants, the majority of whom are young men between the ages of 18 and 21 years, a fact which reflects the age and gender profile of young people within the Irish Prison System.

Participation in the BOND Project is on a voluntary basis. Participants are referred to BOND from a variety of sources with the Probation and Welfare Service being the single biggest agency making referrals. However, what is noteworthy is the increasing number of referrals coming through word of mouth from one young offender to another while in custody. The Project enjoys high levels of confidence among the target group, a fact that is reflected in the increased number of self-referrals to the Project.

BOND is responding to the needs of young people with complex social and psychological problems associated with poverty, marginalisation and alienation. Most are early school leavers with literacy and related education problems. Of the 82 participants 74 come from areas with the highest score in the ADM/GAMMA assessment of deprivation in Blanchardstown, highlighting the links between poverty, social exclusion and offending behaviour. 50 of the participants presented with a substance addiction problem. In most cases the substances involved were hard drugs but almost one third stated that they misused alcohol (see Table 3.9). The problem of homelessness among the participants of BOND is extensive; 22 participants presented seeking help and support to deal with homelessness. In responding to these situations it has become clear to BOND that the lack of local based supported accommodation is one of the major barriers to responding effectively to the needs of these participants. BOND has therefore played a key role with other agencies in developing a response to homelessness in Blanchardstown.

The services provided by BOND aim to support the reintegration of young people leaving prison by focusing and directing them into appropriate supports in the community. The

individual one-to-one support offered by BOND helps participants identify their particular needs and provides them with a safe and supportive structure within which to rebuild and reorganise their lives. The ability to combine a flexible programme of engagement with a structured programme has meant that BOND has been able to cater for the diverse needs of the target group. A measure of the success of this process is the fact that 22 participants in the Project have moved into employment, and 31 have engaged in education and training (see Table 4.4). Of these 11 have received accreditation for the courses they have undertaken, one participant gained a place on a third level Access Course in the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown, which commenced September 2002.

Barriers to reintegration include behavioural or other problems which inhibit participants making proper use of existing services. This was one of the key insights in the establishment of BOND which was established to focus and direct young people into existing services rather than duplicate services. All of the services provided by BOND are directed to this end. However it is the Project's advocacy work that is of critical importance to participants, helping them negotiate the complex network of agencies and services which they need to move away from a criminal life style. In the period 2000-2002, advocacy was undertaken on behalf of 49 participants, a figure representing almost 60 per cent of all participants. BOND delivered support, advice, information and encouragement to deal with new or outstanding criminal justice issues, family support, accommodation, drug and alcohol treatment, education, social welfare, training and employment (see Table 4.4).

Participants interviewed for this evaluation spoke of the value of the overall service and made particular reference to the importance of the support and advocacy work. The services are making a difference to their lives, helping them develop personal and social skills and access employment but, above all, giving them a sense of dignity and self worth.

The findings of this evaluation highlight the importance of the BOND Project and the effectiveness of its work with young offenders. The Project offers a concrete link between the community, the offender and the prison service. Locally based groups and agencies acknowledge the expertise that BOND has developed in relation to its target group. This is evidenced by the many occasions when BOND acted as a focus and integrating agency for local responses to the needs of young ex-offenders, most notably in the local strategy to tackle homelessness and in the strategies developed by the Recite II Project and local Area Partnership. The link with the community ensures that the Project is seen as offering viable options and alternatives to offending behaviour.

The very intensive nature of the work places particular demands on the staff. Over the three years, core staff costs (manager, one project worker and part time administrator) were met by the Young Peoples Services and Facilities Fund. The project received a higher number of referrals from young people seeking support than originally anticipated and as a result the Project sought supplementary resources. BOND succeeded in attracting more resources to the project and has increased its staff to 6 full-time and 4 part-time. To maintain its current

level of operation the Project requires that existing staff ratios are retained. Clear boundaries around current staff-participant ratios need to be maintained to ensure the quality of service. Confidence among the participants and the success of the project is in a large part due to the project's ability to provide each participant with a key worker who offers time and a flexible approach in responding to needs and crises. Equally important has been the ability to offer many of the programmes on a one-to-one basis. The project will require additional staff and space to deal with the growing referrals to the project.

There is also a need to expand existing staff support structures to include an external support component to respond to the demanding nature of the work.

Another important note is that participants and the community identify BOND as an independent local project with its origins clearly based in Blanchardstown. BOND needs to continue to be mindful of this identity and adhere to its community development principles.

Overall the findings of the evaluation show that the pilot phase of the Project has delivered on its stated aims and objectives. The Project has been successful in targeting some of the most marginalised, chaotic and vulnerable young people. The volume of young people engaged in the project has been far higher than anticipated. The Project models a way of working with young people returning to their community from prison or place of detention that is effective and worthy of continuation and replication. Arising from these findings, the following recommendations are made:

Summary of Recommendations for the BOND Project

- That BOND receives mainstream funding from the Probation and Welfare Service to facilitate the continuation of its dedicated service to its target group
- That the Project continues to work in an integrated and interdisciplinary manner and continues to adhere to the aims and objectives underpinning its pilot phase
- That BOND is adequately resourced to maintain and expand the high standard of service and high level of support it offers participants
- That BOND will broaden the age range of its target group in line with the average age of the prison population
- That BOND develops specific programmes to address alcohol abuse and personal and social development
- That BOND is adequately resourced to continue and expand connections and working relationships with agencies and organisations in the Blanchardstown area
- That BOND is adequately resourced to increase the number of staff so that it can continue to be both effective and efficient in meeting the needs of its growing participant group
- That a system of external support for staff is introduced which would boost the impact of the existing staff support programme
- That the planned expansion of the BOND Facility at 37/37A Coolmine Industrial Estate is facilitated through the provision of the necessary capital resources
- That the running costs be made available for BOND's new residential facility which will offer accommodation to six 18-25 year olds returning to Blanchardstown from prison or place of detention who cannot live at home or who are not ready for independent living

Introduction

The BOND Project is a community-based initiative targeting ex-prisoners aged sixteen to twenty-one years from the Blanchardstown area. The Project is now approaching the end of its pilot phase and this report aims to evaluate the work of the Project to date, the lessons learnt and progress made. The carrying out of this evaluation is necessary in order to secure funding for the mainstreaming of the service to the client group in the Blanchardstown area.

Phagos Training, an independent consultancy organisation which offers a range of education and support services to organisations working in the community, voluntary and statutory sectors was chosen to carry out the evaluation, after a tendering process. The methodology used by Phagos Training in carrying out the evaluation included documentary research, workshop style sessions with the various stakeholders in the Project and individual interviews, in addition to spending time in the centre observing day-to-day activities.

Section One commences by providing an outline of the demographic profile of the Blanchardstown area. While considerable development has taken place in Blanchardstown in recent years, parts of the area have not experienced the benefits of the growth in the economy, and poverty and inequality have increased. Particular areas display high levels of early school leaving, unemployment and reported crime. The section then briefly looks at custody rates from the Blanchardstown area and gives a profile of the target group. It reveals the relative disengagement of these young people both in prison and the community, from normal society. Their experience of life is characterised by a continuing pattern of educational disadvantage, a lack of training and employment opportunities, frequent lapses into offending behaviour and consequently, alienation and social exclusion.

Finally, the section outlines the various services which are currently available in the area and which could offer some assistance to young people on release from prison or place of detention. The return to the community from prison can be a very vulnerable time for the young person and their families. As many young offenders have chaotic/unstructured lifestyles and have a difficulty relating to authority and organisations, this can impede their ability to access existing services. The section concludes by noting that while there is no shortage of agencies that are in a position to give support to young offenders, what is needed, and what BOND provides, is a way of coordinating the young person's reintegration programme and assisting them access the appropriate agencies. This process of engagement needs to be intensive and include assessment of their individual situations. Ongoing support needs to be provided to both the young person and his/her family. BOND continuously assesses the gaps in the provision of services among agencies to its target group and, where possible, bridges the gap and advocates for improvement.

Section Two of the report outlines the background to the establishment of the Project, its aims and objectives, and the management and staffing structures. BOND was established in

1997 by people living and working in the Blanchardstown area. While a number of agencies provided, or were willing to provide a service for young offenders, there appeared to be gaps in service provision. It was noted that young people tended to lose their links with home while in prison, a factor which made reintegration on release very difficult. On their return to the community there were many issues which affected them negatively. Typically they would find themselves in a chaotic routine with no clear goals. Whatever motivation they had when leaving prison was quickly diminished by the unchanged circumstances facing them in the community. Many would again indulge in excessive drinking, substance abuse and return to a pattern of re-offending. It was against this background that the BOND Project received initial funding of £12,000 from the Education and Employment Working Groups of Blanchardstown Area Partnership to conduct a research report to define the needs of young people returning to the area from prison. The report entitled “New Directions – Challenging Young Offenders in Blanchardstown” was published in November 1998 and formed the basis of an application for funding to the Probation and Welfare Service and the Young People’s Facilities and Services Fund. Funding was provided on a three year pilot phase to target 14 persistent young offenders from the Blanchardstown area, within the 16-21 age group, who had spent time in prison or place of detention. Subsequent significant funding for the educational aspect of the Project was received from County Dublin VEC for the duration of the pilot phase.

Section Three of the report is focused on the participants of BOND. The Project received its first referrals in March 2000 and began working with young people in custody from April 2000. By April 2002 the Project had engaged with eighty-two young people. The highest referrals were self referrals at 27% and the Probation and Welfare Service were the single biggest referring agency also at 27 %, with local agencies and the prison service making up the balance. Most of those participating in the Project are male, and in the age range 18 to 21 years with the majority of participants having addiction issues. Almost 27% of participants described themselves as being homeless. This is an issue which is becoming increasingly prevalent among those being referred to the Project. Most participants are early school leavers with literacy and other related education problems.

Section Four of the report outlines the services provided by BOND. A key role for BOND is to act as a bridge between prison and community based supports. BOND seeks to support the reintegration of young people leaving prison by focusing and directing them into appropriate supports in the community. It does this by providing individualised needs analysis and individual personal plans coupled with intensive personal support, the nature of which can range from accompanying the young person to court, to job interviews, assisting them with form filling etc. Advocacy is a major aspect of the work of the Project. Advocacy is undertaken on behalf of the participant in the court setting and with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies including the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs, FÁS, LES, CDTs etc. This individualised support is complemented by a range of other programmes including educational, personal development, fitness, relaxation and diversionary programmes. The Project also works with a range of other agencies and together

with their colleagues in the Probation and Welfare Service acts as a catalyst for identifying gaps in services for the target group. BOND plays an important coordinating role and ensures that maximum integration of service delivery is achieved to the benefit of its participant group.

Section Five of the report outlines the results of the evaluatory process. A range of stakeholders were interviewed by Phagos Training, individually and in workshop style meetings, in order to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of the Project and its linkages with other agencies. All agencies interviewed regarded BOND as a professional, accessible and well-informed service, which networks well, and advocates strongly for its participants. BOND provides a valuable link with a participant group that is difficult to access and with whom it is difficult to stay in touch. BOND's approach is non-judgmental with a heavy emphasis on relationship building and providing an environment which allows the young person to identify their needs and to take the necessary steps for change. Much of the initial work with participants is done on a one-to-one basis to achieve this goal. All of the agencies, the staff and executive committee of the Project feel that it is an approach which works well, with the high level of individual attention to participants being more effective than a group approach. Finally, its multi-agency management structure facilitates networking and ensuring that the needs of these young people are brought to the agenda of other agencies. It also offers the possibility of BOND having a wider perspective on relevant social and criminal justice issues and contributes to the development of policy, based on the needs of offenders.

Section Six of the report outlines the conclusions and recommendations. The findings of the evaluation process highlight the importance of the BOND Project and the effectiveness of its work with young people returning from prison or place of detention. The findings also show that the Project has delivered on its stated aims and objectives and that it models a way of working with young people that is worthy of continuation and replication. A major factor in the success of the Project is the dedication, commitment and expertise of the staff. The evaluation concludes by recommending that the project be given the appropriate and necessary resources to continue and to expand its work, as a dedicated service for young people returning to Blanchardstown from prison or place of detention.

Section 1

Demographic Overview and Target Population

1. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

1.1 Target area

Blanchardstown is situated on the outskirts of Northwest Dublin, ten kilometres from Dublin City. It is located in the Fingal County Council Local Authority Area. The area consists of the electoral divisions of Abbotstown, Blakestown, Coolmine, Corduff, Delwood, Mulhuddart, Roselawn and Tyrellstown. The population was in the region of 38,000 in the early 1990s and now boasts a population of 70,000 and that is set to reach 100,000 in the next ten years.

Research on the socio-economic profile of the area indicates that four of the neighbourhoods (Blakestown, Mountview, Corduff, and Mulhuddart) are highly disadvantaged and scored a rating of nine or ten (ten being the highest level of deprivation according to the ADM/GAMMA assessment of deprivation). The remaining areas in Blanchardstown had a rating of one, two or three.

While considerable development has taken place in Blanchardstown in recent years, parts of the area have not experienced the benefits of the growth in the economy, and poverty and inequality have increased. This reality is highlighted in the communities of Blakestown, Mountview, Corduff, and Mulhuddart and to a lesser extent Hartstown and Huntstown, with high levels of early school leaving, unemployment and reported crime in these areas. In order to combat social exclusion the Government established a Local Area Partnership in Blanchardstown in 1995. Blanchardstown has been designated as a Drug Task Force Area and as recently as the year 2000, the above communities were named for inclusion under the Government's RAPID Programme (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development). This Programme aims to target the twenty-five most deprived communities in the country of Blanchardstown is one.

Much development has taken place in recent years in the Blanchardstown area e.g. the development of the Town Centre, the establishment of a new library and theatre in the area. While these developments are to be welcomed, areas of poverty and extreme social exclusion continue to exist in Blanchardstown. Amongst the young people attending BOND, early school leaving, unemployment, addiction, homelessness, boredom and alienation play a central role in many of their life experiences. In this regard young people in Blanchardstown are similar to young people who offend in other communities across the country, with most experiencing high levels of marginalisation and social exclusion in their daily lives.

1.2 Young Offenders in custody from the Blanchardstown Area

In order to establish the number of young offenders from the Blanchardstown area it is first necessary to distinguish between sentenced prisoners and remand prisoners. Sentenced prisoners are committed to prison on the basis that their guilt has been established and the

Court has imposed a fixed term in prison as punishment for the offence committed. Remand prisoners are those who are charged with an offence but the court has not yet fully dealt with their case and has refused bail until the case is dealt with. If the young person is found guilty the Court may impose a custodial or non-custodial sentence. If the young person is found not guilty they are released.

St. Patrick's Institution is the designated detention centre for juvenile offenders in the State. The BOND Project records indicate that 51 young people from Blanchardstown spent time in St. Patrick's Institution in the year 2000, 39 of whom returned to the community that same year. Although the figures appear to be dropping from earlier records (the figures show 57 in 1997), they are in fact distorted because as part of the prison-building programme, the new remand prison, Cloverhill, opened and all new remand prisoners are sent directly there. The BOND Project has not yet set up a mechanism with prison authorities from Cloverhill for the recording of numbers detained from Blanchardstown so it is not possible to get an overall picture of the total numbers of juveniles both sentenced and remand who have spent time in prison or place or detention. However steps have been taken for the collection of data to this end (BOND, 2001). The introduction of computerised data collection within the prison system, currently underway, will greatly enhance this process.

Another important figure is the flow or throughput of prisoners in and out of prison. The New Directions report noted that over one-quarter of those from the Blanchardstown area who spent time in St. Patrick's Institution in 1997, were committed to prison more than once in the 1997 period. It is likely that this pattern is continuing and increases the danger of the young persons concerned falling between services within the prison and in the community (New Directions, 1998).

