Peer-Ed 2008 Evaluation

Executive Summary

1. Rationale

As the Educational Action Research (EAR) project progressed a youth centred need to support young males of 14-16 year olds was identified. The EAR project caters for 5th and 6th class national school pupils and 1st year second level students. As participants matured they actually became too old to participate in EAR programmes. It was the young males that returned to the project requesting a service for themselves during the summer months. This led to the development of a proposal to operate a peer education programme during the summer of 2008.

As young people less than 16 years of age, legislation dedicates that they are too young to participate in part-time employment. Through the progression of the peer education programme it was intended that existing skills of participants would be enhanced and new skills learned. These could then be applied in the workplace and in everyday living in the future.

To maximise the learning from this process it was decided to progress the pilot peer education programme as a piece of action research. The overall aim of the project:

2. Aim

- To pilot a peer education programme with 14-16 year old males.

3. Study Objectives

- To facilitate young people to become peer educators

- The participants would deliver a peer education programme

- To produce an action research report

4. Main Findings

The action research process provided a framework to facilitate the organic development of the project. There were seven distinct phases to the research process; 1) Participant Recruitment; 2) Induction; 3) Identification of Topic; 4) Development of the Course Content; 5) Delivery Preparation; 6) Delivery and the 7) The Exit Strategy. These seven headings are used to present the main findings of the study from the young people's, parent/guardians and workers perspectives

providing a holistic view of the programme. An overall conclusion and set of recommendations are offered to finalise the executive summary.

4.1 Participant Recruitment

<u>Young Persons Experience:</u> The research process revealed a positive response from the young people with regards to feeling fully informed by workers to the various aspects of the programme prior to agreeing to participate in the programme.

<u>The Parents/Guardians experience:</u> Parents unanimously provided a positive picture of their experience of the initial phone call and also the house visit as elements of the recruitment process.

<u>Workers experience:</u> Workers found the short timescale given for the recruitment process difficult as funding was not secured until late June. This meant that the majority of school personnel were on summer holidays. Therefore workers could not link with home school community liaisons or teachers as "gatekeepers" to recruit young people to the programme. Workers did link with a school completion officer as a gatekeeper to assist with the recruitment of participants.

The workers were successful in recruiting adequate numbers to operate the programme. Ten young people were recruited with eight of these young people engaging with the programme. Of the two that did not attend, one had prior commitments that clashed with the programme. The second young person did not engage in the programme, but no specific reason for non-participation was provided by the young person.

4.2 Induction

<u>Young Persons Experience:</u> It was observed that all the young people who attended the induction day chose to continue with the programme.

<u>Parent/Guardians experience:</u> Information gathered through the questionnaires in relation to their experience of the induction day was very positive.

<u>Workers experience:</u> Workers felt that the aims of the induction day were achieved as everything that was planned to be conducted was completed.

4.3 Identification of Topic

Young peoples experience: Ample evidence from questionnaires highlighted a general consensus that equality was evident when it came to deciding the learning element. All the young people expressed that they felt that their ideas were considered and discussed by the group. It was unanimous that the young people agreed that the topic chosen was a group decision. When asked how they felt individually about the army being the chosen topic the young people appear to be very happy. Finally all young people expressed that they felt workers facilitated their various ideas in relation to the learning element.

Workers experience: Workers felt that the experience of the identification of topic was a positive one. It was observed that every young person contributed to the process. Workers also felt that the young people worked well together and listened to each other when identifying the topic.

4.4 Development of the Course Content

Young peoples experience: Information obtained regarding the development of the course content proved mainly positive. Firstly information gathered highlighted that all young people felt that they were given the opportunity to express their ideas/views etc. Further evidence was supplied that all young people felt that as young people they were fully involved in planning and decision making in the group. Finally when asked if they felt there was a time they were not listened to, all but one young person felt that there were no times they were not listened to.

Parent/Guardians experience: Information gathered from the parents/guardians shows a positive response regarding the communication methods utilised by workers throughout the programme. All except one parent (who did not explain their answer) felt that they were given adequate time and information regarding all aspects of the programme.

Workers Experience: Workers felt that they adjusted well to the collaborative working methods required of a peer education approach. Workers endeavoured that that they acted as facilitators and all decisions and plans were agreed upon collaboratively with the young people.

4.5 Delivery Preparation

<u>Young Persons Experience:</u> Through the data that was collected it was clear that the young people were very positive with regards to the delivery preparation.

<u>Workers Experience:</u> It is clear to see that the young people did work hard and prepare well during the preparation of the delivery, however workers felt that having more time to spend preparing would have been beneficial to the young people and the leaders.

4.6 Delivery

<u>Young Persons Experience:</u> The data generated with regards to the delivery of the presentation was also very positive as the majority of young people gave encouraging feedback.

<u>Workers Experience:</u> Workers observed that the young people who were giving the presentation appeared to be gaining more benefits by presenting the project than the young people who were watching it.

4.7 Exit Strategy

<u>Young Persons Experience:</u> From the data that was collected the majority of the young people commented that they had a positive experience on the peer education programme.

<u>Parents Experience:</u> In the data that was collected the parents of the young people overall gave positive feedback with regards to the peer education programme. Parents were provided with an opportunity to make recommendations or changes that they felt could be made to the peer education programme.

<u>Workers Experience:</u> It is clear that the programme achieved all the stated aims and objectives. Workers felt that the programme ran well and that the young people gained many benefits by participating.

5. Conclusion

It is clear that the combination of different targeting methods were very effective at identifying young people who may benefit from participating in the programme. The self selection of young people by requesting the service, by word of mouth (snowballing) and a gatekeeper (key worker within an organisation) meant that young people were active in the shaping of the recruitment process, but without the initiative losing sight of the desired target group for the project.

The revealed data provides evidence that the workers achieved to communicate the purpose, aims and objectives of the project in a comprehensive manner. One young person stated that he did not know about one aspect of the project. This provided workers with valuable information to enhance the recruitment and induction process for any future programme by ensuring a check-list is ticked off by the facilitators as topics are discussed.

The majority of the group felt that the discussion and voting to arrive at decisions regarding the topic for the peer education programme was fair and effective. It was only when the mid-term review was conducted that the individual questionnaires revealed that one member of the group was not totally satisfied with the group decision making process. The important finding here is that multi-methods need to be utilised when working with young people. By doing so creates a multitude of forums where a young person can find at least one space they feel comfortable enough to express themselves. For workers facilitating peer education programmes it is important not to become complacent about using multi-methods otherwise equality will not prevail.

Workers were aware of the principles underpinning peer education and action research from the outset. These principles clearly define the role of the workers as facilitators and contributors to the processes that occur. The experience of the young people with regards to the decision making, delivery preparation, and the delivery of the programme, the presentations, the exit strategy, equality and respect were unanimously positive. Based on this information it is feasible to suggest that the practice principles were adhered to by workers and the stated research aims and objectives have been achieved.

6 Recommendations

- One young person related they felt they were not fully informed about one aspect of the programme at the recruitment phase. To respond to this finding, it is recommended that in the future, workers during house visits would have a list of all the relevant information and to check off each item as it is being discussed. This would provide an accurate record of what information had been imparted during the recruitment phase.

- It is acknowledged due to securing funding the recruitment process could not commence until after the schools had closed for the summer holidays. In the future the recruitment process should commence prior to the schools closing for the summer break.

- An earlier recruitment period means that school personnel and other agency workers as "gatekeepers" could become proactive participants in the recruitment phase.

- It is envisaged that an extended recruitment timescale would lead to the creation of a waiting list for places. Such a list could be drawn upon if any young person decided not to participate in the programme.

- An extended recruitment timescale would facilitate workers to build up relationships with detached youth. This would potentially increase the chances of engaging young people with limited resources with the programme.

- The feasibility of a detached service being made available in the area should be investigated to work with young people disengaged from all mainstream services.

- It is also recommended that in the future the number of participants should be expanded to accommodate at least 15 young people, of both sexes on the programme.

- Workers to incorporate one-to-ones as part of the programme and individual comment cards during decision making.

- To allocate more preparation and practice time with regards to the learning element.

- To continue using multi-methods to gather information to promote equality.

- To continue to feed information back continuously throughout the programme to the wider organisation. This would enable identified youth needs to be responded to in a speedy and flexible manner, where possible.

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

As the EAR project progressed a youth centred need to support young males of 14-16 year olds was identified. The EAR project caters for 5th and 6th class national school pupils and 1st year second level students. As participants matured they actually became too old to participate in EAR programmes. It was the young males that returned to the project requesting a service for themselves during the summer months. This led to the development of a proposal to operate a peer education programme during the summer of 2008.

As young people less than 16 years of age, legislation dedicates that they are too young to participate in part-time employment. Through the progression of the peer education programme it was intended that existing skills of participants would be enhanced and new skills learned. These could then be applied in the workplace and in everyday living in the future.