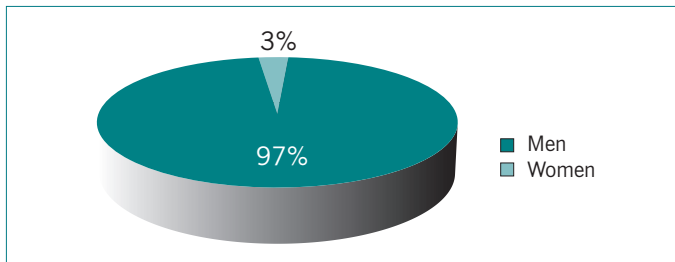
1.3 Profile of Target Group

The following presents a profile of the general prison population, with a focus on young offenders, where possible. Information for this section is sourced from a study of specific characteristics among the population of Mountjoy Male Prison (Harvey & Keane, 1999) and by research commissioned by BOND which carried out a series of interviews with a number of focus groups of young offenders from Blanchardstown in St. Patrick's and Wheatfield prisons (New Directions, 1998). A more specific profile of participants of the BOND Project is presented later in the report. However, it will be seen that the characteristics of the BOND client group are reflective of those of the general prison population.

1.3.1 Gender

The vast majority of those in the Irish prison system are men, with women representing 5% of all committals and less than 3% of the prison population (Table 1.1). Committals of women to Irish prisons represent one of the lowest rates in the European Union.

Table 1.1 Gender of Prisoners



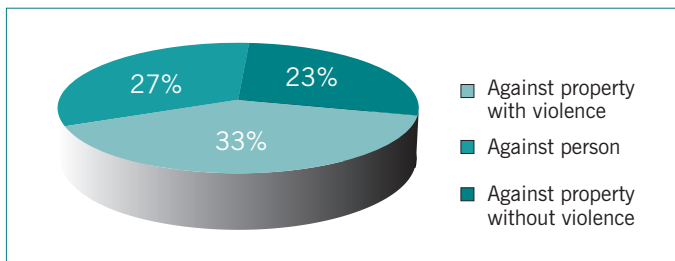
1.3.2 Age

Ireland has a high level of prisoners under the age of twenty-one compared to international figures; making up 27% of all committals. The dominant age group is between twenty-one and thirty, with the average age being twenty-nine. 44% of sentenced prisoners are aged between 17 and 25 years and 65 per cent are under 30 years of age.

1.3.3 Types of Offences

Offences against property with violence make up the highest categories of offences at 33%. Table 1.2 below outlines the three highest areas of recorded offences. Most notable is that 57% of all those serving a sentence have previously served one or more sentences and so are not new to the prison system (Harvey & Keane, 1999).

Table 1.2 Breakdown of Offences



1.3.4 Educational Profile

There is no national data available on the educational background of prisoners. Figures can be obtained at a local level and the details below are based on profiles available from Mountjoy Male Prison.

Table 1.3 Educational Profiles of Prisoners in Mountjoy Male Prison

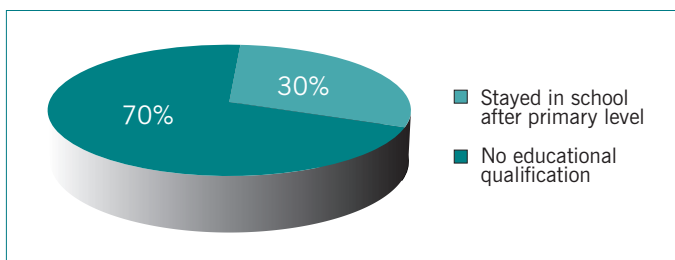


Table 1.3 shows that the vast majority of prisoners profiled in the Mountjoy survey left school with no educational qualifications, with only one-third remaining in the education system after primary level and less than 5% completing their Leaving Certificate (O'Mahony, 1997). This compares with national figures of young people which show that 82% leave school having completed the Leaving Certificate, 15% leave on completion of the Junior Certificate, while the remaining 3% leave without having sat an official examination (McCoy & Williams, 2000). The Early School Leavers Study (1999) has highlighted the strong relationship between educational achievement and economic status. In the study of 1997/1998 school-leavers, it finds that those exiting the educational system without qualifications display considerably higher unemployment levels. Over 40% of those who leave school unqualified are unemployed one year after leaving, while those who have achieved the Leaving Certificate have unemployment levels of 4%. The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) "Sharing in Progress", published in April 1997, and the review of the NAPS "Building an Inclusive Society" published in 2002 stress the importance of preventing and addressing early school leaving and supporting life long learning and second chance education for those who are already out of school.

Research carried out on behalf of the BOND Project also reveals this significant deficiency in the education experience of young offenders. It estimated that approximately 25% had no experience of post-primary education, implying that they had left the educational system at twelve years of age (New Directions, 1998).

Problems with regard to literacy are highlighted in all studies of Irish prisoners and by those working in relevant agencies, with functional illiteracy a significant problem. The study of prisoners in Mountjoy Male Prison found that 29% were illiterate. These findings reflect findings at national and international level which show that perceived rejection by the education system is a contributory factor to offending (Graham, 1988). Education also has an important role to play in regard to the families of young offenders in the form of adult education services in order to help them cope.

1.3.5 Socio-Economic Class

Data in relation to the socio-economic background of prisoners in Mountjoy Male Prison in Dublin show that 93% of the prisoners are from the two lowest socio-economic classes. This is despite the fact that these two classes represent less than 31% of the overall population.

This correlates also to the Early School Leavers study (1999) which highlights the relationship between socio-economic class and levels of educational attainment, with those from the "lower" socio-economic classes having lower levels of educational attainment.

1.3.6 Employment and Training

The research carried out among prisoners of Mountjoy Male Prison found that 88% were unemployed at the time of imprisonment, while 27% had never had a job.

The research carried out on behalf of BOND revealed that only 23% of young offenders were estimated to have had some form of training, with a similar percentage having had previous experience of work. The findings highlight that these young people are not obtaining training and subsequently are not finding employment. Young offenders who have had previous employment experience described it as being low skilled or unskilled and of a short-term nature (New Directions, 1998).

These findings reflect wider research which has found that prisoners are often unemployed on committal and that they lack training and educational qualifications necessary to secure good employment on release. They may also lack the necessary personal development needed to be able to fully benefit from education and training and so may need additional help in this area in the first instance (National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) Report No. 22, 2002). Consequently, a period of job preparation may need to be undertaken by prisoners on release. Supported employment may be particularly important for this group as a stepping stone to mainstream work.

Equally, research has highlighted the importance of having the private sector on board from the beginning of any programme. The view was expressed that if employers can be provided with a strong support structure when employing a young offender, they are more likely to give a commitment to providing employment opportunities. A postal survey of 200 employers in the Dublin area, found that only half (52%) of those who responded to the survey said that they would consider employing an ex-offender. This increased to 63% if supports were provided (Lawler, 2001).

1.3.7 Accommodation

Research on offenders in Mountjoy Male Prison found that the vast majority, almost 80 per cent, come from public housing areas (Harvey & Keane, 1999).

Research gathered as part of this evaluation process indicated that all the young people interviewed in BOND had lived in the family home prior to arrest. Those interviewed said they would ideally like to live elsewhere upon release from prison but that they did not know how to seek accommodation nor did they have sufficient financial resources to afford it. Consequently, on leaving prison many found themselves at home once again, mixing with the same offending peer groups or in some cases, they experienced homelessness.

The National Economic and Social Forum Report titled “Social and Affordable Housing and Accommodation: Building the Future” noted that buying one’s own home is particularly problematic for this target group (NESF Report No. 18, 2000). Accommodation issues in general are particularly complex for this group. They are unlikely to have adequate financial resources to pay the market rate for private rented accommodation. Even if this is not a problem, they may still experience difficulties in getting a landlord to accept them as tenants. Due to incarceration, independent living may pose particular challenges for some young people leaving prison or place of detention.

1.3.8 Drug issues

The connection between crime and drug use is well established. Drug use among young offenders ranges from alcohol to hard drug abuse. Research carried out in the Dublin Metropolitan area on the percentage of crime carried out by people using hard drugs showed that hard drugs were responsible for 85 per cent of detected aggravated burglary, 84 per cent of larcenies against the person, 84 per cent of larcenies from unattended vehicles and 82 per cent of ordinary burglaries. Blanchardstown was one of the main areas in that study (Keogh, 1996). Gardai interviewed as part of the BOND research, indicated that drug use is a significant and growing factor in the lives of young offenders. Cannabis use was cited in almost all cases, with ecstasy and heroin also mentioned. Alcohol also played a role in a significant number of offences. The addiction counsellor interviewed stated that the young offender may not have the knowledge or skills necessary to access drug treatment programmes or the ability to participate at a level appropriate to their needs. Young prisoners interviewed felt that it was crucial to have access to drug rehabilitation in the community. They commented that a number of them had been obtaining treatment in prison and it was considered crucial that there was not a break when they arrived back in the community (New Directions, 1998). BOND currently sits on the Blanchardstown Local Drug Task Force Rehabilitation Sub-group and has also co-opted an addiction counsellor onto its committee.

Research carried out on offenders in Mountjoy Male Prison indicated that 77 per cent used illegal drugs other than cannabis, while two out of every three have used heroin. Similar percentages had a serious drug addiction (O'Mahony, 1997).

1.3.9 Mental Health

The National Economic and Social Forum in their study on the "Reintegration of Prisoners" (2002) reported that mental health problems were more prevalent among the prison population, compared to the general population. Nearly half of the male and three-quarters of the female prisoners included in a study (Centre for Health Promotions Study) referred to in the report were assessed as likely to require some form of psychiatric treatment. The NESF Report concluded by stating that while improvements in the prison health service have taken place in recent years with the recruitment of qualified health staff and the development of substance abuse treatment, mental and physical treatment is still in need of further improvement and development.

1.3.10 Conclusion

Overall the research involving interviews and focus groups with young people, both in prison and the community, revealed their relative disengagement from normal society. Their experience of life is characterised by a continuing pattern of educational disadvantage, a lack of training and employment opportunities, frequent lapses into offending behaviour and consequently, alienation and social exclusion. They have real needs that still have to be addressed such as education, training, illiteracy, employment, accommodation and treatment for drug addiction. This reflects the description of the social characteristics of the general prison population as referred to by the NESF Report on the Reintegration of Prisoners

(2002), indicating that most prisoners come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, lack educational qualifications and have histories of unemployment.

1.4 Existing or available social structures

A number of agencies in the greater Blanchardstown area work with young offenders or have some interaction with them. The following is a brief description of the role of these agencies:

1.4.1 The Probation and Welfare Service (PWS)

The Mission of the Probation and Welfare Service is to foster public safety and promote the common good by challenging the behaviour of offenders and advancing the recognition and use of community based sanctions, thereby reducing the levels of re-offending (Probation & Welfare Service Strategy Statement, 2001-3) The Probation and Welfare Service achieves its mission through the implementation of a range of high level goals, namely:

- assisting the courts in sentencing decisions
- designing providing and promoting effective programmes of supervision in the community
- assisting and motivating offenders to critically examine their attitudes and behaviours and advising and encouraging them to seek help and support to this end
- working with offenders in custody and children detained in schools by focusing on their offending behaviour and preparing and liaising with the young person and their family so to strengthen the process of reintegration
- developing after-care arrangements for offenders in custody and who still require supervision to assist towards their re-settlement into the community
- bringing together groups from local communities to identify and initiate special projects to enhance the supervision of offenders in the community;
- providing specialist information on the development of services for offenders both nationally and internationally (PWS Strategy Statement, 2001-3).

1.4.2 Juvenile Liaison Scheme

This is a Garda operated initiative aimed at targeting young people under the age of 18 who have admitted to an offence of a minor nature. Only certain offences are eligible for the scheme. Two options are available to the Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLO); firstly an informal caution can be given to the young person once the situation is assessed. The second option available to the JLO is a formal caution given by a superintendent in the local Garda station. This is a more serious step for more serious offences. The JLO then provides supervision depending on the details of the case. The objective is to deal with the offender outside of the court system. The scheme is essentially a diversion programme and is not designed to work with people who have been through the courts, its aim being to keep people out of court in the first instance and to reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

1.4.3 Addiction Service

The Addiction Service in Blanchardstown is run by the Northern Area Health Board (NAHB). It works in cooperation with the treatment services, the rehabilitation service of the NAHB and cooperates with all relevant local agencies on the ground in Blanchardstown such as the

Community Drug Teams (CDTs), Coolmine Therapeutic Centre and BOND. Addiction Counsellors deal with a significant number of young offenders who have addiction problems, providing counselling services to participants and their families, making referrals to other Health Board staff and networking with other professionals and community bodies. A dual referring mechanism between BOND and the Addiction Service is in place.

1.4.4 Local Community Drug Teams (CDTs)

There are three CDT's in Blanchardstown which were established under the auspices of the Local Drugs Task Force with funding received through the NAHB, located in Mountview/Blakestown, Hartstown/Huntstown and Corduff/Mulhuddart. The core work of the CDT's is dealing with those with drug addictions in the community. Each CDT work programme is determined by the needs of their client group in their particular area of operation. They are engaged in preventative education, family support and one-to-one support for drug users in addition to outreach work and specialised programmes of a holistic nature. Mountview/Blakestown CDT in conjunction with the NAHB coordinates the needle exchange and urine analysis facilities for all three areas. BOND has an excellent working relationship with the local CDT's which is necessary as they share a percentage of dual participants. Dual referral arrangements are in place.

1.4.5 Local Employment Service (LES)/Joblink

LES/Joblink, which was established in 1997, is a subsidiary of the Local Blanchardstown Area Partnership. The aim in establishing LES/Joblink was to address the high levels of disadvantage characterised by the levels of long term unemployed which was significantly above the national average (Blanchardstown LES/Joblink Plan 2001-2003). The LES/Joblink provides an individualised service, assessing the needs of individuals with the objective of helping them into employment. LES/Joblink works closely with employers, building relationships whereby they make referrals to a range of employers. The LES has identified young offenders as a target group but finds them particularly difficult to place in employment. BOND currently has referral mechanisms in place and has a programme to support its participants who are placed in employment by the LES/Joblink with a goal of assisting them maintain employment. Employment is viewed as a key strategy to assist young people move beyond offending (NESF Report No: 22, 2002). BOND has recently taken a seat on the LES/Joblink Advisory Board. Another significant strategy to assist this target group into employment is the planned placement of a LES/Joblink mediator in the BOND Project one afternoon per week for a pilot phase of six months.

1.4.6 Adult Education Service (Co. Dublin V.E.C)

The Adult Education Service in Blanchardstown is well established, offering services to a wide ranging target group who experience education disadvantage. They run extensive in house courses and have a range of programmes from Adult Literacy to Fast Track to IT (FIT) The Adult Education Service sits on the Executive Committee of BOND and acts in an advisory capacity assisting BOND in its annual application to Co. Dublin VEC for teaching hours for BOND's education programmes.

1.4.7 Youthreach

Youthreach was established in 1989 through a joint initiative of the then Departments of Labour and Education. Youthreach has been mainstreamed nationally through the VEC's. Blanchardstown Youthreach is managed by Co. Dublin VEC. The Agency runs training and development programmes for early school leavers between the ages of 16 to 20 years. Youthreach has assisted BOND with specific education initiatives and the sharing of resources and equipment.