To maximise the learning from this process it was decided to progress the pilot peer education programme as a piece of action research. The overall aim of the project:

1.2 Aim

- To pilot a peer education programme with 14-16 year old males.

1.3 Study Objectives

- To facilitate young people to become peer educators

- The participants would deliver a peer education programme

- To produce an action research report

The remainder of the report is divided into the following chapters. Chapter two is the Project Background. This chapter explains what peer education is and will be discussing both the advantages and disadvantages of peer education. This discussion provides the reader with the rationale for utilising peer education. Finally the chapter will explore the local context. This is aimed at providing a picture of the situation at present in Athlone regarding educational attainment, unemployment levels, social composition and deprivation; this will help establish the needs for services to be available.

Chapter three is the Research Design and Methodology section. This chapter focuses upon the action research process explaining both qualitative and quantitative data generation methods. The ethical framework and delimitations of the study will be discussed in this chapter also.

Chapter four is the Planning Process. This chapter outlines the plan that was put in place prior to the programme. The plan commenced with participant recruitment, then induction, identification of topic, progress development of course content, delivery preparation, delivery and the exit strategy.

Chapter five is the Practice. This chapter will explain the actual practice as experienced from the perspectives of the young people, parent/guardians and the workers under the same headings provided in chapter four.

Chapter six is the Findings and Analysis section. This will produce the findings and analysis of the information gathered from the action research process. The key points are drawn together to make a conclusion as to whether the aims and objectives set out at the beginning of the research were achieved.

Chapter seven is the Recommendations section. This will provide the recommendations based upon the research to finalise this research report.

Chapter Two - Project Background

2.1 Introduction

This section of the research report will firstly explain what peer education is. It will then attempt to answer the question of why peer education? This will include looking at previous studies, and also identifying both the advantages and the disadvantages of peer education. Finally it will explore some background information on the Athlone area which will highlight how peer education could prove a beneficial project to be available to young people in the area.

2.2 What is Peer Education?

Peer education when working with young people is usually associated with health promotion focusing upon specific issues such as sexual health, substance misuse and mental well-being. Peer Education can be utilised with all age groups, not just young people, regarding different topics or issues. The following definitions provide clarity:

'A peer is a person who belongs to the same social group as another person or group. The social group may be based on age, sex, sexual orientation, occupation, socio-economic or health status, and other factors'. (UNPF, 2005:36) From this definition it can be observed that age and status are important determinants in the informal definition of a peer group.

'Education refers to the development of a person's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours as a result of the learning process'. (UNPF, 2005:36)

'Peer Education is a term widely used to describe a range of strategies where people from a similar age group, background, culture and/or social status educate and inform each other about a wide variety of issues .... through a participatory process, peer education creates an environment where young people feel safe and able to share information, skills and values' (IPPF 2004).

Peer Education therefore is based on the belief that young people can have a positive impact on their peers. It differs from most other educational interventions in that the interaction occurs between young people themselves rather than between an adult and a young person. Foroige (2002:4) describe how *'ultimately, Peer Education is an approach that empowers young people to provide education and deliver messages to other young people. It enables young people to reach out and inform other young people on important issues and become active contributors to the educational process, rather than passive recipients'.* Hence key principals of peer education include participation, ethics, promote equality and peers educating peers.

2.3 Why Peer Education?

'The rationale behind peer education is that peers can be a trusted and credible source of information. They share similar experiences and social norms and are therefore better placed to provide relevant, meaningful, explicit and honest information' (IPPF 2004:6). Peer education can take place in any setting where young people feel comfortable. This can include street corners, social clubs, school grounds, churches, bus stations, work places, homes, and farms.

There are many reasons for the appeal of peer education programmes due to the many advantages of such programmes. UNPF and Youth Peer (2005:6-7) lists the following advantages of peer education programmes.

- Peers are traditional providers of information to their peers. Young people already tend to talk with their peers about most subjects, including sensitive issues.

- Peer education programmes are community based. Peer education programmes tend to be quite flexible.

- Peer education programmes can provide strong benefits to peer educators themselves. This could be related to how peer education programmes allow for direct participation of young people in programmes designed to affect them, thereby promoting positive life skills such as leadership and communication creating opportunities for mentoring and future job contacts.

- Peer education programmes can be economical. Although the costs of peer programmes are often underestimated these activities can be implemented economically.

- Peer Education is flexible and complementary. Peer education programmes rarely stand alone. Usually they are just one activity in an organisation's larger initiative involving many organisations, sectors and often public agencies.

While the many advantages and applications of peer education make this approach a valuable one, there are some disadvantages and limitations that should be considered.

According to UNPF and Youth Peer (2005:7) some limitations include:

- That they can be somewhat time consuming to train and supervise young people, however if properly planned and organised this should not pose as a major issue.

- How adults must adjust to sharing decision-making and other responsibilities with young people, a situation that may be new in many cultures and profession. This is true however this can be a learning experience hence for all involved.

- Turnover is relatively high in peer programmes. This is inevitable as young people eventually age out of peer programmes.

- Finally research has shown that peer education programmes have more impact on the educators themselves than the peer contacts. This does not need to be viewed entirely as a disadvantage as the peer educators are still gaining from the experience and the peer programme is still having an effect on them. There is still learning taking place.

In spite of the various limitations identified here, there are ways to reduce them and the advantages appear to out-weigh the limitations.

2.4 Local Context

The peer education programme was conducted in the Athlone Urban area. An overview of the levels of educational attainment, unemployment, deprivation and social class composition will provide an understanding of the local context.

Overall, the Midlands region is the second most disadvantaged region in Ireland. At a local level, Athlone is highlighted in GAMMA's County Westmeath baseline data report (2006:21) as being one of the most disadvantaged areas. Athlone Urban West is one of four which fall into the 'disadvantaged category'. This evidence alone could suggest the need for community services of some kind to be put in place for those currently living in this area.

According to GAMMA (2006:22) the proportion of lone parents (as a proportion of all households with dependent children) in Ireland had exactly doubled over the past fifteen years. Strongly reflecting the urban-rural dichotomy within the county, Athlone West Urban (43.0%), Athlone East Urban (38.4%) and Athlone East Rural (35.4%), all have rates which must be considered very high by national comparison.

Previous peer education programmes have proven effective in this area of sexual health and awareness. UNPF and Youth peer (2005) in their report 'Standards for Peer education Programmes' explain how well designed and well implemented peer education programmes work. In the report they highlight how *'hundreds of evaluations of peer education programs have been carried out, studies which use more vigorous designs have found that peer education programmes led to increased levels of knowledge, reports of condom use, reports of modern contraceptive use at last sex, care-seeking for sexually transmitted infections, intention to delay first sexual intercourse, ability to remain faithful to one partner, perceived self-efficiency in contraceptive use and willingness to buy condoms'*. These findings suggest that a peer education programme based around sexual health could be a beneficial programme to be available in the local area.

There has been a continuous improvement in education levels amongst adults over the past fifteen years in Ireland with *'Athlone No1 (RD) Rural District (31.7%) having*

the highest levels of third level education amongst its adult population' (GAMMA 2006:23). GAMMA (2006:23-24) also highlights that the changes in social composition experienced throughout Ireland over the past 15 years largely parallel those in educational achievement, with a gradual increase in the number of professionals and even a greater decline in the proportion of semi- and unskilled manual workers. However despite these positive findings when it comes to employment in Athlone, one district, Athlone West Urban is a specific area of deprivation. The report establishes that unemployment rates are higher in Athlone UD for both males and females. The report also highlights that the highest unemployment levels in the county are in Mullingar North Urban and Athlone West Urban.

2.5 Conclusion

It has been established by drawing on the GAMMA report and exploring areas such as educational attainment, lone parents, social composition and unemployment that the Midlands are a disadvantaged area. In Athlone the urban areas are experiencing higher levels of low educational attainment and unemployment than the National average. This could suggest the need for services to be available for those living in these areas, for example services aimed at increasing employment rates, reducing the levels of lone parents, promoting health etc.

The development and delivery of services can use different approaches to work with a range of target groups. Peer education is one such approach and has many advantages to offer when working with young people and adults. The participants gain knowledge and expertise in a specific topic and then educate their peers building the capacity of communities to respond to locally based issues.

Chapter Three - Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research process commencing with a brief discussion of research families followed by the following headings of

- Choice of research methodology

- Ethical framework

- Boundaries of the study

- Sampling

- Data Generation Techniques

- Data Management

- Delimitations

3.2 Research Families

'The epistemologies of Positivism and Human Interpretativism underpin different research families. Positivism, a Functionalist perspective, studies casual relationships by using systematic gathering of precisely measurable data to test pre-determined hypothesis, and is generally referred to as quantitative research' (Bilton 1977 cited in McElwee et al 2002:91).

Human Interpretativism argue that richness of information gathered can be lost in quantitative research, they believe qualitative research methods are intended to supply a more richer and deeper understanding of the reality of the people being studied. *'Qualitative research is concerned with collecting and analysing information in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric, as possible'* (Blaxter et al, 1996:49).

There are some researchers who feel that neither *'qualitative methodologies nor the positivist paradigms are sufficient epistemological structures under which to place action research'* (Lather 1986, Morley 1991 cited in O'Brien 1998). Rather a paradigm of Praxis is seen as where the main affinities lie, this is the art of acting upon the conditions one faces in order to change them. According to O'Brien (1998) *'it deals with the disciplines and activities predominant in the ethical and political lives of people. Aristotle contrasted this with Theoria- those sciences and activities that are concerned with knowing for its own sake'. Both are equally needed he thought. That knowledge is derived from practice, and practice informed by knowledge, in an ongoing process, is a cornerstone of action research'.*

3.3 Choice of Research Methodology

Action research involves a cyclical process of planning, action, observation and reflection in a continuous motion. Knowledge is derived from practice, practice is informed by knowledge. As a research process it is flexible and compliments the pilot peer education approach.

Action research as described by O'Brien (1998) has several attributes that separate action research from other types of research. *'Primary is its focus on turning the people involved into researchers, too – people learn best, and more willingly apply what they have learned, when they do it themselves. It also has a social dimension – the research takes place in real – world situations, and aims to solve real problems. Finally, the initiating researcher, unlike in other disciplines, makes no attempt to remain objective, but openly acknowledges their bias to the other participants'*. These fit in nicely with peer education as they reflect the aims of a peer education programme some of which are mentioned by (Foroige 2002) such as the young people becoming researchers themselves, pass on information to each other and learn from each other, it offers a unique and challenging way to develop and implement educational interventions, tackles social problems.

What gives action research its unique flavour is the set of principles that guide the research. These include-

- Reflective Critique

- Dialectical critique

- Collaborative resources

- Risk

- Plural structure

- Theory, practice, transformation

    (Refer to Winter (1989) for further reading).

Action research mostly though, in accordance with its principles, *'it is chosen when circumstances require flexibility, the involvement of the people in the research, or change must take place quickly or holistically'* (O'Brien 1998). Again this highlights the suitability of using action research on the peer education program.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilised in this research. The use of both approaches ensures that the information gathered is likely to be more rich and accurate. By this it means for example that some young people might not feel comfortable speaking their true opinions in a focus group situation, but will also have the opportunity to disclose their feelings confidentially by means of a questionnaire. This is known as a triangulation which creates the opportunity to cross reference

data generated by different methods and identify mis-matches of information and emerging themes.

3.4 Ethical Framework

An ethical framework was designed prior to the recruitment process of the project. This ensured that the young person consented to participate in the programme and that it was their choice. It consisted of ensuring that parental consent was also obtained. It also included confidentiality, storage of information, equality proofing and prevention of harm. A copy of the code of ethics was provided during the house visits and they were explained fully to both the young people and their parent/guardians. (See appendices G)

3.5 Boundaries of the study

3.5.1 Geographical

The peer education programme took place in Athlone town of County Westmeath. The young people who participated in the programme resided in various parts of the town drawn from both the west side and east side areas.

3.5.2 Age

All the participants of the programme were between the ages of 14-16 years.

3.5.3 Profile of Participants

All participants at the time of the research were residing in Athlone with five young people living in the Athlone West and three young people living in Athlone East. Out of the eight young people who participated in the programme, four young people were from different ethnic backgrounds. The participants of the programme were attending different secondary schools in the Athlone area. There were four young people entering into third year in school, two young people entering second year and one young person entering fifth year.

3.6 Sampling

There were three forms of non-probability sampling and purposeful sampling used in this research *'non-probability sampling is a method of sampling that does not involve random selection'* (Social Research Methods, 2008). *'In purposeful sampling, we sample with a purpose in mind'* (Social research methods, 2008). The first form of non- probability sampling to be implemented was that of convenience sampling. Beins (2004:69) describes convenience sampling as a non probability sampling technique that involves whatever participants can conveniently be studied.

Convenience sampling occurred when two young males who would have participated in previous EAR projects, but were now too old to participate in these programmes, returned to the project requesting a service for themselves during the

summer months. Both of these young people were recruited to the programme. There was also one other young person recruited through convenience sampling. This young person applied to participate in the EAR Summer Connected? Programme[1], but was not guaranteed a place due to there being only 21 places on the programme and his application was numbered in the late twenties. Workers had worked with this young person previously and were aware of his age and that he would be eligible for the peer programme. Workers contacted this young person and informed him of the peer programme. He agreed to participate and was recruited to the programme.

The second form of sampling to be used was 'gatekeepers' (Sociological Association of Ireland, 2008). This occurred with five young people. Two young people were identified through the tracking exercise conducted by the EAR project which highlighted the possibility of the young people experiencing difficulties in school. Both of these young people were recruited to the programme. Workers also liaised with a Schools Completion Officer and three young people were referred by this gatekeeper to the workers. Both of these young people were contacted and recruited to the programme.

The third sampling method to be used in the research was that of chain-referral sampling (snowball sampling). It is *'a non-probability sampling technique in which a research participant is selected who then identifies further participants that he or she knows'* (Social Research Methods, 2008). This occurred when workers were conducting house visits with two separate young people. One young person referred workers on to two of his friends. Workers followed up on these two young people and both were recruited for the programme. Another young person recommended his friend to the programme however despite numerous attempts by workers including telephone calls and house visits proved unsuccessful in recruiting this young person to the programme.

3.7 Data Generation Techniques

Quantitative and qualitative methods are both compatible with action research. To maximise the potential learning from the research process it was decided to utilise both quantitative and qualitative data generation techniques.

Quantitative research consists of *'those studies in which the data concerned can be analysed in terms of numbers'* (Blaxter et al., 2006:26). This is research where you can condense your results into numbers. A questionnaire is an example of a method of quantitative data collection.

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[1] Summer Connected works with 6th class and 1st year pupils only. It is acknowledged for a variety of reasons some young people maybe 14 years of age in 1st year. The young person who availed of the peer programme was 14 years of age.

Advantages according to Beins (2004) of quantitative research are they carry out statistical tests, can be reduced to numbers, you can carry this type of research out on more people and that with a questionnaire a vast amount of information can be gained in a short space of time. The disadvantages of quantitative research must also be taken into account and according to Beins (2004) quantitative data is not as rich or detailed as qualitative data. .

'Qualitative research is concerned with collecting and analysing information in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric, as possible' (Blaxter et al., 1996:49). According to Bryman (2004) this is research that can be conducted by use of interviews, focused groups and single case studies that will give you in-depth information on topics researched.

Some advantages of qualitative research that Beins (2004) establishes include that interviews and focused groups are very adaptable, it allows the researcher to establish people's feelings, and also it produces in-depth data. Qualitative research also has its disadvantages, Beins (2004) would argue that qualitative research can be time consuming as transcribing and coding of data is a major task, consistency and objectivity is hard to achieve so this effects reliability and finally that data is based on what people say rather than what they do.

3.7.1 Quantitative Methods

The quantitative methods utilised for this particular pilot programme were baseline questionnaires, attendance sheets, young person's open-ended questionnaires, parental/guardian open-ended questionnaires and worker open-ended questionnaires.

Baseline Questionnaires- The young people who were identified through the tracking carried out by the EAR project completed a baseline questionnaire. Prior to the programme young people were asked to complete a baseline questionnaire regarding school attendance, intention of education progression, desired options if leaving school and social activities (see appendices A).

Attendance Sheets- Young people were asked to sign an attendance sheet at the beginning of each session. This provided evidence of attendance patterns throughout the programme. (See appendices B).

Young person's questionnaire- Near completion of the programme as part of the evaluation process and the exit strategy young people were asked to complete an individual open ended questionnaire (see appendices C). The contents of the questionnaire were based upon qualitative data gathered from worker reflection recordings, focus groups and direct inputs from young people. As a technique it also provided participants with an opportunity to provide information on an individual basis, which might be preferred by some as a way of contributing to the generation of data

<u>Parental/guardian questionnaire</u>- Parents/guardians were asked to complete an open ended questionnaire for the final evaluation of the programme (see appendices D). The contents of this questionnaire were based upon qualitative data gathered from workers reflective recordings, direct inputs from young people and inputs from the workers and overall project. To provide a holistic picture of the pilot project it was essential to capture their opinions, perceptions and feelings regarding the project.

3.7.2 Qualitative Methods

The qualitative methods generate 'rich' data of people's experiences, feelings and perceptions. A variety of methods were used to generate qualitative data throughout the process. These were field notes, reflection sheets, planning sessions, mid-point reviews and focus groups.