1.4.8 ROOFS (Blanchardstown Homelessness Group)

ROOFS was established as the 'Homelessness in Blanchardstown Steering Committee' in September 2000 and changed its name to ROOFS in early 2002. Its overall objective is to put in place a coordinated strategy and a locally based response to the complex issues of homelessness in Blanchardstown. Its membership comprises of representatives from a range of local agencies; the NAHB, the Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Blakestown/Mountview Youth Initiative, the BOND Project, the Blakestown/Mountview Neighbourhood Youth Project, Barnardos, Local Drug Task Force, Probation and Welfare Service and Blanchardstown Youth Service. ROOFS has just produced a strategy document for tackling homelessness in Blanchardstown in which young offenders and ex-prisoners have been identified as being at particular risk of being homeless. As part of its recommendations to tackle homelessness in Blanchardstown, it calls for funding to be secured to enable the BOND residential facility to progress (A Strategy for Tackling Homelessness in Blanchardstown: ROOFS, 2002)

1.4.9 Blanchardstown Youth Service

The Youth Service in Blanchardstown is operated by Foróige and one of its aims is to enable communities to respond to the needs of their young people by providing training, support and financial assistance to voluntary groups. The main age of its target group are young people aged between 12 and 18 years. The Youth Service also runs a range of specialised groups for young people at risk. The service has a specific focus of targeting young people from disadvantaged areas in Blanchardstown and therefore works with some young people who could be at risk of offending behaviour. The Youth Service is not resourced to respond to the needs of young offenders leaving prison, however it is the managing agency for the WEB (Working to Enhance Blanchardstown) Project.

1.4.10 WEB Project

This project is aimed at young people at risk of offending. It is a community-based initiative managed by Blanchardstown Youth Service and funded primarily by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform via the Garda Síochána Special Projects. The mission of WEB is to enable young people at risk of getting into trouble with the law to engage in constructive and developmental activities within their own communities. It achieves this by identifying young people at risk in the area and designing programmes to meet their needs.

1.4.11 Bridge Project

The Bridge Project is an intensive Probation Supervision Initiative in which young adult offenders from the Dublin area are engaged in a demanding community based programme. Its aim is to prevent re-offending by young adult offenders who would otherwise serve substantial prison sentences by reducing the incidence of criminal behaviour by participants and helping them become reintegrated into their communities. Bridge was initiated in 1991 and is staffed largely by the Probation and Welfare Services and the City of Dublin VEC. It works in partnership with FAS, the Irish Youth Foundation, the Social Partners, the Judiciary and the Garda Síochána who are represented on its management board. Services of Bridge include young adult male and female programmes, intensive probation supervision programmes, educational services, employment services, individual supports and a community employment scheme. Its target group is serious offenders from the Dublin area over the age of 18. Although Bridge shares a similar target group to BOND it is located some distance from Blanchardstown in the city centre.

1.4.12 PACE

PACE was established in 1969 and works in partnership with agencies such as the Probation and Welfare Service, FAS and the City of Dublin VEC to create a high quality settlement service for offenders. PACE also provides further training and education for male and female ex-offenders and supported accommodation for men at its Coolock site. PACE has linked extensively with the BOND Project during its pilot phase. Although PACE is relevant to the BOND target group it is not located in Blanchardstown and this has proved somewhat unsuitable for many of BOND's participants who are often unwilling to live in accommodation that they judge to be too far from their social network and other supports in the Blanchardstown area.

1.5 The Socio-Economic Situation and Presenting Issues

A brief profile of the Blanchardstown area, and the services operating there, is provided above. In communities of disadvantage, such as those referred to above, facilities and venues for young people to meet and network are underdeveloped. Socio-economic deprivation prohibits opportunities for inclusion in many activities where other young people may gather and socialise. The result is that youth culture within disadvantaged communities will, for some, contain a sub-culture or 'street-culture'. In communities such as Mulhuddart and Corduff in Blanchardstown, 'the street' may be the only place for young people to congregate. Although this may expose young people to crime and drug misuse, peer group culture is an important point of reference providing a sense of identity and belonging, a release from boredom and an opportunity for fun and friendship.

The research commissioned by BOND in 1998 found that there was agreement among representatives from the various agencies that the return to the community from prison can be a very vulnerable time for the young person and the support available to him/her and their families can be fragmented in nature. As many young offenders have

chaotic/unstructured lifestyles and have a difficulty relating to authority and organisations, they are not likely to approach agencies which can help them and hence are unable to access existing services. Young people coming out of prison or a place of detention often have experienced multiple disadvantages making their reintegration process even more difficult.

1.6 Summary

Blanchardstown and the wider Dublin area has no shortage of agencies that are in a position to give support to young offenders. However what is needed, and what BOND provides, is a way of coordinating the young person's reintegration programme and assisting them access the appropriate agencies. One of the key advantages for BOND is that it is a local based initiative and derives its identity from within the community of Blanchardstown. Many young people with such levels of disadvantage are slow to trust agencies that are very often willing to help and provide support. BOND tries to overcome this by engaging with young people early on in their sentence and so engagement into the project upon release is viewed as a natural next step in a mutual respectful relationship. Once engagement commences it includes assessment of their individual situations. Ongoing support needs to be provided to both the young person and his/her family. BOND continuously assesses the gaps in the provision of services among agencies to its target group and where possible bridges the gap or advocates for improvement. It does this by calling on the support of other relevant interested agencies such as the Probation and Welfare Service, local Drug Task Forces, ROOFS etc.

Section 2

History of BOND

2. History

2.1 Background to the Project

The BOND Project was founded in May 1997 by people living and working in the Blanchardstown area. This followed a realisation that while a number of agencies provided, or were willing to provide, a service for young offenders, there appeared to be gaps in the service provision. It was noted that young people tended to lose their links with home while in prison, a factor which made reintegration on release very difficult. On their return to the community many issues would arise which affected these young people negatively. Typically young people would find themselves in a chaotic routine with no clear goals. Whatever motivation they had when leaving prison was quickly diminished by the unchanged circumstances facing them in the community. Many young people would again indulge in excessive drinking, substance abuse and return to a pattern of re-offending.

It was against this background that a group of people came together to form a committee to discuss how the issue could be addressed. On their initiative the BOND Project was formed in May 1997. Its aim was to develop a community based response to the needs of young people returning to the community from prison or place of detention. The first major task undertaken by the BOND committee was to commission a piece of research to define the needs of young people returning to the community and to conduct an audit of existing service provision in the area with a view to identifying the gaps in service provision for these young people. Funding for this research report was obtained from Blanchardstown Area Partnership via the Education and Employment Working Groups. The report entitled 'New Directions Report' (1998) was launched in November 1998 at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. The report consisted of interviews with young people in prison and with local agencies in the Blanchardstown area.

The report revealed the alienation of these young people in prison and in the community from 'normal' society, with their experience of life characterised by a continuing pattern of unemployment, a lack of education and training, drug addiction and frequent lapses into offending behaviour.

The 'New Direction Report' (1998) indicated that:

In regard to the needs of these young people only a multi-faceted response is likely to succeed in helping them break with the past situation which led them into crime. The report highlighted that young people leaving prison need:

- a person to link with on return to the community
- a structured individualised programme
- access to drug treatment services

- support to acquire job seeking and accommodation seeking skills
- access to diversionary activities

With regard to service provision for young people returning to the community from prison, the report highlights that:

- each of the agencies has a valuable service to provide to these young people
- the agencies are unable to actively seek out and engage these young people
- no one agency has a particular mandate for this group
- there is a lack of co-ordination between the agencies and the relevant prisons and amongst the agencies themselves

The report recommends the establishment of a multi-faceted response involving the community and locally based agencies, in order to track these young people and ensure the relevant agencies work closer together. It recommended that BOND become the mechanism to focus the energy of the relevant agencies in their response to the needs of these young people and that the management committee of BOND take on the task of developing an integrated community response to the needs of young offenders in the Blanchardstown area. In carrying out this function it should foster the development of best practice amongst community services and prison-based services in relation to providing for and meeting the needs of young offenders.

2.2 Funding of the Project

Funding for the Project is obtained from a range of sources, firstly from the Young People, Facilities and Services Fund and then from the Probation and Welfare Service, which provided the principle resources for capital and running costs. The Project has also been supported throughout the pilot phase by County Dublin by way of an annual allocation of teaching hours to resource the education element of the project. The complete list of funding organisations is provided in Appendix 1 of the report.

2.3 Target Group

Funding was granted to the Project through the Probation and Welfare Service for the purpose of working with 14 persistent young offenders from the Blanchardstown area, within the 16-21 year age group, who had spent time in prison or place of detention. When, in mid 2000, the Project began offering services to the target group the needs and the age profile of the target group had changed somewhat. As a result BOND offered services to 16-mid twenty year age group. (See Table 3.6.) BOND has, during its pilot phase, offered services to 82 persistent young offenders from the Blanchardstown area.

2.4 Project's Aims and Objectives

Aim

BOND seeks to support the reintegration of young people leaving prison or place of detention by focusing and directing them into appropriate supports in the community.

Objectives:

- To provide a community based, aftercare service for young people returning to the community on release from prison or places of detention and thereby undertake the re-socialisation, training and education of such young people and where possible to find suitable employment
- To direct such young people into other community based services and agencies that may assist in the re-socialisation, training and education of such young people and to support such young people in the use of these services
- To help them address drug addiction and other factors linked to their previous offending behaviour.
- To promote and develop an integrated plan and code of practice to meet the needs of these young people among local agencies and community groups
- To promote links between the local community-based agencies and similar services in the prison.
- To establish, should it be desired, educational and recreational programmes for those young people who are seeking or have sought the support of BOND
- To maintain, as far as practicable, contact with such young people should they be returned to prison or places of detention
- To develop public confidence in the ability of community based services to cater for the needs of young offenders and promote a restorative justice ethos

2.5 Ethos of the Project

Underpinning the aim and objectives and in the delivery of the services offered by the BOND Project, the following values are adhered to:

- BOND endeavours to operate a non-judgmental approach to Project participants.
- BOND endeavours to hold an unconditional positive regard for all Project participants.
- BOND recognises that each young person has individual personal needs.
- BOND recognises that each young person is unique in their own right.
- BOND recognises the ability of each young person to bring about change.
- BOND recognises the importance of respect for young people to enhance such changes.
- BOND recognises the importance of trustful relationships and the time it takes to build such relationships.
- BOND recognises the importance of confidentiality.

2.6 The Development of the Management Committee and Project

The initial development group which later developed into the Management Committee was spearheaded by Tony O'Riordan SJ, who was a voluntary chaplain in the prisons, and also

included a local parent of a young offender, a local Garda, Probation and Welfare Officers, an Employment Link Worker, a Community Worker and the Educationa Coordinator - all from the Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

One of the main recommendations of the New Directions Research (1998) was that a formal management structure be set up for the BOND Project comprising of a voluntary management committee, with representatives from the community and relevant agencies. It recommended that the Project itself be developed in two phases. The first phase dealt with the employment of Key Workers. The second phase dealt with the initiation of a modular programme to address the specific needs of these young people not currently provided for by education and training services in the area.

In order to maximise an integrated response to the target group, the BOND Committee co-opted onto its executive committee the relevant agencies. Based on the research findings the executive committee put together an application for funding to the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund for staffing costs and the Probation and Welfare Service for capital and running costs. In late 1999 the committee was successful in securing both applications on a 3 year pilot phase. The next task of the Committee was to register themselves as a Limited Company, which they did in November 1999.

The Committee successfully identified a suitable premises located at 37A Coolmine Industrial Estate, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, in which to base the Project. The Project recruited a Manager in December 1999 who took up the position in February 2000. The Project Manager's first task was to oversee the refurbishment of the premises, which took place between February and May 2000. Simultaneously, the recruitment and selection of staff for the Project took place. The BOND Project received its first referrals in March 2000 and began visiting young people in custody in April 2000; while the commencement of services in the local community began in June 2000 it was at this time that the premises became fully operational. The Project was officially launched, by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in December 2000.

2.6.1 Aims of the Management Committee

The BOND Executive Committee formed a number of sub groups to achieve all the objectives under the commencement phase. These sub groups included financial, premises and recruitment .At a review that took place in February 1999 the Management Committee agreed the following as its aims:

- Prove that a community response can work and identify lessons for mainstream agencies in how they respond to young offenders
- Increase awareness of the factors that give rise to offending
- Work with the community to encourage greater local responsibility and concern for the needs of offenders within the community

The Management Committee agreed the following areas of responsibility:

- Establish goals, objectives, targets
- Management of finances
- Confirm job descriptions
- Recruit staff
- Draw up contracts for staff
- Support/supervise and monitor staff
- Obtain insurance/premises
- Evaluate terms of reference

Two additional areas of responsibility were identified after the establishment of the Project:

- Put in place policies to support and enable the staff to carry out their work
- Document the experiences of BOND in terms of its interaction with participants and other agencies in order to shape future actions and policies

Some of these responsibilities have now been achieved, while others are ongoing. Even where objectives have been achieved an important role for the Committee is to review goals, objectives and targets in the light of operational experience.

2.6.2 BOND Current Executive Committee Members

• Catherine Durkin	Blanchardstown Area Partnership	Chairperson
• Donal O Sullivan	Probation and Welfare Service	Secretary
• Tommy Dwyer	Local Business and Community Rep	Treasurer
• Gay Hogan	County Dublin VEC	
• Marie Dwyer	Community Representative	
• Mary Moore	Probation and Welfare Service	
• Helen Brophy-Macken	Northern Area Health Board	
• Wenda Edwards	Jesuit Centre for Faith & Justice	
• Jimmy Smith	Community Representative	

Former Executive Committee Members who contributed to BOND:

• Tony O Riordan S.J	Jesuit Centre for Faith & Justice
• Ciaran Kennedy	Assistant Principal, Probation & Welfare Officer
• Marie Dooley	Assistant Principal, Probation & Welfare Officer
• Darren Conroy	Blanchardstown Youth Service
• Emer Hanna	Senior Probation & Welfare Officer
• Insp. Mick Feehan	Formerly Blanchardstown Garda Station
• Sean Redmond	PACE
• Derek Hanway	Blanchardstown Area Partnership
• Susan Bookle	Blanchardstown Area Partnership

BOND is currently involved in expanding the Executive Committee to include more members from the local and business communities.

2.7 Staffing

The BOND Project commenced with the following staffing allocation: one full-time Manager, one full-time Project Worker and one part-time Administrator. It expanded its team within the first year due to an allocation of teaching hours from County Dublin VEC which enabled the Project to recruit one full time teacher/tutor and three part time teachers/tutors. This enabled the Project to offer an extensive education element in its service delivery. The Project also secured an allocation of two Jobs Initiative posts from '2001 Jobs Initiative' from which it has been able to employ a full time receptionist and a resource worker. These additional staffing have contributed greatly to the growth of the Project. The Project has also benefited from the voluntary commitment of two local people who gave of their time to the Project and one professional Psychologist who has made themselves available on a sessional basis. Due to the high demand for access to the BOND Project and the difficulties associated with working with a volatile participant group, the Project found it necessary to recruit a second Project Worker mid way into the pilot phase. The addition of the second Project Worker carried many benefits and allowed the Project to take on an element of out-reach work and within four months of commencement of this post the BOND Project cleared its waiting list and increased their participant capacity from the mid-twenties to the high thirties, without reducing the quality of service delivery. Careful personnel management of these resources and flexibility of staff has meant that the Project has been able to cater for more than double the target number of participants over the pilot phase. Given the current labour market, and the challenging nature of this work, the Executive Committee recognise that it is important to give careful attention to staff supports, in-service training, work environment and pay conditions so as to attract and maintain suitable staff.