<u>Field notes</u>- The appointed workers kept a daily diary of field notes providing a detailed account of what occurred, dates, times and observations. Action items were identified. These recordings were the workers perception of what was happening. As part of the action research process these records are part of reflective critique and observations.

<u>House visit</u> – House visits were conducted prior to programme commencement with both the young people and their parent/guardian present. The house visit was aimed at providing all relevant information regarding the programme and giving an opportunity for any questions or queries to be answered. Consent forms would be collected during the house visit and the code of ethics would be distributed. This reflects the ethical framework of informing people, they are aware of what they are committing to.

<u>Reflection sessions</u>- The workers completed reflection entries after each of the sessions. These recorded mainly group dynamics, issues that emerged, agreed actions and follow ups. Each session was kept on file to enable retrieval of information when required.

<u>Planning sessions</u>- From the onset young people were facilitated to make choices regarding all aspects of the project. Choice of topic for the peer education programme, ethics of the peer programme, contents, budgets, arranging activities, agreed action, who would be responsible for a particular task etc.etc. These were written up and kept on file. This adhered to the dialectical critique of action research and collaborative resources.

<u>Mid-point review</u>- At the mid-point of the programme a review was conducted. The purpose of the review was to ensure that the stated aims and objectives were being worked towards, to identify outstanding tasks and other items that the participants wanted to share and consider potential responses. This interaction was recorded

and recommendations were made. (See appendices E). This was also typed up and filed away.

Focus group – The focus group with the young people provided a forum to consider all aspects of the project, what worked well? What was learned? Would be done differently? The information from this process was recorded on flip charts. Main themes and ideas were incorporated into the young person's questionnaire as a method of triangulation and verifying data that had been generated through the focus group. (See appendices F)

3.8 Data Management

All information gathered was stored and filed away appropriately. All information was kept on file to enable retrieval of information when required.

3.8.1 Quantitative Methods

The quantitative methods utilised for this particular pilot programme were baseline questionnaires, attendance sheets, young person's questionnaires, parental/guardian questionnaires and worker questionnaires. All of the information gathered from above was all stored in the peer education file, a file dedicated to the peer programme only. This file was stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. Results obtained from the questionnaires were also stored on two laptops assigned to the workers of the peer programme in a folder dedicated to the peer education programme. These laptops were stored in a locked press in a locked office.

3.8.2 Qualitative Methods

The qualitative methods used in this research were field notes, reflection sheets, planning sessions, mid-point reviews and focus groups. All data from field notes and planning sessions were filed away in the peer education file which was stored in a locked cabinet in a locked room.

All information gathered through field notes, midpoint reviews and reflections were typed up and saved in the peer education folder in the laptops assigned to workers. A copy was also saved and filed away in the peer education programme file.

3.9 Delimitations

3.9.1 Study Scale

There were 10 young people who were recruited for the programme and eight who actually participated in the programme. Due to the small scale of the programme the transferability of the findings and recommendations to other areas may be limited. However as this was a pilot project it provides a sound basis to build on the information gathered from the research to inform future practice.

3.9.2 Timescale

As a result of funding constraints the recruitment process commenced in June after the schools had closed for the summer holidays. Although the recruitment methods utilised during the programme secured the desired number of young people to progress the programme. It is acknowledged that if recruitment process had commenced prior to the schools closing and a longer timescale it probably would have aided the recruitment process.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter highlights that the framework for the programme was a thoroughly thought out process, providing an ethical framework, research methodology, data generation methods, study delimitations which promoted the action research to evolve in an organic way ensuring that the young people were partners in the process.

Chapter Four- The Planning Process

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the planning to enable the progression of the action research project and is presented under the headings of

- Participant recruitment

- Induction

- Identification of topic

- Progress development of course content

- Delivery preparation

- Delivery

- Exit Strategy

4.2 Participant Recruitment

4.2.1 Identification of Participants

It was decided from the onset of the programme that workers would use both convenient sampling and gatekeeper sampling/referrals to recruit young people for the programme. However it wasn't anticipated that workers would also use chain referral (snowball) sampling. The development of snowballing will be discussed further in the report.

There were three forms of non-probability sampling and purposeful sampling used in this research *'non-probability sampling is a method of sampling that does not involve random selection'* (Social Research Methods, 2008). *'In purposeful sampling, we sample with a purpose in mind '*(Social Research Methods, 2008). The first form of non- probability sampling to be implemented was that of convenience sampling. Beins (2004:69) describes convenience sampling as a non probability sampling technique that involves whatever participants can conveniently be studied.

The second form of sampling decided to be used was that of gatekeeper sampling.

The sampling methods resulted in all young people being recruited by means of non-probability sampling. Five young people were recruited through gatekeeper sampling, two young people were recruited through convenience sampling and three young people were recruited through snowball sampling.

4.2.2 Engagement

Telephone call- The process of contacting the young people would comprise of workers conducting an initial phone call to their parent/guardians which would involve briefly explaining the programme and organising a house visit.

House visit- As action research is a proactive process a decision was made to conduct house visits with all the young people and their parents before the programme was due to start. The rationale behind this decision include that this would allow workers to talk to the parents and young people through the various aspects of the programme. The house visit would also provide both the young person and parent/guardian with an opportunity to ask any questions they might have in relation to the programme. It would also establish and encourage good communication links and that it would be a step towards building a relationship with the young people and their parent/guardian. It also would provide information in a verbal format as well as written format. This is particularly important as it would reduce any barriers such as some parents not having a high standard of English or low literacy levels for example.

During the house visits the workers would obtain the consent of the young person and their parent/guardian to participate in the programme.

Consent Forms- An explanatory letter was prepared by workers which included all the relevant details about the peer programme to insure both the parent/guardian and the young person were fully informed in relation to the various aspects of the programme. This included the facts that the programme was a pilot project, the code of ethics and that the programme was going to be conducted as an action research project to ascertain the feasibility of a peer education project. (See appendices G).

A consent form was also prepared and given to both the young person and their parent/guardian this was completed and signed after they had read the explanatory letter (see appendices H).

4.2.3 Letters of Confirmation

Once the consent was obtained from both young people and their parent/guardians, which in all cases was achieved during the house visit. It was then planned to send a letter of confirmation to each participant, which included an invite for both the young people and their parents/guardians to attend the induction day on the 3rd of July. (See appendices I for letter)

4.3 Induction

An induction day was organised for Thursday the 3rd July and would begin at 11am and finish at 2pm. Parents were requested to attend for an hour and stay for lunch while the young people would stay on after lunch until 2pm.

The focus of the induction day was to

- begin building relationships with the young people and their parents

- allow everyone to communicate with each other

- to ensure everyone understood all aspects of the program

- to answer any questions parents/guardians and young people may have

- to provide information re relevant policies of the program to both young people and their Parent/Guardians by going through all relevant policies

- to draw up the rules with the young people and begin the planning process with the young people.

The second half of the day would be used for the group

- to collaboratively draw up behaviour boundaries
- to commence the process of the learning element

4.4 Identification of Topic

Workers were aware of the principles underpinning peer education and action research from the outset. These principles clearly define the role of the workers as facilitators and contributors to a collaborative approach as equal partners with the young people. The preparation for the programme identified discussion groups as one of a range of techniques to facilitate dialectical critique and encourage participation to progress the programme.

4.5 Development of the Course Content

Prior to the commencement of the project it was envisaged that the young people would be active participants in deciding the course content. As the project is part of an action research it was planned to use dialectical critique and collaborative resources, so workers would hold a focus group with the young people once the topic for the learning element was agreed upon. This would involve facilitating the young people to identify possible sections or areas to be researched in relation to the project. The design included the framework of reviews/reflective sessions as part of the course content.

4.6 Delivery preparation

This involves workers sharing skills as a collaborative resource to prepare for the delivery of the peer education program.

4.7 Delivery

The young people will deliver a presentation on the peer programme to a group of their peers. The young people will chose the method of delivery of the presentation.

4.8 Exit strategy

There will be a celebration event held to bring closure to the programme. This will be the choice of the young people as to what they would like the event to be.

4.9 Conclusion

A framework was constructed to ethically progress the action research process and the peer education programme simultaneously. The initial identification of potential participants and the engagement process was particularly important to target the desired group to participate in the programme. The framework enabled the active participation of the young people in decisions to progress the programme and the research through to fruition.

Chapter Five- Practice

5.1 Introduction

This chapter of the report will discuss opinions and experiences of the young people, parent/guardians and workers under the following headings.

- Participant recruitment

- Induction

- Identification of topic

- Development of course content

- Delivery preparation

- Delivery

- Exit Strategy

- Conclusion

5.2 Participant Recruitment

5.2.1 The Young People's Experience

The research process sought information regarding the understanding of young people regarding the progression and development of the peer education programme. The data generated via open-ended questionnaires showed a positive response from the young people regarding how they were informed by workers about various aspects of the programme. Statements included:

- *'Yes they told us when they came to the house',*

- *'yes we were informed by the house visit'*

With regard to the expectations of the programme set at the initial meeting, all the young people made positive statements. Five young people stated that *'yes'* the program had met their expectations

- *'yes I expected to learn new things'.*

Two young people revealed that the programme has surpassed their expectations in a positive way stating

- *'No, it was a surprise I thought it was going to be boring but it's not'*

- *'thought it would be useless cause it's all boys but it's actually fun'.*

The majority of young people stating that there were no aspects of the programme that they weren't expecting

- *'nope I was never caught by surprise'.*

In cases where young people highlighted things they weren't expecting, these were knowing someone in the programme that they already knew and being surprised as they had previously worked on another programme with one of the workers. However one young person outlined something unexpected

- *'yes, we were told we have to teach younger kids about what we learned'.*

5.2.2 The Parents/Guardians Experience

An open-ended questionnaire was distributed to parents as part of the final evaluation process. The first section was designed to explore their experience of the recruitment process. Parents unanimously provided a positive picture of their experience describing the initial phone call

- *'Its a warm welcome call which I really appreciate'*

Also a positive response was given by parents/guardians in relation to their experience of the house visit such as

- *'Friendly and informed'*

- *'Very good explained well'*

However one parent/guardian stated *'yes'* when asked if anything could be done to improve communication prior to the commencement of the programme. However they did not leave a suggestion or recommendations as to what could be done.

5.2.3 Workers Experience

Workers found the short timescale given for the recruitment process difficult as funding was not secured until late June. This meant that the schools and home school community liaison officers were on summer break and the workers could not link in with them to recruit young people to the programme. Workers liaised with the School Completion Officer as a "gatekeeper" to recruit some young people. Due to the short timescale workers did not recruit a back up list of young people to join the programme if a young person was to leave the programme.

Workers found that the plan for the recruitment of making an initial phone call and conducting a house visit worked very well. All house visits were very welcoming and workers felt relaxed. Workers felt that that all relevant information was disclosed during these visits. In addition it also acted as the first step in relationship building between the workers and both the young people and parents.

5.3 Induction

5.3.1 Parent/Guardians Experience

Information gathered through the open-ended questionnaires in relation to the parent/guardians experience of the induction day were very positive with comments including

- *'Very interesting and did all that they said they would do'*

- *'I felt relaxed and comfortable'*

- *'Felt comfortable and informed'*

5.3.2 Workers Experience

Workers felt that the aims of the induction day were achieved as everything that was planned to be conducted was completed. However workers felt that engagement was minimal between the young people during lunch and between the parents. However after lunch the young people appeared much more relaxed and engaged well together. Overall workers felt that it was an important aspect of the process.

5.4 Identification of Topic

5.4.1 Young People's Experience

The midway review dedicated a section to the learning element. It was designed to assess whether or not young people felt that there was equality in the group when it came to the learning element of the programme. This ascertained if the young people felt their ideas in deciding the choice of topic where listened to and acted upon, if they were happy with the decision and if workers facilitated the various ideas provided by the young people.

Ample evidence from this section highlighted a general consensus that equality was evident when it came to deciding the learning element. All the young people expressed that they felt that their ideas were considered and discussed by the group.

- *'We did get a chance'*

Every young person also stated that they felt they were given the opportunity to agree or disagree when choosing the topic.

- '*Yes we got to agree what we learn'.*

It was unanimous that the young people agreed that the topic chosen was a group decision. When asked how they felt individually about the army being the chosen topic the young people appear to be very happy with it with reasons including

- 'its good because all my family need to know more about the army'

- 'its good cause I want to know more about the army to see if I like it

Finally all young people expressed that they felt workers facilitated their various ideas in relation to the learning element. Despite these positive responses one young person in section three of the questionnaire suggested the possibility that one young person might have felt pressured by the group into agreeing with the decided topic as he stated that he least enjoyed

- 'The army...... but it's ok because everyone else likes it'

5.4.2 Workers Experience

Workers felt that the experience of the identification of topic was a positive one. It was observed that every young person contributed to the process. Workers endeavoured to facilitate equality and participation of the group throughout. It was observed by workers however that some young people needed more encouragement than others to voice their opinions in the focus groups and group discussions. Despite this however workers endeavoured to facilitate participation by asking the young people individually to contribute to the process. This approach always resulted in receiving a response from the young people. Workers also felt that the young people worked well together and listened to each other when identifying the topic.

5.5 Development of the Course Content

5.5.1 Young People's Experience

In the mid-way review a section of the questionnaire was dedicated to the equality and collaboration in the group. Questions were designed to generate the opinions of the young people in relation to; did opportunities exist to express their ideas, opinions, and beliefs; if they were listened to; if they felt they were involved in decision making; and to establish if there was ever a time they felt they were not listened too.

The information gathered highlighted that all young people felt opportunities to express their ideas/views did exist. Some examples given included

- *'yes we asked to go swimming and we were allowed', 'yes ...because we do what we all vote on'.*

The answers provided also sustain that all young people feel that workers listen to and follow up on ideas/requests

- *'yes I made up a place we could go on an outing'*

- *'yes I think they are very good listeners and they also are very good at following up on our ideas...'.*

Further evidence was supplied that highlighted that all young people feel that young people are fully involved in planning and decision making in the group.

- *'Yes because we vote'*

- *'yeah we do and that's what I like about it'.*

Finally when asked if they felt there was a time they were not listened to, results showed that all but one young person felt that there were no times they were not listened to. One young person related that the one time he felt he was not listened to related to a request to go the gym.

As explained in chapter four planning, the completion of reflections and a mid-way review were included in the planning framework. To ascertain if these sessions were effective in facilitating young people to express their opinions and ideas a section was incorporated into the final evaluation about the mid-way review. The responses are presented below:

- *'yes because we can express our feelings'*

- *'yes because we can get to ask questions of things we are not sure about'*

- *'Yeah I came up with ideas and the workers followed up on them'*

The evaluation also included a section dedicated to equality and collaboration in the group. It was designed to evaluate whether the young people felt that since the mid-way review that opportunities occurred to express their ideas/requests.

Results from this section contained positive responses from the young people regarding all of the above.

- *'Yes we got opportunities to express our ideas'*

- *'I was listened to because I asked to go to the gym and they did this'*

Finally with regards to the young people feeling involved in the decision making for the program each young person answered positively. One young person stated

- *'Everybody is involved because we all have a vote then majority wins. This was very fair'*

5.5.2 Parent/Guardians Experience

As the programme progressed the workers kept parents/guardians informed of any changes or updates to the programme through telephone calls and letters. Information gathered from the questionnaires showed positive responses from the majority of parents/guardians regarding the communication methods utilised by

workers. All except one parent (who did not explain their answer) felt that they were given adequate time and information regarding all aspects of the program with comments such as

- *'Yes I received all information by post which made everything clear'*

- *'yes b/cos I do receive a letter few days b/4 any changes or day trips'*

When evaluating their overall experience with communication with workers throughout the program the responses were positive including

- *'The girls kept me well informed of what was happening either by letter or mobile'*

- *'Perfect'*

5.5.3 Workers Experience

Workers felt that they adjusted well to the collaborative working methods required of the peer education approach. Workers endeavoured that that they acted as facilitators and all decisions and plans were agreed upon collaboratively with the young people.

However workers found it difficult at times to include the young people in all aspects of organising day trips or activities due to the program only running on Thursdays and Fridays. To elaborate further, for example if the group decided on a Friday that they wished to go on a day trip the following Thursday there would be limited time available on the Friday to organise all details of the trip. This meant that the workers would have to organise aspects of the activity during the week. If the programme operated longer hours or more days a week this would provide ample time for the young people to organise all aspects of the trip themselves.

5.6 Delivery Preparation

5.6.1 Young People's Experience

Through the data that was collected it was clear that the young people were very positive with regards to the delivery preparation.

Comments from the young people included:

- *'It was fair because we didn't do much everybody had a little to do.'*

- *'Yea cause each of us picked an option our self and wasn't forced to do it'*

With regards to all their research and work being put together into a book the young people left comments such as:

- *'It was good cause we saw and read what we worked on'*

- *'I thought it was good because it shows everything that we did'*

With regards to the time frame to prepare for the delivery of the presentation the young people commented that:

- *'We were given plenty of time to learn the presentation'*

- *'It was clear because the instructors helped us to go through it multiple of times'*

5.6.2 Workers Experience

It is clear to see that the young people did work hard and prepare well during the preparation of the delivery. The workers agree that having more time to spend preparing would have been beneficial to the young people and the workers.