2.7.1 Current Staff Members

• Patrick Doyle	Manager
• Goretti Dwyer	Administrator
• Sinead Hoare	Education Coordinator
• Una McNeill	Project Liaison Worker
• Ingrid Colvin	Project Liaison Worker
• Rosemary Bean	Education Tutor
• Carmel Campbell	Education Tutor
• Noel O'Reilly	Resource Worker
• Martin O'Brien	Receptionist
• Conor Troy	Fitness Instructor
• Sheila Porter	Psychologist

Former Staff Members

• Eadaoin Ni Ghiosain	Project Liaison Worker
• Debbie Whelan	Administrator
• Declan Ryan	Fitness Instructor



Section 3

Participants of
BOND

3. Participants of BOND

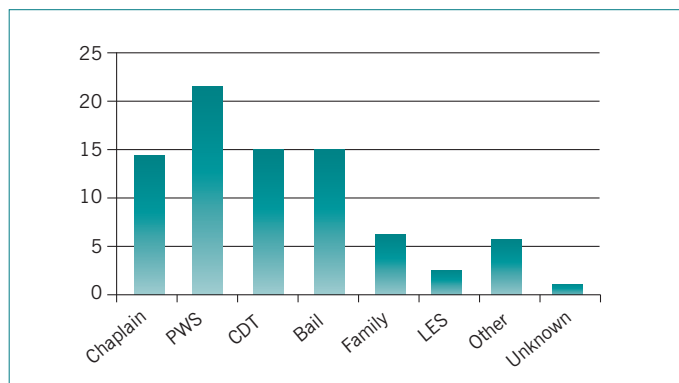
3.1 Referrals to BOND

The BOND Project was known to young offenders in the prisons prior to the establishment of the Project’s services. This was primarily due to the work of the former Chairperson (Tony O’Riordan), in his voluntary role as Chaplain to the prisons. There was also some level of awareness among agencies in Blanchardstown of the plan for a Project for young offenders in the area, as a result of the publication of the ‘New Directions Report’ (1998).

The Project received its first referrals from March 2000 and began working with young people in custody from April 2000 and offered services locally in the Blanchardstown community from June 2000. In that year BOND engaged with 32 young people. This figure was double the targeted number and reflects the real demand from young people for assistance and support to re-integrate back into their community. By April 2002, the Project had engaged with 82 young people.

Engagement in BOND is voluntary. Initial referrals to the Project came through Chaplaincy work in St Patrick’s Institution. As the profile of BOND began to rise, referrals broadened to include all the major Dublin prisons, the PWS, agencies in Blanchardstown, self-referrals and referrals from families within the community (Table 3.1).

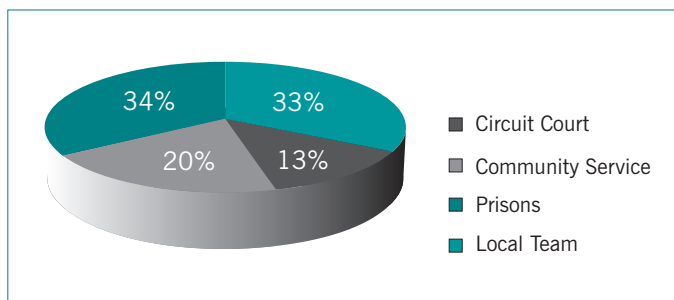
Table 3.1 Source of Referrals to BOND



Note: PWS – Probation and Welfare Service
 CDT – Community Drugs Team

The Probation and Welfare Service make up the single biggest agency making referrals to the Bond Project (Table 3.2). The BOND Project links extensively with the PWS under the following sections: the Assistant Principle Officer with responsibility for the Blanchardstown area, Probation and Welfare Local Team, Probation and Welfare Officers attached to the prisons and places of detention, Probation and Welfare Circuit Court Team, Probation and Welfare Officers responsible for Community Service.

Table 3.2 Referrals from the Probation & Welfare Service



Although agencies make and encourage referrals to the BOND Project, participation is on a voluntary basis. Each young person chooses the level and extent of involvement with the Project. The belief voluntary participation has been justified by the numbers who have engaged in the Project since its foundation.

3.2 Levels of Engagement

An indication of the level of engagement is to be seen in the fact that the centre received 760 visits from participants in the period from January 2002 to April 2002 (Table 3.3). This has increased from a level of 369 visits over the same period in 2001 (Table 3.4). What is most notable when reviewing patterns of referrals is that more and more referrals are coming through word of mouth from one young offender to another while in custody.

The high numbers of participants accessing the service as seen in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 clearly shows the growth of the Project within its pilot phase and the impact of the expansion of the team. The highest number of referrals in 2001 was in December bringing the total number of participants to 29, but by the end of January 2002 the Project recorded its highest figures, bringing the total to 41. The Tables show significant variations in the numbers of participants from month to month. BOND has developed a comprehensive tracking/monitoring system which identifies that those who experience drug relapse, homelessness, or who receive court summonses make a higher demand for the services of BOND, and given the chaotic or non-structured lifestyles of many of the target group, average monthly participant figures are not easily predicted. One other factor which is predictable is the prison release schedules, which at certain times of the year can greatly increase staff work loads.

Table 3.3 Participant Visits to BOND from January 2002 – April 2002

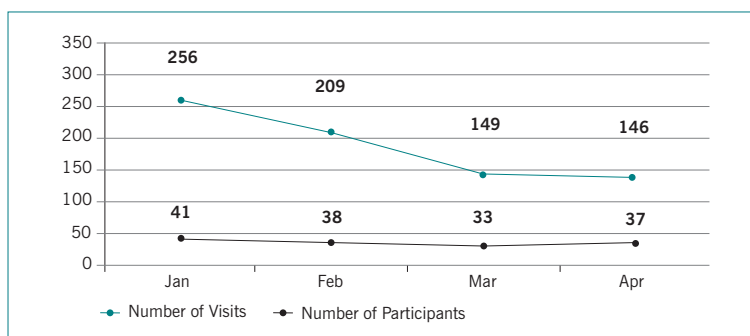
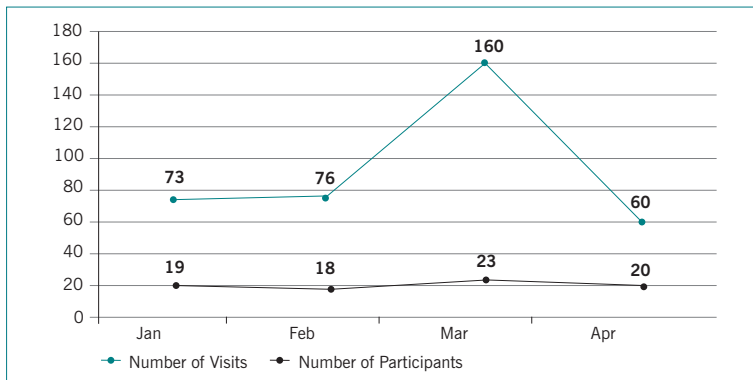


Table 3.4 Participant Visits to BOND from January 2001 – April 2001

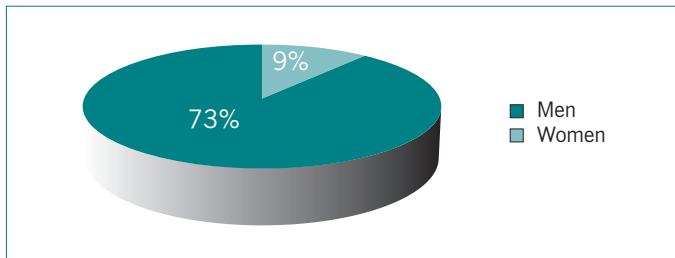


3.3 Profile of Participants

3.3.1 Gender

Over the two-year period April 2000 to April 2002, 82 participants have engaged with the BOND Project. Table 3.5 below highlights the fact that the majority of participants are male, reflecting the gender breakdown of young offenders. Most participants are between the age of 18 and 21 years of age, with an increasing number of referrals from within the mid to late twenties age group (Table 3.6).

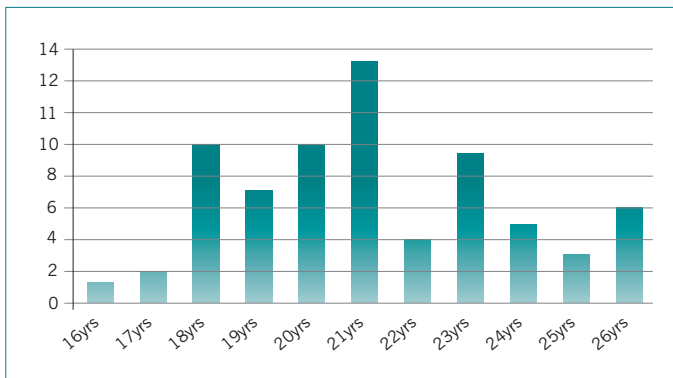
Table 3.5 Gender of Participants



3.3.2 Age

The New Direction (1998) Research recommended that the Project should target young people in the 16-21 year age group. The known ages of participants are listed in Table 3.6. The majority of project participants were between the ages of 18-21 with a significant number between the ages of 22-25. The project made a decision early on in the pilot phase to extend the age group, this was in line with the presenting needs of referrals many of whom had been interviewed for the initial research in 1998 but had moved beyond the 21 year old target group by the time the project was implemented. What is clear from the age profile is that the least number of new referrals are coming from the 16-17 year age group. BOND is currently working with 14 young people in custody none of whom fall into the 16-17 age bracket.

Table 3.6 Age Range of Participants



3.3.3 Participants with Children

Of the total number of referrals to BOND, 26 participants have children (Table 3.7). This is very much a gender related issue with 19 of the total 73 male participants and 7 of the total 9 female participants having children (Table 3.8).

Table 3.7 Participants with or without children

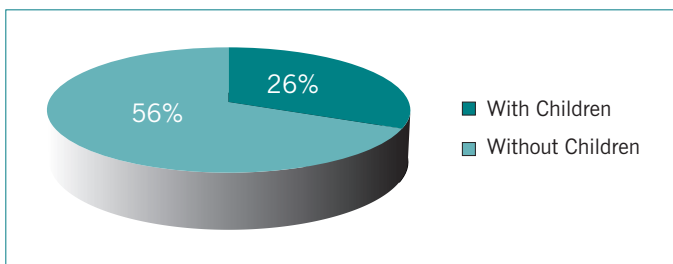
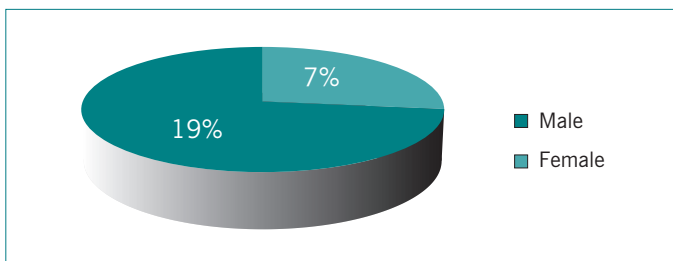


Table 3.8 Gender breakdown of Participants with children

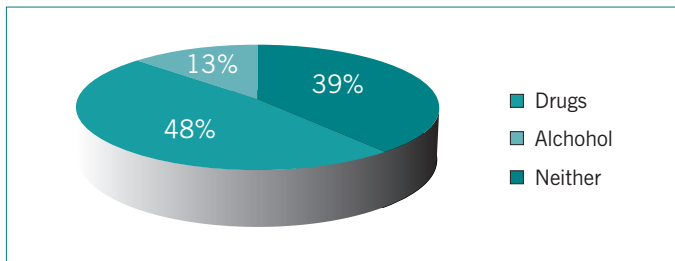


3.3.4 Addiction

Addiction issues are particularly prevalent among the participant group of the Project, the majority of whom identified themselves misusing drugs or alcohol (Table 3.9). In most of these cases this was described as abuse of drugs, with a proportion reporting themselves as misusing alcohol. It is important also to remember that there may also be multiple addiction issues and thus the two may not be distinct groups. Many of the BOND participant group would self report that their offending behaviour is as a direct result of their misuse of drugs or alcohol. The BOND Project has been the lead agency in assisting access to drug and alcohol residential treatment programmes for 4 participants and acted as a support to a further 4 participants while on a residential treatment programme. BOND regularly links

with the local Community Drug Teams who, together with BOND, act as dual service provider to a further 11 participants.

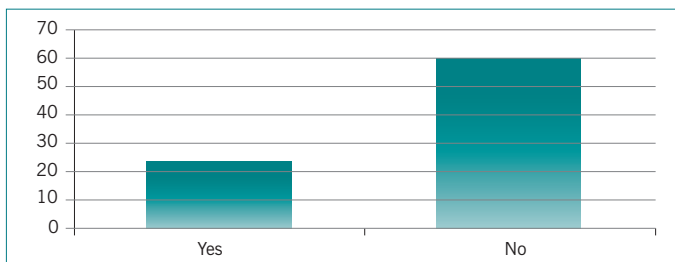
Table 3.9 Participants with Addiction Issues



3.3.5 Homelessness

A significant number of BOND participants state that they are without accommodation (Table 3.10). A trend that has been observed by those working in the Project is the increasing number of referrals who describe themselves as homeless. Many participants identify this as their main concern prior to release from prison. Anti-social behaviour, alcohol or drug misuse and breakdown in family relationships are cited as some of the causes. There are increasing numbers of participants facing homelessness as a direct result of exclusion orders by local authorities. There are currently no hostels in the grater Blanchardstown area which offer emergency or short term accommodation for young people aged 18-25. However, there is a strong homeless steering committee (ROOFS) which is currently advocating for the provision of such services. BOND is an active member of this committee and has also a number of its own responses to bridge this gap in services among its own participant group.

Table 3.10 Homelessness

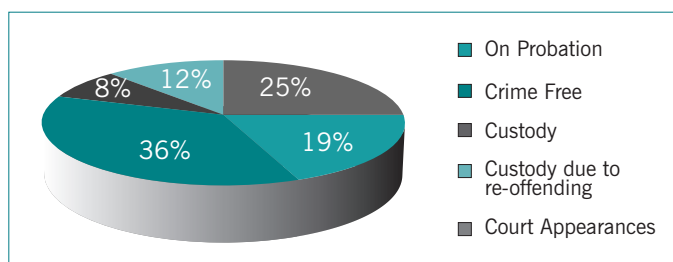


3.3.6 Criminal Justice Status

Since their referral BOND has extensively documented the criminal justice status of each participant. Most notable about this process is that participants regularly move from category to category, or may appear in more than one category within a given week. The BOND Project records show that, from April 2000 – April 2002, 26 of the 82 participants remained crime-free, and only 10 of the 82 participants were returned to prison during that period. BOND recognises that relapse into offending is a reality for some young people. Through tacking and monitoring the 10 young people who returned to custody while engaged with BOND the following issues were identified as influential in their re-offending - peer relationships, street culture, homelessness, alcohol and drug misuse and mental health

issues. The criminal justice status of the remaining participants is that they were either on probation, awaiting court appearances or have been referred to BOND while currently in custody (Table 3.11). In relation to the 25% of those participants awaiting court appearances, over half presented to BOND identifying their primary need as support and advice regarding forthcoming court appearances.

Table 3.11 Criminal Justice Status



3.3.7 Non Engagement

A small number of referrals did not engage with the Project. Most notable about this was that they tended to be referrals from agencies rather than self referrals and had not linked with BOND prior to release from custody. In the second year of the project the number of referrals that did not engage was significantly reduced by the Project's outreach service. This service was greatly enhanced by the appointment of an additional project worker with a specific responsibility to target those who had not previously engaged.

3.3.8 Tracking & Monitoring

The BOND Project has developed tracking and monitoring systems that record the individual participants' history of offending behaviour, their identified needs, intervention requested and delivered, levels of engagement, participation, achievements within the project and progression routes.

3.4 Summary

The BOND Project is a community-based initiative in the Blanchardstown area, supported by the Probation and Welfare Service. Since 2000, BOND has worked with 82 participants, the majority of whom are young men between the ages of 18 and 21 years.

Participants are referred to BOND from a variety of sources with the Probation and Welfare Service being the single biggest agency making referrals. Participants engage with the Project on a voluntary basis, either through its pre-release prison based programmes or through its day support service offered at its premises in Coolmine Industrial Estate in Blanchardstown.

The services provided by BOND aim to support the reintegration of young people leaving prison by focusing and directing them into appropriate supports in the community. The

individual one-to-one support offered by BOND helps participants identify their particular needs and provides them with a safe and supportive structure within which to rebuild and reorganise their lives. The ability to combine a flexible programme of engagement with a structured programme has meant that BOND has been able to cater for the diverse needs of the target group, and is able to cater for participants who are either highly motivated or those who are more chaotic.

BOND responds to the needs of young people with complex social and psychological problems associated with poverty, marginalisation and alienation. Most are early school leavers with literacy and related education problems. Some 90 per cent of participants come from the RAPID areas in Blanchardstown, confirming the link, established elsewhere, between poverty and offending behaviour. Addiction issues are very prevalent among the participant group of the Project. In most cases this was described as abuse of drugs, although a large percentage reported misusing alcohol. The problem of homelessness among participants is greater than originally perceived with almost 27 per cent describing themselves as homeless. This situation highlights the importance of BOND developing services to respond to homelessness.

Since BOND was established, the age profile of referrals has changed considerably with BOND offering services to a wider age group highlighting the need for an expansion of the services provided by the Project.

Section 4

BOND Service & Programme Implementation and Experience

4. Services provided by BOND

4.1 Services Provided to Participants

Essentially BOND seeks to provide the necessary services to support the reintegration of young people leaving prison by focusing and directing them into appropriate supports in the community. A key role for BOND is to act as a bridge between the prison and community based supports. During the pilot phase the BOND Project developed its services according to the needs of the young people and in line with current best practices. This included the following services:

Services Provided
Prison Community Links
Individual Needs Analysis
Individual Personal Plan
Intensive Personal Support
Information
Programmes
Advocacy
Court Support
Outreach
Family Support
Professional Counselling
Ongoing Contact

4.1.1 Prison Community Links

BOND begins the process of engagement with young people while in custody acting as a link between them and their community. This can form part of the getting out phase but also includes on-going contact offering support and reassurance to participants who are finding custody difficult or are returned to custody due to re-offending.

4.1.2 Individual needs analysis

Individual needs analysis help the young person identify and prioritise their needs. Where possible this preliminary work takes place while in custody.

4.1.3 Individual personal plan

An Individual Personal Plan is drawn up with the young person providing a step-by-step response to their needs as identified. BOND supports them in the management of the steps they need to take in order to reintegrate and aids the adjustment of their plan when necessary. Steps may, for example, include:

- Goal setting
- Taking steps to address offending behaviour (anger management etc.)

- Identifying and accessing good personal supports,
- Addressing addiction
- Addressing educational disadvantage (in-house courses, FÁS, VEC etc.)
- Increasing employment opportunities (skills enhancement)
- Addressing accommodation issues
- Building links with relevant service providers in Blanchardstown

4.1.4 Intensive personal support

Intensive personal support is on a one-to-one basis with a Project Liaison Officer. This helps the young person to keep appointments and commitments as part of their plan. It also helps the young person identify obstacles to attaining goals and assists the young person to move towards more independent living. The nature of this support ranges from accompanying the young person to court or to job interviews, assisting with form filling etc. This service is of particular importance in the event of a relapse into offending behaviour or a return to custody and has also proved to be beneficial for addressing drug relapse and homelessness.

4.1.5 Information

Information is provided on a wide range of issues, services and opportunities that may benefit the young person.

4.1.6 Programmes

Programmes are designed to cater for the needs identified in the individual personal plan. Point 4.3 details the Programmes offered by BOND.

4.1.7 Advocacy

Advocacy forms a major part of the work of the Project. Advocacy is undertaken on behalf of the participants in a wide range of areas (see table 4.1) In the period 2000-2002 advocacy work was undertaken on behalf of almost 60% of participants of the Project.

4.1.8 Court Support

A number of participants present with outstanding court appearances or develop new charges; this can be a very stressful and daunting experience for the young person. BOND supports the young person by helping them navigate their way through the process, liaising with Gardai, legal teams, Probation and Welfare Service, and where requested accompanies the participant to court and acts as an advocate.

4.1.9 Outreach

This service is primarily offered to two types of participants - those who have found it difficult to engage and those who are in particular crisis and are unable to access the centre.

4.1.10 Family Support

BOND offers a limited service to families of participants who are in custody, have court appearances or where the participant is in particular crisis or experiencing relapse.

4.1.11 Professional Counselling

The Project has successfully engaged a registered psychologist to offer a counselling service. Strict guidelines and procedures have been agreed upon for the effective delivery of this service. Many of the participants in the BOND Project have experienced extreme marginalisation, alienation and have suffered the effects of violence, drug addiction and family break-up. The BOND Project recognises the need for the participants to critically reflect upon their life experiences so as to increase their opportunities for personal development. BOND encourages participants to avail of the psychological service as part of their individual personal plan. Experience to date indicates that participants do not readily choose to avail of this service in the early stages of engagement. The request for the service usually occurs as a participant progresses or meets with a crisis. This psychological service is also available to the staff on request as part of the wider support mechanism.

4.1.12 On Going Contact

BOND endeavours to maintain contact with all those who have been referred to the Project regardless of whether they progress and move on or in the event that the young person is returned to prison or place of detention.

4.2 Phases of Involvement

BOND delivers on its twelve services using a three phased approach which are outlined below.

4.2.1 Getting Out

This is an opportunity to introduce the young person to the BOND Project while they are still in custody. The aim at this stage is to assess the young person's suitability/ interest in BOND, to foster the young person's motivation to engage actively in a support plan when released and to begin a needs analysis, especially with regard to immediate needs on release. BOND links with the prison authorities and the Probation and Welfare Service to ensure an integrated response to a positive sentence management programme for the young person. To enhance the young person's reintegration back into their community BOND facilitates day release and early release programmes.

4.2.2 Just Out

This phase of engagement with the Project is designed to build on the work accomplished in the Getting Out phase. The aim at this stage is to help the young person with immediate adjustment issues and to refocus him/her on the needs identified during phase one.

Often on release the young person is full of euphoria and wants to enjoy the benefits of liberty. This can lead to a loss of focus and a return to the issues that contributed to previous offending behaviour. While recognising the desire to celebrate their release, the emphasis at this phase of engagement is to focus the young person on a plan of action that will keep him/her out of trouble.

4.2.3 Staying Out

This phase of engagement with the Project is designed to assist the young person develop the necessary framework to sustain their move away from offending behaviour. Unemployment, homelessness, addiction, family issues, peer-pressure and boredom are some of the issues these young people face and seek help to address. BOND assists, by listening and providing an environment in which the young person can gain a perspective on his/her situation and an opportunity to explore options. BOND then helps them access and navigate their way through the complex range of services they might require. This requires constant commitment on the part of the young person and can be a long and difficult process. BOND offers ongoing support to young people to help them to remain focused and where there is relapse BOND challenges and encourages the young person to renew their efforts to improve their situation.

BOND has found that consistent and regular support of young people while in prison, combined with continuity of contact with the same personnel upon release, creates a climate of confidence. BOND acknowledges that relapse is a natural part of recovery, re-learning and re-integration. In cases where a young person is returned to prison BOND maintains contact. BOND believes that this practice of integrated service delivery offers an effective model for post-release programmes among its target group.

BOND recognises that care should be taken to ensure that any new responses do not overlap or duplicate existing services. Any new response should serve as an integrating focus for prison based and community based agencies in relation to the target group (Doyle, 2001).

4.3 BOND Programmes

Over the pilot phase of the Project, BOND has offered a range of programmes with the following objectives,

1. To combat educational disadvantages
2. To enhance employment opportunities
3. To counteract boredom
4. To reduce isolation
5. To build young peoples capacities
6. To increase participants self-esteem
7. To provide opportunities for new experiences

4.3.1 Education and Training Programme

Research has shown the links between offending and educational disadvantage such as early school leaving, truancy and low levels of literacy skills. Second chance education for young people is crucial to their rehabilitation and their opportunities for employment.

In June 2000 BOND was successful in its first application to County Dublin VEC for an allocation of teaching hours for the incoming academic year. This was to run a flexible learning

programme from its centre in Coolmine. The allocation of teaching hours has continued throughout the pilot phase of the Project. BOND established a flexible learning programme and offered taster sessions and short courses to its target group. The courses are offered to all participants of the Project and, where appropriate, some courses are offered on a one to one basis. The programmes are designed on the identified needs of the individual participant.

The BOND Project is now registered with the Further Education, Training and Awards Council (FETAC). This means that it can offer accreditation in a wide range of areas. A number of participants have availed of this opportunity and have for the first time received a recognised qualification. These courses offer certification in areas which are both theoretical and practical. Individuals work at their own pace. Educational programmes include literacy/numeracy, information technology, personal development (e.g. anger management), pre-employment (e.g. preparation of CVs, letter writing), creative learning, health issues, stress management. Eleven BOND participants have received accreditation between 2000 and 2002.

The unstructured/chaotic lifestyle of some of BOND's participant's together with a history of educational disadvantage makes engagement and subsequent delivery of the BOND education programme a challenge. Homelessness, addiction, mental health issues, outstanding criminal justice issues and childcare are some of the complex factors that must be taken into consideration in the delivery of BOND's education programmes.

The BOND Project has responded to these issues in a number of ways, by raising of staff awareness regarding the issues named above, ensuring a flexible learning model of education, recognising all efforts made by participants, celebrating achievements, offering flexible timetables, funding childcare places, recognising and responding to other presenting needs.

BOND is a registered partner of the Recite II Education and Training Initiative which is a European funded programme with an emphasis on improving young people's employability. Fingal County Council are the lead partner. The BOND Project has received funding from the Recite II to support and assist with resource materials and programme costs.

In late 2001 BOND was successful in securing funding from the Department of Public Enterprise through the CAIT Initiative to develop an Information Technology facility at its centre in Coolmine. As a result BOND is now in a position to offer a wide range of computer based courses including FETAC Computer Modules, ECDL, Introduction to the internet, the National Driving Theory Test and the latest literacy and numeracy courses.

BOND assists individuals to improve their opportunities for employment. This has been achieved by establishing a grant scheme which has included a range of strategies such as funding external training course, child care places, travel expenses to alleviate transport difficulties, the resourcing of tools for trade apprenticeships and safety equipment. In addition BOND has facilitated 7 young people to secure accredited Forklift Safety courses

and offered a number of participants opportunities to study for the Official Driver Theory Test, to secure their provisional licence, avail of a course of driving lessons and apply for their driving test.

4.3.2 Diversionary programmes

Access to diversionary programmes to combat isolation and boredom are seen as a key strategy in combating offending behaviour. In the New Direction (1998) research young people in custody stated that they believed that if they had access to leisure activities this would lessen their chance of re-offending. The Project participants choose the activities themselves. These include: go-karting, canoeing, wind surfing, horse riding, bowling, pictures, quad biking, power boating, fishing, paintballing and clay pigeon shooting.

4.3.3 Fitness Programme

BOND has its own gym facilities and offers fully supervised individual fitness programmes to participants. The programmes incorporate a range of fitness areas such as cardiovascular, weights, and circuit training. In 2001 five participants successfully completed the Module 1 of the FETAC, Health and Fitness Course.

4.3.4 Relaxation Programme

BOND endeavours to offer a holistic approach in its programme delivery and has engaged a massage therapist who offers Indian head, back and full body massage.

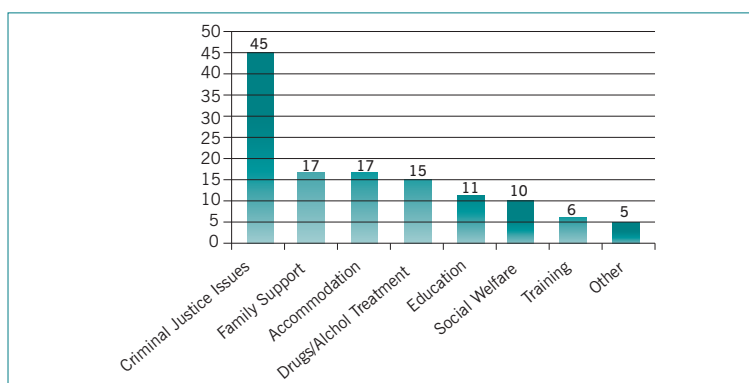
4.4 Experiences arising from Service Implementation

BOND has extensively documented its work with individual participants and has designed tracking and monitoring systems which has helped to highlight the areas of particular importance from the pilot experience.

4.4.1 Advocacy

Advocacy is a major part of the work of BOND Table 4.4 provides a breakdown of the various types of advocacy work in which BOND employees engage on behalf of those participating in the Project. It is clear from the table that advocacy in terms of support in dealing with the criminal justice system is of major importance to BOND participants.

Table 4.1 Breakdown of Advocacy 2000-2002

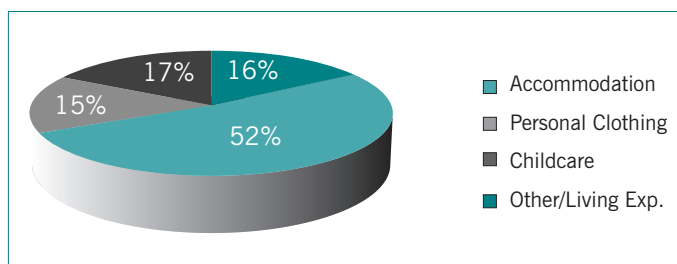


4.4.2 Assistance and Support

Assistance and support is one of the key services offered by BOND under a number of headings including advocacy, court support assistance with accommodation, assistance to access social welfare, family support, support in relation to addiction issues, access to employment, information, advice, counselling and financial assistance. The Project's monitoring systems indicate that during the pilot phase the most common issues for which participants sought support and assistance were accommodation, social welfare, family support and criminal Justice issues.

In relation to financial assistance BOND has established an Emergency Fund for which clear guidelines have been established. This fund is not meant to replicate or replace participant's rights to benefits from statutory agencies. The purpose is to assist participants in an emergency situation. Table 4.2 shows the areas of need identified from applications made to this fund.

Table 4.2 Emergency Fund Allocations 2000-2001



4.4.3 Homelessness

The prevention of homelessness is a key element of the Government's strategy. Strategies and services must be put in place to target groups most at risk of homelessness and to help to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place. BOND endorses this key element and through the provision of its existing services BOND provides assistance that seeks to address problems that relate and lead to homelessness among young people leaving prison or place of detention and returning to the Blanchardstown Area.

However since its inception in 2000 BOND has seen an increasing number of its participants present and seek help because they are homeless. For the period April 2000 – April 2002 twenty two young people had presented to BOND as homeless.

BOND has sought to respond to the needs of these participants in a variety of ways, seeking at all times to provide the appropriate response within the existing local resources. An outline of the responses to homelessness developed by BOND to date is detailed in Table 4.3. However it has become clear that one of the key aspects of an adequate and appropriate response to a significant number of participants who are homeless, is the direct provision of high support accommodation in the Blanchardstown area.

Table 4.3 Existing strategies used by BOND to respond to it's participants who are homeless

Strategy	Possible Responses
Assistance to locate safe shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral (and advocacy) to city wide homeless agencies • Locating and arranging emergency accommodation in B & B's in conjunction with ERHA Homeless Person's Unit (HPU) for periods agreed with HPU • Assistance with transport
Assistance with basic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral (and advocacy) to statutory bodies e.g. ERHA Community Welfare Section • Direct provision of food, laundry and wash facilities in BOND premises • Safe shelter in BOND premises during office hours • Educational and training during office hours
Assistance with long term issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key work support to identify underlying causes of homelessness and support to address these issues • Support to locate, secure and maintain suitable housing • Financial assistance to alleviate difficulties raising deposits

There are many reasons why people become homeless, including behavioural or other problems which inhibit them making proper use of existing services. Homeless persons may have mental health, alcohol, drug-related problems or multiple needs, which are not met effectively either by homeless or mainstream services. There are a number of key groups at potential risk of homelessness – those leaving institutional care, whether custodial or health-related and young people leaving care.