5.7 Delivery

5.7.1 Young People's Experience

The data generated with regards to the delivery of the presentation was also very positive as the majority of young people gave positive feedback writing comments such as:

- *'It feels good to be able to teach younger kids'*

- *'It was quite funny because the first day was a disaster and it went badly because of laughing. The second day was good and it went all well, we all know our passes and it went smooth. It was lots of fun.'*

- *'First day was funny but it didn't go as we planned cause we made disaster of it'*

- *'It was good. I was able to teach people but some of the people that I was teaching didn't give a toss. I think'*

5.7.2 Workers Experience

It is apparent that during the presentation of the programme to other young people that there should be workers with both the peer education group and the group that are attending the session. This would ensure the young people attending the session are attentive and illustrating respect for the peer educators. It is the opinion of the workers that the peer educators appeared to gain more benefits by giving the presentation compared to the young people who were the audience.

5.8 Exit Strategy

5.8.1 Young People's Experience

From the data that was collected the majority of the young people commented that they had a positive experience on the peer education programme writing comments such as:

- *'I really enjoyed my time in the peer education program it was a ball good luck in the future'*

- *'Thought it was gonna be boring cause it was all boy but I was wrong it turned out to be fun and the workers were very nice'*

In the data collected with regards to any changes that could be made in the future of the programme the young people had mixed answers including:

- *'Yea should be mix and should organise one for old people that are over 16'*

- *'The workers should be more strict on the messers and there should be a man and a woman instead of just women because he could be more strict on the boy messers'*

- *'To change the age 16 to 17 because I'm sure lots of people have wanted to do the programme but stopped by their age. It would be better if was mixed group of boys and girls'.*

5.8.2 Parents Experience

In the data that was collected the parents of the young people overall gave positive feedback with regards to the peer education programme. Comments on how they felt their young person's experience of the program were:

- *'I think he gained a little bit of confidence because he had to mix with his peers'*

- *'Good for his social skills'*

- *'Em my opinion is that the peer education will help them plan ahead in the future'*

- *'I think it has been a good experience and a worthwhile one for _____'*

With regards to any recommendations or changes that the parents felt could be made to the peer education programme the parents wrote mixed reviews:

- 'Maybe chatting to the person individually regarding their interest, some teenagers find it difficult to speak out in a group'

- 'I think they should consider the age, 16-17 years of age next year and both sex. I mean boys and girls together'

- 'Should be means of transport for young people on site[2] to the program'.

5.8.3 Workers Experience

It is clear that the programme achieved all the stated aims and objectives. Workers felt that the programme ran well and that the young people got all that they could out of it. Workers feel very encouraged that the parents feel that their child has had a worthwhile experience throughout the programme, as workers we can discuss and consider the options of increasing the age limit in the future and having a mixed group, as this could be beneficial to a peer education group.

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[2] The site – This is an accommodation centre for asylum seekers and refugees

5.9 Conclusion

It is clear from the evidence provided in the previous sections that the planning framework translated into practice in a positive manner. The research aims and objectives have been achieved. The perspectives of young people, parent/guardians and the workers when compared found opinions that matched each other in the majority of areas, including equality, communication, decision-making and the exit strategy. As an action research project the peer programme was examined in-depth and the reflective critique identified points for potential improvement which will be considered in the next chapter.

Chapter Six – Analysis (Observation and Reflection)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the practice evidence, observation and reflections of the young people, parents/guardians and workers. As the project progressed it is clear that needs, issues and concerns emerged, which the peer educators in collaboration with the workers explored and considered possible responses to arrive at a group decision. These decisions were implemented and it was these choices that led to the fruition of the project.

The final evaluation enabled all involved the opportunity to reflect upon the project in its entirety. This analysis draws together the key findings of the report, the knowledge produced and how this knowledge can then be applied to inform practice (O'Brien: 1998). The remainder of this chapter is presented in the following sections:

- Programme Recruitment

- Induction

- Identification of topic

- Development of the course content

- Delivery preparation

- Delivery

- Exit Strategy

- Other

6.2 Participant Recruitment

It is clear that the combination of different targeting methods were very effective at identifying young people who may benefit from participating in the programme. The workers initiating the project through design facilitated the organic development of the programme recruitment promoting equality and participation from the outset. The self selection of young people by requesting the service, by word of mouth (snowballing) and a gatekeeper (key worker within an organisation) meant that young people were active in the shaping of the recruitment process, but without the initiative losing sight of the desired target group for the project.

Ten young people were identified as potential participants within a short time span of approximately two weeks. Eight of these young people were successfully engaged in the programme. The two that did not engage, the first had commitments elsewhere and was unable to attend. The second, although parental and the young person consent was obtained the individual did not attend the programme.

Peer education is usually one strand of initiative offered by an organisation (UNPF and Youth Peer 2005) and as such it is acknowledged that not all young people will engage with this approach. The young person may have chosen not to attend for a variety of reasons. But to promote inclusion further re-engagement strategies of telephone calls, messages and house calls were initiated without success. This could suggest a need for a different type of service such as detached youth work.

6.3 Induction

The experience of young people and parent/guardians of the induction was positive. The ethical framework, the principles of peer education and action research states that it is important that all involved understand the purpose of the project. The revealed data provides evidence that the workers achieved to communicate the purpose, aims and objectives of the project in a comprehensive manner.

One young person stated that he did not know about one aspect of the project. This provided workers with valuable information to enhance the recruitment and induction process for any future programme. It is this reflective and dialectic critique process which enables action research to be flexible and inform practice on an ongoing basis (O'Brien: 1998). By workers listening to and acting upon a young person's information actively demonstrates that an equal value is placed upon a young person's and adult opinions and ideas.

6.4 Identification of Topic

The majority of the group felt that the discussion and voting to arrive at decision regarding the topic for the peer education programme was fair and effective. It was only when the mid-term review was conducted that the individual questionnaires revealed that one member of the group was not totally satisfied with the group decision making process. By providing the opportunity to supply information through a written form created a space for the individual to express their personal feelings in a manner that they were comfortable with. This information highlights that even when things appear to be equal, unforeseen factors can impact upon the way a person participates in a group decision-making process. The important finding here is that multi-methods need to be utilised when working with young people in order to provide a multitude of spaces for the young person to express themselves and not to become complacent otherwise equality will not prevail.

6.5 Delivery Preparation.

Workers were aware of the principles underpinning peer education and action research from the outset. These principles clearly define the role of the workers as facilitators and contributors to a collaborative approach as equal partners with the young people. The experience of the young people with regards to the delivery preparation of the programme was unanimously positive. The young people felt that

the work load was divided up 'equally' and that everyone got to work on a topic of their choice thus promoting participation.

With regards to the timescale provided for the preparation, the responses from the young people were again very positive. They felt that they were given 'plenty of time' and were facilitated well by workers. Foroige (2002) highlights how adequate preparation time must be allocated to the young people and although the young people gave positive responses workers observed that the young people worked hard and prepared well for the delivery. But it was felt by the workers that more time dedicated to this area would be beneficial to the young people as some young people appeared nervous on the day.

6.6 Delivery

The responses given by the young people in relation to the delivery highlighted that they enjoyed both presentations, but felt the first delivery didn't go very well, but the second presentation went really well. This could be linked back to providing more time to practice and prepare as recommended by Foroige (2002).

One disadvantage of Peer Education as highlighted by UNPB and Youth Peer (2005:7) is that *'research has shown that peer education programmes have more impact on the peer educators themselves than their peer contacts'*. This was observed by both the young people and by workers during the presentation. The young people stated that they enjoyed teaching their peers but that they felt that some of them were not interested in learning. Workers observed that some of the young people receiving the presentation did appear disinterested at times however others gave their full attention and appeared to enjoy the presentation.

6.7 Exit Strategy

Both the young people and their parent/guardians were included in the exit strategy. It was envisaged that the young people would be active participants in deciding the course content using dialectical and collaborative resources this would include involvement in deciding the exit strategy (O'Brien 1998). The young people were indecisive between two options; 1) a trip to the cinema or 2) a meal. The young people requested the workers to decide and surprise them on the Wednesday, the closing session of the programme. Workers surprised the group by providing both a meal and the cinema. The young people were very happy about this and thanked workers. This shows the collaboration of the group working together and also of workers promoting equality was up held as everyone got the option of their choice.

There was also a celebration evening held where the young people were given invitations for them to invite people of their choice. Some young people invited their parents, who attended the evening and thanked workers for the peer education programme.

6.8 Other

The analysis considers all aspects of the project and it is clear that the stated research aims and objectives have been achieved. The peer education programme has been piloted successfully and is identified as feasible method of working with young people in the Athlone area. The young people became educators of their peers by researching their own choice of topic and imparting their learning to others. The conscious decision to progress the project as piece of action research enable the experiences of those involved to be recorded, observed, reflected upon and collated into a report to inform future practice.

6.8.1 Young women

The project focused upon young males as the initial idea to develop a service with 14 -16 year olds came from the young males themselves. As the project developed it became apparent that young females of the same age group could potentially benefit from a similar programme either as a mixed group or a female group.

As an approach peer education is one element of practice within an organisation (UNPF, 2005). The identified need for an intervention with young females of 14-16 year olds supported the findings of another EAR project initiative. A weekly programme facilitating a mixed group of young people aged approximately 11 – 13 years of age identified the need to work specifically with young females to respond to issues regarding risky behaviour. Peer education is an approach that has proven successful regarding substance mis-use, sexual health and mental well-being (UNPF, 2005).

6.9 Conclusion

It is clear from the findings and analysis that the aims and objectives set out at the beginning of the programme have been met. It also highlights how action research was a complementary method to use with the peer education programme. The research process has provided valuable information and insights into the experience of young people and their parents/guardians about the programme which can be utilised to inform practice in the future.

Chapter Seven-Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The action research process generated significant amounts of data providing an in-depth insight in the experiences of the young people who became researchers and peer educators, their parents/guardians and workers. The generated data presented in the previous chapters provides a sound basis for the recommendations made under the following headings:

- Participant Recruitment

- Induction

- Identification of topic

- Development of Course Content

- Delivery preparation

- Delivery

- Exit Strategy

- Evaluation methods

- Additional Information

7.2 Participant Recruitment

- There is ample evidence to show that the combination of the telephone calls, house visits to inform the young people and parents/guardians of the various aspects of the programme and letters was an effective method of recruitment. This multi-method communication approach should be utilised for future programmes.

- As the research shows the combination of telephone calls, house visits to inform the young people and parents/guardians of the various aspects of the programme and letters was an effective method of recruitment. This multi-method communication approach should be utilised for future programmes.

- As one young person related they felt they were not fully informed about one aspect of the programme at the recruitment phase. In the future workers during

house visits would have a list of all the relevant information and to check off each item as it is being discussed. This would provide an accurate record of what information had been imparted during the recruitment phase.

- It is acknowledged due to securing funding the recruitment process could not commence until after the schools had closed for the summer holidays. In the future the recruitment process should commence prior to the schools closing for the summer break.

- An earlier recruitment period means that school personnel and other agency workers as "gatekeepers" could become proactive participants in the recruitment phase.

- It is envisaged that an extended recruitment timescale would lead to the creation of a waiting list for places. Such a list could be drawn upon if any young person decided not to participate in the programme

- An extended recruitment timescale would facilitate workers to build up relationships with detached youth. This would potentially increase the chances of engaging young people with limited resources with the programme.

7.3 Induction Day

- The induction day also got a warm response however not every parent could attend this session. In the future the date for the induction session should be given while on house visits. At this stage if there is any parent/guardian who indicates that they are not in a position to attend the session, the workers could provide the details planned for induction day with the parents during the house visits.

- In addition, parents who committed to the induction day, but for whatever reason could not attend on the day. Subsequently a session will be agreed with the parents to provide all the details of the induction session.

7.4 Identification of topic

The majority of young people gave positive responses when it came to the choosing of the topic through a focus group. However when the mid-way review was conducted it emerged that one young person was not fully satisfied with the chosen topic. However this would not have emerged if the workers were not using multi-methods of gathering information.

Although parents/guardians were not directly involved in the choice of topic at the evaluation stage with one parent made the suggestion *"to speak to each young person individually about their interests"*. The workers through the reflective process also identified a need for one-to-ones as another method of working with young people to ensure that equality is promoted throughout the programme.

- Workers to allocate more time and incorporate one-to-ones and individual comment cards during decision making.

7.5 Development of Course Content

- There is ample evidence that the diverse delivery methods used within the group which comprised of group discussions and group voting are recognised by the young people as being successful and a fair method of making agreements and progressing the project.

- To improve practice in the area of course content. When suggestions or ideas cannot be accommodated by the programme this should be communicated with the young people. By explaining the efforts that were made to respond to specific request, but create opportunities to explore other possible options.

- To ensure regular breaks are included in the daily structure of the programme.

- To continue to utilise relationship building exercises throughout any future programme.

- As the programme developed it was necessary to be flexible regarding times and dates. Any such changes were communicated to parents/guardians by letter. Generally, parents/guardians viewed this as a positive method of receiving

information. One parent felt that the notification of change could be longer. To accommodate this request it is recommended that both telephone communication and letters should be used to inform parents of changes in the future.

7.6 Delivery preparation

The evidence from the young people suggests that they were happy with the delivery preparation process. They felt they were given adequate time and practice before the delivery. However the workers recorded observations noted that some young people appeared nervous. The young people themselves felt that the first delivery did not go as well as the second delivery. To respond to this information the following recommendations are made:

- To allocate more preparation and practice time

- To continue to utilise the focus group as a means of deciding what sections and areas the young people would prefer to cover and work on in their project

7.7 Delivery

Responses from the young people and the observations of workers established that some of the young people receiving the presentation were disinterested in learning. In the future-

- The presentation should be offered to young people who are interested in learning and participating in the presentation instead of presenting the project to a group in general.

7.8 Exit Strategy

It is important to provide an exit strategy to any programme in order to bring closure to a programme in a positive way. The exit strategy in this project celebrated and

acknowledged the work and efforts put into the peer education program by everyone involved.

- Continue to provide an exit strategy to the peer education program

7.9 Evaluation Methods

The information gathered from the young people show that they were very positive about the evaluation methods used in the peer programme. The workers used multi-methods of generating information and this created the opportunity where young people could express themselves in a safe environment of their choice, focus group, questionnaire or one-to-one.

- To continue using multi-methods to generate information

7.10 Additional Information

As peer education is usually one approach used by a project, the information gathered can be fed back into the wider organisation or programme. A need was identified for young females of the ages 13-16 years and reported internally to the EAR Project. As a result of this information a programme was designed and implemented in a relatively short space of time.

- To continue to feed information back continuously throughout the programme so needs can be identified and programmes put in place to meet these needs, where possible.

It was established that despite efforts made by workers, one young person although recruited would not engage with the programme. This could be that the programme offered did not meet the immediate needs of that particular young person. As previously discussed a longer recruitment period may provide the space to build a relationship that would create the circumstances to enable the young person to engage. However it is also a possibility that detached youth work might be a more appropriate response when working with this young person and other young people.

- To investigate the feasibility of a detached service being made in the available in the area.

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Appendices A

Athlone Community Task Force- Education action research project 2008

1) Has your child remained in the secondary school they transferred to from national
school ?   Yes   No

If no, please outlined if they went to another school or to a different education provision

_____

_____

2) Since 6th class has your child joined or availed of any of the services listed below (please
tick which apply):

Youth Club   GAA Club   Speech Therapy

Drama/dance   Soccer Club   Music

Order of Malta   Barnardos   Any other (please detail)

_____

_____

3) Will your young person be sitting the junior certificate this academic year?

                    Yes   No

4)   a) Does your young person intend to return to school in the next academic year?

                    Yes   No

b) Please circle the secondary school year they will going into September 2008.

1st Year   2nd Year   3rd Year   Transition Year

4th Year   5th Year

5) If your young person is intending to leave second level school – do they have plans to do any of the following?

Employment   Training   Apprenticeship

6) Permission to access primary and post-primary school attendance records.

I (name) _____give my permission for ACT to access my son/daughter

(name) _____ school attendance records. Date. _____

Appendices B

Attendance Sheets for the Peer Educational Programme 2008

Leaders Present :

_____

Date :

_____

Day :

_____

Venue :

_____

Name	Time In	Time Out
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Reasons for Absence:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendices C

Young Persons Final review for Peer Education Program August 2008

Name: _____   Date: _____

Individual Experience of the mid way review

1. Do you feel that the use of a questionnaire was a good method to use for the mid way review and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Do you feel that workers listened to your answers in the midway review and followed up on issues/requests etc highlighted by young people and explain your answer by providing an example?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Was there any topic/area/etc that you feel the questionnaires did not contain in relation to the Peer Education Program that you feel was important and should have been included, please explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Equality and collaboration of the group since the midway review

4. Since the midway review do you feel you were given the opportunity to express your ideas/requests/recommendations/views and give an example of a time this occurred?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Do you feel that workers listened to you and followed up on your ideas/requests/recommendations/views and give an example of a time this occurred?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Do you feel that young people have been involved fully when making plans and decisions for the Peer Education Program and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Experience of preparing for the presentation of the learning element

7.In your opinion did workers provide the group with adequate assistance in the sessions dedicated to the learning element such as providing handouts/setting tasks etc, please explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

8. In your opinion what delivery method used by workers did you find the most useful while preparing and researching for the learning element and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9. Do you feel that the work was divided up fairly among the young people in the planning sessions for the learning element and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

10. How did you feel about the group decision to put all the groups research/work together in the form of a book and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. Do you feel that the young people were given enough time to practice for their presentation prior to the presentation day and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