This type of profile is similar to international experience where the problems of mental illness, alcohol and drug dependence, unemployment, poverty, poor health, loss of contact with family and friends, history of institutional living and criminal or anti-social activity are among the causes of homelessness.

Time in prison at any point in a person's life can increase his or her chances of homelessness, while being discharged from prison can be one of the triggers that leads directly to homelessness. People who are homeless or insecurely housed before prison, people who lack personal and family support and people with substance misuse problems are at the greatest risk.

A recent report, Crime and Homelessness, (July 2002) carried out by housing charity Focus Ireland and prisoner support organisation PACE; found that more than 60% of people

leaving prison cite housing as their major difficulty. Furthermore the study found that just under half of homeless people surveyed said their homelessness led to crime and in turn imprisonment. Most of the crimes were not of a violent nature, but tended to involve shoplifting, larceny, begging or squatting. “The survivalist nature of these crimes indicates that the criminal behaviour is not always predatory but based on subsistence and need,” the report stated.

BOND’s experience of dealing with homelessness among its target group bears out these findings. In particular it has noticed the added pressure to commit offences that many of participants feel and report when faced with homelessness. BOND has responded to these needs by offering through its day service provision of basic needs such as food, laundry and day shelter. This has been provided in tandem with a service to offer assistance to locate and secure safe night shelter as an emergency measure and working out strategies to move the person out of homelessness in the medium to long term. However the personal needs profile of many of the participants and the lack of appropriate local based accommodation has often meant that we have been unable to help the participant deal adequately with their situation. (See Recommendation 11, page 93).

4.4.4 Drug and alcohol issues

A high number of participants report misusing drugs and alcohol. What is noticeable is that while the connection between crime and drugs is documented and responses to deal with this issue locally are beginning to address the issue, the link between alcohol abuse and crime are equally prevalent among the participant group but yet there is a distinct lack of local services in which to make a referral.

4.4.5 Mental Health

The NESF Report on the reintegration of Prisons (2002) reported that mental health problems among the prison population were more prevalent than those of the general population. BOND experience would collaborate this. What is noticeable is that of the participants attending BOND experiencing mental health issues, one case was receiving professional support. BOND’s response to mental health needs of the participants has been to refer them to the local psychiatric services. The Project has developed links with these services and now has a procedure of cross referral of participants.

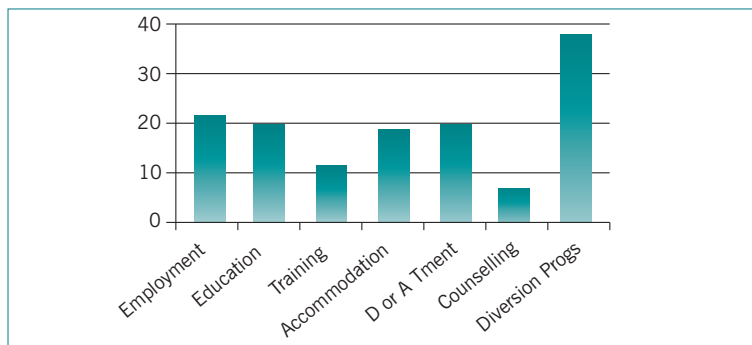
4.4.6 Engagement/Progression with BOND Services

Table 4.4 details the levels of engagement and highlights the fact that 31 participants have engaged in education or training while of these 12 have received accreditation for the courses they have undertaken.

Diversionary, fitness and relaxation programmes were undertaken by almost half of those participating in the Project over the two-year period and these programmes were put in place to enhance the quality of life, reduce isolation and boredom, increase their skill base and improve their general well being.

22 of the 82 participants in the BOND Project have moved into employment. Not all the employment secured was of a permanent nature due to the volatility in the current employment market, nor did all the participants have the skills to sustain themselves in one particular post for a substantial period. However, some participants were dealing with issues such as drug addiction, homelessness, isolation and educational disadvantage and these formed part of their daily life experience. Table 4.4 highlights the willingness and efforts made by participants to achieve and create a better quality of life despite the challenges they face them. BOND's experience has shown that discrimination still exists around the employment of ex-offenders.

Table 4.4 Details of Engagement with BOND Services April 2000-2002

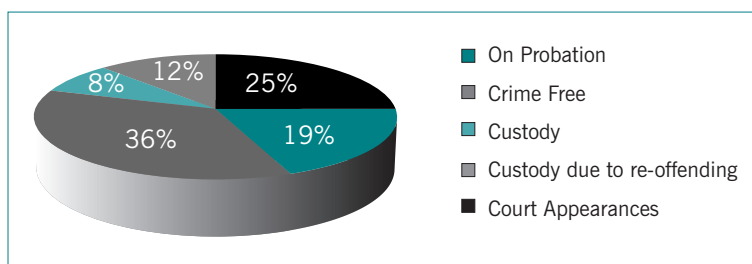


Note: D or A – Drug and/or Alcohol Treatment

4.4.7 Re-offending Issues

BOND places great emphasis on getting young people to address the issues that led to their history of offending. These issues include educational disadvantage, drug addiction, anger management, family relationships, personal development, raising skills and training levels. However, some of the young people present to BOND with a long history of challenging behaviour and with well-developed patterns of offending behaviour. BOND acknowledges that relapse is a natural part of recovery, relearning and re-integration. Mindful of this, BOND has experienced some levels of re-offending, which have led to a percentage of its target group returning to prison or place of detention. BOND has made a commitment to continuing work with this participant group even if they are returned to custody through its prison link service.

Table 4.5 Record of Re-offending



4.4.8 BOND an integrated approach

BOND links extensively with statutory, voluntary and community agencies and other bodies. The Project has negotiated codes of practice with relevant prisons and places of detention and with a wide variety of community based services and agencies such as CDTs, LES, Youthreach and other service providers. The Project continuously reviews levels of service provision to the participant group and where necessary identifies gaps and advocates for improvement to services for the target group in the area. BOND has also served as a vehicle for other agencies that have a remit to respond to these young people, an example of which is BOND's current partnership with Fingal County Council around emergency accommodation for young people upon release from prison. All these activities seek to minimise duplication and seek to provide a focus for agencies in the community who have a responsibility to BOND's target group. BOND therefore plays an important co-ordinating role and ensures that maximum integration of service delivery is achieved. Any new response should serve as an integrating focus for prison based and community based agencies in relation to the target group (Doyle 2001).

4.5 Summary

In summary, the BOND Project offers an aftercare or post release service to young people returning to the community of Blanchardstown from prison or place of detention. Services include: Prison links, Individual Needs Analysis, Individual Personal Plans, Advocacy, Intensive Personal Support, Information, Advice, Education, Training and Employment opportunities, Diversionary programmes, Outreach work, Court Support, Family Support, Professional Counselling and ongoing contact.

These services are offered to all young people who make a referral and are accepted to the Project. They are delivered over three phases of engagement - Getting Out, Just Out and Staying Out. Each phase is of critical importance. Linking with the young person in custody and preparing them for release in the Getting Out phase provides the best opportunity for positive engagement. Assisting the young person to meet their immediate adjustment needs upon release in the Just Out phase, builds confidence, helps to settle the young person and provides a solid foundation for their re-integration into the community. The Staying Out phase provides the single biggest challenge to both the participant and the Project as it requires real commitment on both parts to sustain reintegration and the young person's move beyond offending behaviour.

There are clear threats which act as barriers and so reduce the likelihood of full reintegration of the young person back into their community. Low levels of self esteem and a fear or inability to engage in self awareness greatly reduces opportunities for growth and development. Accommodation and addiction issues, boredom, peer pressure, family relationships, educational disadvantage, employment opportunities and financial difficulties if unaddressed can all form obstacles which impede the process of full integration and the young person's moves toward a more positive lifestyle. Equally linking with BOND prior to

release, building a positive relationship with the project liaison worker upon release, committing to an individual personal plan, engaging with the appropriate agencies, participating in the education, training and diversionary programmes in BOND has proven to greatly enhance the process of integration for many participants.



Section 5

The BOND Project through
the Eyes of Participants,
Staff, Executive Committee
and Relevant Agencies

5. Evaluation of the BOND Project

5.1 Introduction

This section of the report outlines the outcome of the review process which was undertaken with participants, staff and the Management Team of the BOND Project and with agencies involved with the Project (a list of the groups and individuals interviewed is provided in Appendix 3 of the report).

The aim of the review process is to:

- indicate the effectiveness of the Project from the point of view of the various stakeholders
- indicate the effectiveness of the linkages with other agencies
- refer to the changes that have occurred and that continue to influence the delivery of the Project with the aim of providing recommendations for the future

The methodology used in the review process involved workshop style meetings with the management committee, the staff and the client group. In addition, individual interviews were carried out with persons in each of the above groups.

5.2 Views of the Client Group

A group interview was conducted with ten BOND participants. In addition, individual interviews were carried out with a total of eight BOND participants. These interviews took place both in the BOND premises and in St. Patrick's Institution. The views and opinions expressed are outlined below.

5.2.1 Experience of the service provided

“I like the place & I feel that if I was slipping or going astray I would be able to talk to the staff and I know I'd get support.”

“BOND went to court with me and stood up for me. You have to want to work with BOND if you want it to work for you.”

Participants expressed the view that the services provided by the Project make a significant difference to their lives. The support and advocacy of Project staff was viewed as particularly important. This takes the form of practical support, for example in the preparation of CVs, or academic support, but also emotional and moral support and advocacy on the part of the participants in the courts, in accompanying people to job interviews etc. One of the participants interviewed told of how a BOND Project worker had helped her to get a job in telesales and how the Project helped her with child-care support, “they've helped me in loads of ways – emotionally, academically and physically. They are always there, they spoke up for

me in court and I know they would not do that unless they felt I was doing ok". These views were reflected by a number of those interviewed who spoke of staff as "always being there for me", "speaking up for me", and "treating me with respect".

Generally participant's experience of the BOND Project is that:

- It is a positive place to come to and it helps them in getting 'their lives together'
- It helps them develop communication skills and enter employment
- It provides support, training and social activities
- Staff are very supportive at a range of levels

5.2.2 What we get through involvement in BOND?

"BOND staff kept in contact with me and supported me. I now see them as friends."

"I've been here a couple of months and I come nearly every day. I'm doing the literacy programme, it's a place to come to and doing things keeps me out of trouble, I'm not hanging around."

Participants stressed that to get long-term benefit from the Project, they need to have willpower and be convinced of the need to change their lives. Participants reflected during the interview process that when they were prepared to help themselves, BOND is there to help and support them. Participation in the Project helps participants to build their confidence and self-esteem, reduces levels of boredom and, by providing a positive focus, it helps reduce crime. One participant who was interviewed described how BOND, in addition to helping with his education, also helped him refocus his life, get an apprenticeship in carpentry and find a job. For him the educational opportunities offered by BOND were the most useful aspect of the Project. Also important was the fact that help was at hand when he sought it, for example, when he went for an interview, BOND staff accompanied him to FAS. This support was referred to by another interviewee who described how BOND staff kept in touch with her and helped her while she was on a drug detoxification programme. All of the participants referred to the practical support which the Project offers – assisting people to claim social welfare, to get identification, apply for provisional licences etc.

One participant spoke of his life prior to becoming involved in BOND. He described his days as being spent robbing, drinking and getting arrested. However, "its not like that any more, I haven't been locked up since I got involved in BOND. BOND has helped me stay out of trouble and when I got into trouble BOND were there to help me out. BOND staff came with me to the LES and FAS centres, they offered me counselling and accommodation if I was stuck. My involvement in BOND has changed me from how I was - the fact that someone cared about what I did and wanted to help me".

5.2.3 What we contribute towards the Project?

“I bring a bit of a laugh and I bring support to other participants.”

“I bring myself, my pride, my smile and personality. I give a hand in keeping the place clean and I give a hand to other lads who might need a dig out. I get involved in the activities like chess and drawing and I get involved with the people here.”

When the client group were asked about what they saw as their contribution towards the Project they highlighted the following:

- Participation – taking part in activities and programmes
- Making links with others – bringing in friends and giving advice to others in need of help

Peer support and spreading word of the services of BOND were both highlighted as contributions which participants make to the Project. As described by one participant:

“I bridge that gap between people who have been in trouble with drugs and the staff. I can talk to participants and I know what its like for them. I also bring a lot of fun.”

5.2.4 What might be done differently

When asked what might be done differently or how things might be improved, comments made related mainly to increasing the range of activities available and lengthening the opening hours of the Project.

Reference was also made to the gender imbalance in the client group and the fact that it may be intimidating for women participating in the Project.

5.3 Views of the Staff Group

Six members of staff were involved in the staff review process. The views they expressed are outlined below.

5.3.1 Experience of the delivery of the BOND Services

Staff expressed the following opinions in relation to how they experience their work:

- The service is non-judgmental, there is trust and respect for participants, they are accepted and the relationship starts from where they (the participants) are at
- BOND requires local involvement and local knowledge
- BOND provides identifiable support
- The service provides an outreach element by visiting participants in their homes and communities which is a new experience for both staff and participant and is proving to contribute to the development of trusting relationships with participants and is essential for linking with participants who are having difficulty engaging

- Staff emphasised the importance of listening to participants and meeting their needs in a safe and non-threatening atmosphere. Interaction and integration with the participants is seen as important and special mention was made of the importance of sharing meals. This model offers participants a positive experience of engagement with a supporting agency
- Staff spoke of “having to work with where people are at”
- There is an acceptance that participants will make mistakes and relapse is a part of some participant’s recovery
- Every day is different and the immediacy of the service can bring challenges with work priorities constantly changing. Planned programmes are only an aspect of what staff do, the goal posts change as events occur
- Staff are mindful that many participants present in a state of turmoil and chaos and that the project has to against been drawn into that chaos
- Linking up with other agencies is an important support to participants and this type of advocacy can happen in a planned or unplanned fashion. Among the linkages highlighted were:
 1. **PWS, Prisons & Courts** – liaising with relevant prisons and with PWS; accompanying participants during court appearances, liaising with solicitors and the Gardai are a daily occurrence. BOND facilitates programmes for day and early release schemes in cooperation with Prison Authorities and relevant Probation and Welfare team members and assists participants to meet their obligations under Court or Probation Orders.
 2. **Welfare & Employment** – support with form filling and accompanying participants to LES, FAS and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. Help with preparing CV’s, getting passport photographs for driving licenses & other documentation.
 3. **Health Care** – accompanying participants with hospital appointments; liaison with local CDT’s and liaising and accompanying participants to drug treatment centres.
 4. **Education** – liaison with education agencies and education opportunities in the Blanchardstown area, in particular with the local library, the Institute of Technology, Adult Education services and Youthreach.
 5. **Promotion of BOND** – visiting and making presentations on BOND’s work to local community groups, schools, organisations working in the area and to relevant agencies and organisations working within the Criminal Justice field.
 6. **General support** – being available to converse with participants, refer them to appropriate services if necessary, accompany them to appointments or visit them in their homes and share general everyday living experiences with them such as mealtimes, during diversionary programmes and other recreational activities.

5.3.2 What is working well

Staff described the following as particular features of the Project which work well:

- Because of its client centred approach, the Project is flexible with regard to the needs of the participants

- The Project responds to the participant's needs on a variety of levels – practical, educational and emotional
- The immediacy of the services provided to participants by the Project
- Access and availability to staff and services in the project
- There is good team support between staff
- Flexibility of the programmes provided
- Staff expressed their satisfaction with the current manager of the Project who is aware of the support needs of staff. This is seen as a fundamental requirement of whoever manages the Project
- The project is viewed by staff as being well structured
- The main source of staff support in the Project is the Project Manager. Support meetings are held at regular intervals and are self-directed i.e. the individual staff member sets the agenda around what they seek from support meeting and what their expectations are

5.3.3 What are the challenging aspects of the work?

On reflection on the above question the staff raised the following points

- The current workload limits the time available to reflect on wider issues or to think issues through
- Staffing levels could be improved
- Time constraints limit in-service training and staff development
- Responses to individual participant needs can sometimes be limited due to staffing levels
- Space and facilities available could be improved
- While recognising that more young men than women offend it was considered important that the Project does not develop a overly male orientation
- Questions were raised as to whether the Project can respond to the needs of groups such as travellers, refugees and asylum seekers
- Currently there is no external supervision available to staff. It was considered that this may, on occasion, be appropriate
- Some concerns were raised regarding burn-out of staff because of the commitment and flexibility given by them to the Project

5.3.4 Changes that have influenced the delivery of the service

When staff considered this question they highlighted the following changes or issues:

1. **Homelessness** – The area is seeing a steady increase in the levels of homelessness and this is putting increased demands on the Project.
2. **Fingal County Council Anti-social Policy** – Fingal County Council's policy on anti-social behaviour combined with societal moves for a more punitive rather than a social response may have an impact on the work of the Project. The resulting effect of this is that an increasing number of young people are presenting to BOND with accommodation issues.
3. **Employment** – the employment market has seen a down turn in 2002, some of the job opportunities that did exist when the economy was buoyant are now more difficult to access.

5.4 Views of the Project Manager

The following views were put forward by the Project Manager.

5.4.1 Impressions and experience of the project

The project has delivered on the stated aims and objectives as outlined in the New Direction Report (1998). Key to the engagement of the participant group has been time committed to building relationships the development of trust, a non-judgmental approach, patience and belief that the young person has the capacity to move themselves beyond situations that ultimately puts themselves at risk.

The levels of engagement have been much higher than anticipated but what is more important is the quality of the service delivery. The Project Manager is confident that BOND has struck the balance between quality and quantity. To safe guard the quality in the last year of the pilot phase BOND introduced a waiting list for referrals.

Key to the delivery and quality of service is having a good, positive highly committed staff team. BOND has invested considerably in the staff of the project and they are central to the success of the pilot phase. The Project could not deliver on the aims and objectives without a committed staff team. Training opportunities, supervision and regular team meeting have been essential in building an effective team.

Some of those participants who engaged in BOND have re-offended and were returned to custody. BOND is committed to continue to work with these participants to support them at this time, to encourage reflection and to assist them map a way forward for themselves. This is in the belief that the next occasion that they are due for release from custody their engagement with BOND will continue to create opportunities with the young person to address the challenges they face.

The inequalities that participants face due to educational disadvantage, addiction homelessness, unemployment and social exclusion has been well documented by BOND and are in line with the national experience. The levels of participation show the efforts the participant group is prepared to make to bring about change in their life situation. This is to be supported, encouraged and recognised. It is clear however, that there are a whole range of changes required in the systems that govern us if we are to seriously reduce the number of young people that experience inequality, alienation which culminates in custody. BOND will continue to do it part by providing services on a local level and on a national level by contributing to such reports as the Reintegration of Prisoners NESF Report No. 22 (2002) and advocating for the delivery of the recommendation within such a report.

5.4.2 What is working well?

The day to day running of the centre

- The project services and phases of engagement
- The project education, fitness, relaxation and diversion programmes

- The communication systems among the staff team and project manager
- Levels of feedback from the participants about their experience of the project
- The models of tracking, monitoring and reviewing the project, the programmes, the services and the participant levels of engagement
- Ability to respond quickly to identified needs
- The level and range of policies developed by the project to aid staff in their day-to-day work
- The ability to respond to identified needs such as advocacy, personal support accommodation, and training
- The level of awareness about the project among the community and local agencies
- BOND networks with a wide range of agencies and organisations on behalf of the participant group. It links with the community, local agencies, Probation and Welfare Services, prisons and other criminal justice project
- BOND's participation and commitment to the Recite II Programme, the Equal Initiative, the Local Drug Task Force sub-committees on rehabilitation and justice and the Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Youth Implementation Board
- The executive committee and relevant sub committees' commitment to and involvement in the project
- Raising the levels of awareness regarding the needs of the participant group and using the research and experience of BOND to highlight gaps and advocates for change on a local and national level

5.4.3 What might be the challenges for the project?

- Ensuring the future mainstreaming of this service for the participant group in Blanchardstown
- To ensure the future development of the project continues to be in line with the demand and needs on the ground
- To draw down the relevant funding necessary to bring additional staff to the project. Key new staff would be a prison links worker and outreach workers to compliment the service
- To retain good quality staff in such a highly demanding working environment
- To maintain effective staff, participant ratio's and to maintain the balance between quantity and quality in the delivery of service
- To respond at the most practical level to the accommodation issues facing the participant group
- To devise and implement appropriate programmes using an adult education model to allow participants explore issues relating to alcohol, anger, gender, relationships and related issues
- To ensure that BOND continues to have the support of the local community.
- That BOND advocates for the needs of the participant group with all agencies and any initiatives in which it is engaged

5.5 Views of the Executive Committee

5.5.1 Impressions/Experiences of the BOND Project

The Executive Committee expressed its satisfaction with the team of staff working in the Project and with the Manager and the way in which the work of the Project is conducted. All were pleased to be associated with the Project.

In terms of the BOND approach, with its individual focus on participants, the Executive Committee feel that this is the most appropriate way of working with participants, that it provides an individually 'tailor-made' approach and "prepares clients for progression to a more integrated education process". The approach used by BOND accepts participants for whom and what they are.

It was recognised that the role of the Committee is changing, now that the project is up and running. Exploring the form any new role should take will involve reviewing the learning to date, examining where the Committee is currently and looking towards future developments.

5.5.2 What is working well

- The management of the Project and the work of the staff
- The content of the Project, with the emphasis on education and training in practical skills and in personal development and social skills
- For Committee members themselves, being on the committee has benefited their own work, giving them a link to the community
- The manager's involvement in committee meetings ensures that the committee is well involved with what is happening in the Project
- The Management Committee is advised by the Manager on the day to day management of the project, while the overall direction of the Project is guided by the Committee
- The Manager plays a dynamic role in sustaining and developing the project
- The Committee itself is working well and is meeting its aims and objectives. It is clear in terms of its role, taking decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions
- In terms of the representational roles of Committee members, work has been done on clarifying the situation. When attending BOND meetings, members are there as the Project management and not as the agencies where they work. At the same time, account is taken of the interests and needs of the agencies

5.5.3 What might be done differently?

When asked to consider what BOND might do differently the following responses were given. Responses are divided between those related to the Project itself and to the Executive Committee:

Project

- **Capacity** – there is a need to look at the Project working to capacity in terms of participants. It needs to avoid the danger of becoming focused on the numbers of

participants accessing the service but rather maintain its current emphasis on the quality of service. It also needs to sustain its objectivity, adaptability and independence

- **Clarity** - further clarity on what representation means on the board of management might be useful
- **Funding** - concern was expressed regarding the fact that funding is not readily available and that seeking funds utilises energy that could be directed elsewhere in the Project
- **The Approach** - the client-centred individual approach is seen by the Management Team as the most effective for the participants, there is however, recognition that it is very draining on staff and there is a need to set clear boundaries in relation to what staff can safely and effectively work with.

Management Committee

- The Committee could be more strategic in terms of its structure, looking in particular at the use of sub-committees, which would facilitate a more focused use of the skills and talents of management committee members

5.5 Views of Relevant Agencies

Interviews were conducted with representatives from a number of agencies who have contact with the BOND Project. These include the Probation and Welfare Service, St. Patrick's Institution, the Community Drugs Team, Fingal County Council, the Arrupe Centre and Youthreach. Some of these representatives are also members of the Management Committee of BOND, however the views expressed below are in their capacity as working for particular agencies.

5.5.1 Interview with Local Probation and Welfare Service Team

Experience of the BOND Project

From the point of view of the Probation and Welfare Officer (PWO), having the BOND service, means that there is a direct local service to refer young offenders to. Prior to establishment of BOND there was no local support service specifically for young offenders. There had been a concern about clients falling between agencies after leaving prison. BOND is now responding to that concern. Because BOND staff go into the prison and meet the young people from the Blanchardstown area, interventions can start prior to the young person's release from prison. The opportunity to have a structure to a client's day is offered and the hope of a changed lifestyle. This contributes to the possibility of reducing re-offending and consequently benefits the local community.

In practical terms the Probation and Welfare Officer can see clients in BOND (there is no Probation Service office in Blanchardstown). This gives people options and means they do not have to travel into the city centre. This is a concrete and practical response by BOND.

Involvement by the Probation Service - what it means for BOND

The Probation and Welfare Officer spoke of the fact that, in the Probation Service, there is a need for a service such as that provided by BOND. In turn, BOND has gained experience

from the involvement of the Probation Service. The links already developed mean that BOND has access to the prison and Probation Service staff in the prison, who can facilitate making links between prisoners and BOND. Involvement by the Probation Service offers BOND a perspective on the criminal justice system and connections into that system.

Overall from the Probation and Welfare Service point of view it was considered that:

- BOND offers a model of an integrated approach to work with offenders where it is possible to influence the decisions of the prison service in relation to the needs of the offender and thereby develop policies in this area
- At a practical level BOND provides a local facility where people can be seen
- A good working relationship between the Probation and Welfare Officers and the Project gives a greater insight into the day-to-day lives of participants
- The BOND Project facilitates a limited number of participant on Community Service Orders (CSO). BOND's experience and ability to offer a flexible timetable, has placed it in a position to facilitate young offenders who have had previous difficulties meeting their commitments under their CSO because of child care arrangements, drug relapse, homelessness, and mental issues

5.5.2 Interview with a representative from St. Patrick's Institution

Experience of the BOND Project

BOND is viewed as a link between the community and St. Patrick's and between the offenders and St. Patrick's. "BOND's way of working and their structures are all very useful to us in our work. They act on behalf of the offender, they come in and assess the offender and they make recommendations to us regarding the possibilities for release". "BOND fosters good communication, they keep us informed of what is happening around activities and the situation with regard to temporarily released prisoners under their care". This is considered to be very valuable, giving a sense of the professionalism of BOND. "Once we know that BOND is involved with an offender, we do all we can to facilitate the process."

BOND's role is viewed as complimentary to the services offered in St. Patrick's, acting as a link between the community and the prison service, which is a comparatively new development. "In relapse situations, offenders' experience of BOND in the time between getting out and coming back to prison, gives the young person knowledge of there being something out there to go to. This can help the offender on the second time around, to think more about alternatives and wider possibilities. BOND also often acts as a link with families of offenders and can be a useful resource in this regard in the community".

"Very often an offender, on completion of their sentence, will take their bag of clothes and the money they have earned, step outside the gate and they are on their own. We see the value of BOND, in this situation, as a support for the person to reconnect to society".

5.5.3 Interview with a representative from the Community Drugs Team (CDT) in the Mountview /Blakestown area

Experience of the BOND Project

“BOND offers support to a particular age group and that support is important in terms of helping young people coming out of prison to delay or avoid re-offending. The social and recreational activities are open and meet the immediate needs of young people”.

The manager of BOND was described as being “influential on a variety of committees in the area, representing the Project well and being an advocate for the client group. This, in turn, influences other projects to think about their work in relation to young offenders”.

Developing links between the two projects – CDT & BOND

A number of areas were identified where cooperation and coordination could be developed between the two projects. These include:

- **Alcohol problems** – BOND could develop services to address the specific needs of clients with alcohol problems
- **Prison Community Link worker** – BOND is well placed to employ a prison community link worker who would liaise with participants from both projects and provide a direct link between the prison service and the community
- **Greater links between CDT/Gardai/BOND** – this suggestion was made based on experience in the UK where an offender has the option to get assessment in relation to drug misuse and the degree of cooperation would influence the final decision of the courts
- **Pilot Drug Court** – While this programme is viewed as positive it is still under pilot covering the North Dublin Inner City area phase and does not cover the Blanchardstown Area. Both projects would advocate for the mainstreaming of this programme
- **Age criteria** – With regard to the limited age group (16 – 21) that can avail of BOND services, the Blakestown/Mountview CDT would advocate the service being offered to a wider age range of participants

5.5.4 Interview with a representative from Fingal County Council

The representative interviewed from Fingal County Council is the Transnational Coordinator of the EU Recite II Project. This project focuses on the integration of marginalised young people, creating employment, and skills training aimed at increasing the employability of young people. BOND is one of Recite II local partners on this project.

Recite II Experience of Working with the BOND Project

“BOND increases the capacity of young people and the Project is alleviating social problems in Blanchardstown. However, its impact is limited because of the fact that it is only one project”.

In terms of the methods used by BOND it was recognised that while the cost of having an individual focus is high, the results show it is more effective. The fact that many BOND participants progress to employment, highlights the effectiveness of the approach taken by the Project.

5.5.5 Comments from a representative from the Arrupe Centre

Experience of the BOND Project

The Arrupe Centre is a Jesuit backed project with centres dealing with drug related issues in a number of areas of Dublin. It was their view that BOND “offers to participants, an opportunity to engage in a lifestyle with alternatives to offending behaviour”.

5.5.6 Interview with Representative from County Dublin VEC Youthreach coordinator

Experience of the BOND Project

BOND participants come to Youthreach to undertake training and other activities. It is intended to develop this partnership, to include cross referrals. Youthreach also work with BOND in inter-agency activities and this helps to develop an integrated approach in the deliver of these services.

The main value of BOND identified by the coordinator is the fact that it offers an outreach service. Youthreach do not have such a service so it is very useful for them to have a project like BOND to refer young people who have difficulty in engaging with services.

In terms of the management of BOND, the view was expressed that the BOND manager has “a great understanding of the area, he knows what is going on and what is developing”.

5.5.7 Interview with Education Coordinator, Blanchardstown Area Partnership

BOND’s role in the community

The following comments were made about BOND’s role:

- The Project is working with young people with little or no other chances and is making up to them, in some small way, for what has happened to them in terms of their past life experiences
- There is pride among the agencies involved in supporting the BOND initiative
- The personalised and individual approach used by BOND offers possibilities for participants to progress with their education
- Blanchardstown Area Partnership views BOND as a very progressive initiative

5.5.8 Interview and comments from Parents of BOND participants

The young person in question had gotten into trouble in relation to tax and insurance on his motorcycle and also in relation to being a passenger in a stolen car. Within this context

BOND has helped through providing a place for this young person to go to, encouraging him, providing training for him and providing the recreational services of the Project. The mother interviewed spoke of BOND as “giving a sense of self worth, and offering a place where he is welcome”. “As a parent he only tells me so much, he confides more in the workers (in BOND). BOND works beyond the office system; it’s reassuring to know that someone is at the end of the phone”.

The mother of this BOND participant indicated that young people like her son need “more things to do”, boredom is a factor, as is abuse of alcohol. In regard to the latter she highlighted the need for a programme on alcohol awareness.

Comments from other parents

“I’m delighted that my son is getting involved in BOND, if he wasn’t he might have gone the other way because he has been with you he’s beginning to think about what he might do next.”

“This is the first time my son has got involved in anything and stuck at it. He doesn’t speak a lot at home and lacks confidence but now he is talking about what he has been doing and that is not normally him, his sisters have said that I can’t believe that he is doing something.”