12. In your opinion do you feel that the young people were clear of their role in the presentation prior to the presentation day and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Learning experience of the program and presentations

13. How would you describe your experience of participating in the two presentation days?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

14. Are there any skills that you feel you have gained by participating in the program that you did not have prior to completing the program and if yes please provide an example?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

15. Is there any Knowledge that you feel you have learned by participating in the program that you did not have prior to completing the program and if yes please provide an example?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Individual experience of the peer education program

16. Please outline your overall experience of the peer education program?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____

17. Do you think there is anything that could be done to change the program in any way and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

18. Is there anything you will take from your experience in the peer program that you feel you will use in future aspects of life and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Other comments

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

☐**Thank you for your time and effort in completing this review**☐

Appendices D

Parents review for Peer Education Program August 2008

Name: _____   Date: _____

Communication prior to the commencement of the peer education program

1. Please outline your experience of your initial form of communication with workers re phone call made by workers explaining the project.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. How would you describe your experience of the house visit conducted by workers prior to the commencement of the program?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Do you feel that you were fully informed by workers as to the various aspects of the peer education program prior to the commencement of the program and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. How would you describe your experience of attending the induction day which took place prior to the program commencement?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. In your opinion is there anything that workers could do differently in the future to improve the communication process between parent/guardians and workers prior to program commencement?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Communication throughout the peer education program

6. Do you feel that workers communicated to you in adequate time information on various aspects of the program such as day trips organised/time change etc and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. How would you describe your experience of communication with the workers on the peer education program?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Individual evaluation of the program

10. Please outline any discussions/comments (if any) that your young person has made to you with regards their experience in the peer program.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. In your opinion what are the outcomes of your young person's experience in the peer education program and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

12. In your opinion is there anything that workers could do to improve the program for young people and please explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

13.Prior to the peer education program did your young person avail of any other service that were specific to this age group, if yes please outline?

_____
_____
_____
_____

14. Is there any suggestions/recommendations you would like to make for the future for young people and please explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

15. In your own opinion how would you describe your young person's overall experience in the peer education program?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Other Comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your time and your effort in completing this review

Appendices E

Midway review for Peer Education Program July 2008

Name: _____

Date:_____

Communication prior to the commencement of the Peer Ed Program

1. Do you feel that you were fully informed by workers as to the various aspects of the Peer Education program prior to the commencement of the program and explain your answer?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Do you feel the Peer Education Program has met your expectations so far and explain your answer?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. Were there any aspects/details of the Peer Education that you were not expecting and explain your answer?

   _____
   _____

_____

_____

Equality and collaboration of the group

4. From the commencement of the program do you feel were given the opportunity to express your ideas/requests/recommendations/views and give an example of a time this occurred?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Do you feel that workers listened to you and followed up on your ideas/requests/recommendations/views and give an example of a time this occurred?

_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Do you feel that young people have been involved fully when making plans and decisions for the Peer Education Program and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Was there any time that you felt that your opinion's/views etc were not listened to and if so please provide an example of when this occurred?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Equality re the learning element

8. Do you feel that your ideas were considered and discussed by the group when it came to deciding the topic for the learning element of the Peer Education Program and explain your answer?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

9. Were you given a choice to agree or disagree when choosing the topic for the learning element and explain your answer?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

10. Do you feel that the young people decided as a group that the 'ARMY' would be the chosen topic for the learning element and explain?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

11. How do you feel with the 'army' being the chosen topic and explain your answer?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

12. Do you feel that workers facilitated young peoples various ideas in relation to the learning element and give an example?

    _____
    _____

_____
_____
_____

Individual Participation in program

13. How would you describe your experience in the program so far?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

14. What have you enjoyed most about the program and why?

_____
_____
_____
_____

15. What have you enjoyed least about the program and why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

16. Do you feel that you have formed relationships with the other members of the group and explain?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

17. Do you feel that you work well in the group and get involved in discussions/decision making etc and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

18. Do you feel that you have learned anything so far from your experience in the Peer Education Program and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

19. Do you think there is anything that could be done to improve the program in any way and explain your answer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Other comments

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your time and effort in completing this review

<u>Midway review of the peer education program- Questions re Group discussion?</u>

How would you describe your experience in the Peer Education Program so far and why?

What aspects of the program have you least enjoyed/ most enjoyed in the program so far?

How do you feel the young people in the group are working together?

Do you feel everyone in the group has been Adhering to the agreed upon rules/code of ethics?

How do you feel the learning element of the program is going?

Where would the group like to go for a full day out activity to end the program?

Are there any issues that you as a group have concerns about?

Is there anything that could be done to improve the program in some way?

Appendices G

Peer Education Program-Pilot project

Date:

       I am writing to invite you to participate in a Peer Education Program for the summer months. As this is pilot project this will be conducted as an action research project to ascertain the feasibility of a peer education programme.

       Target group for the program are young males between the age of 14 and 16 years with a maximum of 10 participants. The program will run for 8 weeks and will take place on a Thursday and Friday in the ACT building beginning on Thursday the 3rd of July. Set hours for the said days will be made in agreement with the participants and a light lunch will also be provided.

        As it is a peer education program participants will be facilitated by workers to take as much responsibility as possible for all aspects of the program. The participants will decide on the activities they wish to participate in with agreement from workers. An important aspect of the peer education program is training element where the young people are trained to become peer educators in a specific area of their choice.

       Consent from parents/guardians and assent from the young person is required for the program. If you fully understand and agree to the aspects of the program and wish to participate in the program please fill out the consent and assent form overleaf.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

_____   _____

Eilis cully (youth worker)   Gillian Cunniffe (youth worker)

Ethical Framework

The ethical framework adopted for this study is presented under the following headings:

- Consent
- Confidentiality
- Storage of Information
- Equality Proofing
- Respondents under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or substances
- Prevention of Harm

Parental Consent

To participate in the Peer Education Program young people under the age of 18 years required parental consent. An explanatory letter and consent form have been sent out to parents and Guardians to be completed and signed.

Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality of individual participant's codes will be applied to collected data. On all issues of confidentiality, the research will apply the Children First Guidelines (Department of Health and Children, 1999), which were adopted by the Board of ACT. An established reporting mechanism will ensure the possibility of expedient reporting of any genuine suspicions of abuse. From the outset of the project young people will be informed of this condition of the research.

Storage of Information

All data and associated research materials, tapes, field notes, etc., will be stored securely at the premises of ACT for a period of five years. The data can only be used for the purposes for which it was collected. The data will be destroyed on the elapse of the five year period.

Equality Proofing

The Equality Status Act (2000) prohibits discrimination on nine grounds: gender; marital status; family status; sexual orientation; religious belief; age; disability; race and membership of the Traveller Community. The research will not reinforce existing inequalities through its methods.

Respondents under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or other substances

The Management Team agree that any data obtained from respondents under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or other substances could be used, but noted in the report.

Prevention of Harm

The research does not intentionally use methods which place participants in any physical, emotional or psychological danger.

The four ethical principles applied during the study are shown in Table Five below.

Table Five Ethical Principles of Research with Children (Hogan and Gilligan 1997, pg 5, 1997)

Types of Rights	Research Ethic Principles
To satisfactory development of well-being	The purpose of the research should contribute to children's well being, either directly, or indirectly, through increased understanding of children which can help adults who are responsible for children
To protection from harm	Methods should be designed to avoid stress and distress, contingency arrangements should be available in case children become upset or situations of risk or harm are revealed
To appropriate services	Children should whenever possible feel good about having contributed to research as a service which can inform society, individuals, policy and practice
To express opinions which are taken account of	Children should make informed choices about : Agreement or refusal to take part; Opting out (at any stage); Contributing ideas to research agendas and processes, both for individual research projects and to the research enterprise as a whole

Appendices H

Peer Education Programme – Pilot Project 2008

Parental/ Guardian Consent Forms

I (parent/guardian name) _____ give consent for my child (child's name) _____ to participate in the peer education programme.

I (youth) _____ agree to participate in the peer education programme.

Address:_____
_____
_____
_____

Telephone Number: _____ Mobile Number: _____

Please supply details of any medical conditions or medical needs that your child may have e.g. asthma.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Signature of parent: _____

Signature of youth: _____

Date of Signature: _____

Appendices I

Date

Dear (young person and parent/guardian),

I am writing to you regards the peer education programme that (young person) has agreed to partake in during the summer months. There will be an induction morning at 11 0'clock on Thursday the 3rd of July in the ACT building. We would like to invite both the youths and parents/guardians to come along, where we will discuss the programme in more detail, any questions or queries you may have will be answered. We also wish to invite the youths to stay on after the induction for the beginning of the peer education programme.

Thanking you,

_____
_____

Eilis Cully (youth worker)   Gillian Cunniffe
(youth worker)