5.6 Conclusions

Upon analysis of the interviews that were conducted the following are summary conclusions;

5.6.1 The Participants

- Most are young people, who because of their circumstances have difficulties accessing services in their local areas
- As a group, they have considerable and particular needs which demand a high level of individual attention
- Misuse of both alcohol and drugs is a factor in the lives of many of the participants
- Many participants are early school leavers with literacy and other related educational problems
- Many participants have low self-esteem and related behavioural problems
- Many participants come from families with a history of dysfunction

5.6.2 The Staff of the BOND Project

- They are a very professional, highly motivated and committed group of people
- They are flexible, open and have a good and empathetic relationship with the participants. However, this approach to the work puts considerable strain on staff, giving rise to the danger of burn-out
- While staff are well supported by the Manager, there is not enough investment in their development from a point of view of external supervision or skills acquisition

5.6.3 The Project Manager

- Key to engagement is the development of trust, building positive relationships, patience, a non-judgmental approach and a belief in the capacity for change and where re-offending occurs a commitment by BOND to stick in there with the young person
- Striking the balance between a quantitative and qualitative approach in the delivery of service and achieving this in a community development framework through an integrated, multi agency approach
- Key to delivery lies in a positive highly motivated, energetic staff team. Key to achieving this is good supervision, good systems for communications among staff, regular team meetings, safe supported working environment and opportunities for further training
- An awareness and a commitment to advocate for change in the inequalities that exist in the systems that govern us and how this manifests itself in communities that experience inequalities, marginalisation, and alienation which culminates in custody for many of their young people

5.6.4 The Executive Committee of the BOND Project

- The composition of the Executive Committee offers a model of inter-agency cooperation and integration. This, in turn, offers BOND the possibility of developing a coordinated and integrated approach to work with young offenders
- Working in this coordinated and integrated manner, presents the Executive Committee with a complex set of relationships. In order for these relationships to consistently work in the interests of BOND, there is a need for the Executive Committee to regularly review its working process

5.6.5 The Agencies working with the BOND Project

- All the agencies interviewed speak highly of BOND, which they see as a very useful local service to refer people to; a service which networks well, is very accessible and which is a very good advocate for the participant
- They all see BOND as a professional and well-informed service, which is providing a link with a client group that is difficult to access and with whom it is difficult to stay in touch. The agencies also feel that BOND's level of acceptance means the Project can facilitate some of the more difficult offenders
- In terms of the approach used by BOND, all of the agencies feel that this works – the high level of individual attention to participants works better than a group approach
- The Probation and Welfare Service local team sees BOND as offering a structure which offenders can access straight from prison and the Project is also seen as providing a bridge between the prison service and the community
- Its multi-agency management structure facilitates networking and facilitates getting the needs of offenders onto the agendas of other agencies. It also offers the possibility of BOND having a wider perspective, at management level, on relevant social and criminal justice issues and contributes to the development of policy based on the needs of offenders

5.6.6 Parents of a BOND participant

- BOND gives their children a sense of self-worth
- BOND offered a place to go and a place of welcome
- BOND is one of the few places open to young men who have offended
- BOND staff offer support and reassurance to parents
- A child/young person in trouble may find it easier to talk to BOND staff rather than to a parent
- BOND works beyond office hour and beyond the office system by way of outreach
- There is a need for an alcohol awareness programme and for services at the weekend when alcohol plays a significant role in offending behaviour
- BOND provides training and recreation

Section 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This section outlines general impressions and the conclusions of Phagos Training, having carried out the evaluation of the Project. This is followed by a list of recommendations for the future development of the Project.

6.2 Phagos Training's Overall Impressions of BOND

The following are the general and overall impressions of the BOND Project:

- BOND is offering a very professional and focused service
- The Project is well respected by the local community and by the relevant agencies
- The services offered by BOND are relevant to the needs of their target group
- It provides a safe place for participants
- The majority of BOND participants are young men. While recognising that more young men than women offend, it is important to ensure that the project does not develop an overly male orientation which may prove intimidating to women
- The Project serves as a model of an integrated inter-agency approach that could be put to wider use
- The Project is currently running at capacity both in terms of staffing and facilities
- The very intensive nature of the work places particular demands on staff. There is a need to expand the existing staff support to include an external support component.
- BOND is very effective at networking and linking with other relevant agencies and services
- It is a measure of the success of the Project that it is now participants themselves who are informing others of the Project and the services it provides

6.3 Conclusions & Recommendations

The findings of this evaluation process highlight the importance of the BOND Project and the effectiveness of its work with young offenders. The Project offers a concrete link between the community, the offender and the prison system. This link is respected and valued because it facilitates practical responses to the needs of the offender and the needs of the prison and Probation and Welfare Service. The link with the community ensures that the Project is seen as offering viable options and alternatives to offending behaviour.

The advocacy, education, support and outreach services offered by BOND are tailored to meet the specific needs of participants who are young people with considerable and complex social, psychological and related behavioural problems.

1. Mainstreaming the BOND Project

The findings of this evaluation show that the pilot phase of the Project has delivered on its stated aims and objectives and it is offering a very professional and focused service. The evaluation points out that these services are relevant to the needs of the BOND target group and it is a measure of the success of the Project that it is now the participants themselves who are informing others of the services available through the Project. The findings also show that BOND models a way of working with young offenders that is effective and worthy of continuation and replication. However, there is concern that both staff and management need to devote a considerable amount of time and energy to the process of securing the necessary funds to keep the service running. This time and energy could be more usefully directed elsewhere in the Project.

In order for BOND to continue and to further develop its work it needs to be in a position to move from the pilot phase to become a dedicated service with appropriate and adequate resources.

Recommendation 1 →

It is recommended that the process of becoming a dedicated service be facilitated by the mainstreaming of funding through the Probation and Welfare Service from the Department of Equality, Justice & Law Reform

2. BOND's Integrated Approach

The experience of the BOND Project shows that the needs and circumstances of young people who have spent time in prison or in a place of detention are ultimately best addressed at a local community level by placing the young person in the centre of their own care plan. This is best facilitated by way of an inter-agency group, such as that of the BOND Executive Committee, which is made up of statutory and voluntary agencies with direct responsibility for BOND's target group, community representatives, the local business community and participants who have progressed and moved on through BOND.

Recommendation 2 →

It is recommended that BOND continues to work in an integrated and inter-disciplinary manner and that the Project continues to adhere to the aims underpinning its pilot phase

3. Individualised Service

The approach used by BOND in its work with participants is effective because of the one-to-one focus and the recognition that the individual is not yet able to engage in an integrated learning context. However, it is recognised that, while the approach is effective, the cost of this individualised service is high. The full range of BOND's programme enables the participants to engage in activities that involve interactive and social skills. This in turn enables them to develop their capacity for relationships, which, at a later stage, will contribute to their ability for greater integration into society.

Recommendation 3 →

It is recommended that BOND be adequately resourced to not only maintain but to expand the high standard of service and high levels of support it offers participants. Central to this is the Project's capacity to offer one to one individualised support

4. Expanding the Service

Statistics show that the dominant age group among the prison population is between 21 and 30 years. BOND's mandate, on its establishment, was to address the needs of "persistent young offenders from the Blanchardstown area, within the 16-21 age group, who have spent time in prison or place of detention". In its work, the Project is responding to this mandate but it is also attempting to respond to demands for services from a wider age group and from young people who are offending and are at serious risk of receiving a custodial sentence.

Recommendation 4 →

It is recommended that BOND expand its services to cater for a wider age group in line with the average age of the prison population. This expansion would be facilitated by opening the existing services to cater for 16-24 year olds and by developing specific programmes for offenders in the 25-30 age group

5. Additional Services and Programme Development

During this evaluation process the need for a number of additional services was highlighted. These additional services were seen as necessary to address specific issues such as alcohol abuse and homelessness, which is considered to be a major contributory factor in offending behaviour. The services were also seen as necessary in order to meet the needs of young people who are particularly marginalised.

Recommendation 5 →

It is recommended that BOND develop specific programmes to address alcohol abuse and specific learning programmes e.g. personal development, psycho drama, offending behaviour in conjunction with the local Probation and Welfare team and other relevant agencies, and where feasible and appropriate BOND should make such programmes available to the following target groups:

- a) Young women engaged in offending behaviour
- b) Young travellers engaged in offending behaviour
- c) Young people engaged in offending behaviour who are deemed by the Probation and Welfare Service to be at risk of receiving a custodial sentence

6. Networking

A key element in the success of the BOND Project is the ability of the Manager and the team to network with other agencies and organisations working in the Blanchardstown area and to engage with key initiatives such as RAPID and Equal. While the Manager and staff see this networking as an important aspect of their work, it does place considerable demands on already scarce human resources.

Recommendation 6 →

It is recommended that the project would receive additional resources to increase the current part-time administration post to a full-time post which would facilitate the manager network and liaise with the appropriate agencies

7. Transport

While the areas of Corduff and Mulhuddart are, included in the RAPID plan for Blanchardstown, the geographical location of these areas and their distance from the BOND Project premises has impeded the level of engagement by referrals from these communities.

Recommendation 7 →

It is recommended that BOND be appropriately resourced to respond effectively to these communities through the provision of a designated transport facility for the project

8. Resourcing the Work

The dedication and commitment of staff is a major factor in the success of the BOND Project. The importance of the role and expertise of the staff was identified, by all the stakeholders interviewed, as part of this evaluation process. What was also identified was the pressure under which staff work due to lack of adequate facilities and the demanding and intensive nature of the work. While the issue of facilities is being addressed, because of the high number of referrals there is a constant need to examine the staff participant ratio. Consideration also needs to be given to expanding the number of staff employed in the Project. This would ensure the continued delivery of a quality individualised service while allowing BOND to offer its service to a wider participant group and help address concerns in relation to the danger of staff burn-out. Table 6.1 outlines the current breakdown of staff in the Project and lists the recommended staff as part of the mainstreaming process.

Recommendation 8 →

It is recommended that the current staff levels be increased to maximize the delivery of service as part of the mainstreaming process in 2003

Table 6.1 **Developing the Staff Team**

Staffing	Current Situation 2000-2002	Recommendations 2003
Staff Directly Employed by BOND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Project Manager 1 Project Liaison Worker 1 Project Outreach Worker 1 Part-time Administrator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Project Manager 1 Full-time Administrator Project 2 Liaison Workers 2 Project Outreach Workers 1 Programme Development Worker 1 Prison Links Worker 1 Resource/Caretaker 1 Part-time Housekeeper
Staff employed directly by BOND	3.5 staff for 2002	Recommended 9.5 staff for 2003
Staff employed through Job Initiative Scheme	2 Resource Workers	2 Resource Workers
Staff employed through annual allocation of teaching hours from CDVEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Full-time Education Co-ordinator 3 Part-time Tutors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Full-time Education Co-ordinator 3 Part-time Tutors

9. Staff Support

As already indicated the staff are BOND's most important resource. Their commitment and dedication is enabling the development of an effective approach to working with young people with specific needs. This approach, with its emphasis on individualised attention makes considerable demands on staff and highlights the need for support. While the current position, whereby the Manager is the main source of support for staff, is viewed as working well, additional support is also considered necessary.

Recommendation 9 →

It is recommended that consideration be given to the introduction of a system of external support, which would operate alongside the existing internal system. The purpose of the external support would be to help staff explore professional and ethical issues presenting in their work with participants; to support them in work-related difficulties and explore their workplace relationships

10. Expanding the current facilities of BOND

The BOND Project is currently experiencing the difficulties associated with trying to deliver a very person-centred service in an over-crowded space. Work is ongoing to address these difficulties but particular consideration needs to be given to adequately resourcing this work. This will enable the Project to enhance and expand the existing service in addition to offering the following:

- A designated training facility in which to offer modules on offending behaviour, personal development, alcohol awareness and drug prevention
- Designated facility for Probation and Welfare staff, to meet with dual clients
- Additional counselling facilities
- Conference facility
- Additional education facilities
- Extended kitchen and dining facilities
- All purpose activity room
- All purpose gym and fitness centre
- Shower and laundry facilities
- Garage facility

Recommendation 10 →

It is recommended that the application for capital resources for the planned expansion of BOND's Centre in Coolmine Industrial Estate, currently with the PWS, be approved

11. Addressing Homelessness

In discussions, during this evaluation process, on issues and changes, which are impacting on the BOND Project, the problem of homelessness was highlighted. The Blanchardstown area is experiencing a considerable increase in homelessness and this is placing additional demands and strains on BOND participants and on the Project itself. BOND has already developed links with ROOFS (Blanchardstown Homelessness Group), the Homeless Agency and is raising the issues facing young people returning to the community from prison or place of detention. Following consultations with Fingal County Council, BOND has secured a dwelling in the Blanchardstown area, in which it will manage a residential facility for young people between the ages of 18-25 years who cannot live at home or who are not ready for independent living upon release from prison. BOND has secured the support of all the relevant agencies for this initiative. The Project is included in the report of the local development group in Blanchardstown on capital projects for the second allocation of the Young Peoples Facilities and Service Fund who have recommended for approval that the BOND project be allocated €77,500.00 for the capital cost towards the refurbishment of the residential facility resources which are expected to be drawn down by the end of 2002

Recommendation 11 →

It is recommended that BOND be resourced, on a three year Pilot Phase, for the capital and running costs necessary to bring this unit into service. (See Appendix 2)

APPENDIX 1

BOND - Funding Sources 2000-2002

Main Funding:

1. **Probation & Welfare Service**
 - Capital costs
 - Running costs
2. **Young People's Facilities & Services Fund**
 - Salaries
3. **County Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC)**
 - Annual allocation of teaching hours

Other Funding:

4. **Department of Public Enterprise & The CAIT Initiative**
 - Capital grant for I.T. equipment
5. **Fingal County Council**
 - Funding through the Recite II Project (Development Department)
 - Provision of a dwelling (Housing Department)
6. **Department of Health and Children**
 - At Risk Children's Fund

Supplementary charitable funding

7. **Jesuit Irish Province**
8. **Allen Lane Foundation**
9. **Katherine Howard Foundation**
10. **St. Stephen's Green Trust**

APPENDIX 2

BOND Transitional Residential Facility

Aim of BOND Residential Project

BOND proposes to run a residential facility which will offer accommodation initially to 8 homeless young men, aged 18-25, who have returned to the community of Blanchardstown from prison or place of detention. Ordinarily the period of residency is envisaged to be a maximum of one year though subject to extension depending on need and circumstances. During this time residents will be helped to identify future accommodation and through other BOND services will be offered intense support to acquire a range of skills to move out of homelessness. It is foreseen that the facility has the eventually capacity to house up to 10 residents. This will require additional modifications and investment.

Continuum of Care

The concept of continuum of care is widely acknowledged as essential in responding to homelessness and is described in detail in 'Shaping the Future'. The principle is that "every person who becomes homeless has access to a suite of services which address all their needs in an integrated way and will be focused on ensuring that they are successfully settled out of homelessness."

In relation to young people returning to Blanchardstown from prison or place of detention who are also homeless, BOND believes that it is in the best position to deliver a seamless and integrated service to these young people. Potential residents will also have the support of the full range of supports and services that BOND offers through its existing Day Service.

With the establishment of the proposed facility, BOND will be able to respond quickly and locally to participants who are homeless and will be able to offer accommodation in the context of a broad range of other services.

This facility opened in September 2003.

APPENDIX 3

Interviewees

The following groups and individuals were interviewed as part of the evaluation process:

1. **Members of the BOND Executive Committee**
2. **Chairperson of BOND Executive Committee**
3. **The Project Manager**
4. **BOND staff**
5. **Past and present Participants in the Project**
6. **Parents of a participant**
7. **A selected group of prisoners in St. Patrick's Institution**
8. **Probation & Welfare Local Team**
9. **An Assistant Chief Officer, St. Patrick's Institution**
10. **The CDVEC Adult Education Coordinator**
11. **Blanchardstown Area Partnership's Education Coordinator**
12. **Community Drugs Team (CDT)**
13. **The Arrupe Centre for Homeless Young People**
14. **Blanchardstown Youthreach Coordinator**
15. **Fingal County Council Recite II Project**

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