

**Athlone
Community Taskforce
Peer Education
Programme 2009**

**“ A career in the Gardai
Siochana”**

Evaluation Report

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INTRODUCTION

The Educational Action Research Project (EAR) Project has an overall aim “to create conditions to support young people to make a positive transition from primary to post-primary school” (McArdle, 2006). The EAR Project’s target group is 5th and 6th class national school pupils and 1st year second level students. A range of initiatives are provided within the school environment at primary and post-primary level and in the community during term times and the summer holidays.

The activities of the Educational Action Research Project ran from the period of 2006 - 2008. Initiatives which the Educational Action Research Project previously delivered have included;

- Transition to Secondary School Programme
- Study Skills Programme
- Film Making Programmes
- Research Programmes
- Summer Connected Programme
- Media and IT Skills Programme

In 2007, five young people aged 14 to 16 years of age who had participated in previous activities of the Educational Action Research Project approached the Project Coordinator and requested a service which ran on a continuous basis during the summer holiday period. Working from a child-centred perspective the Project Manager piloted a Peer Education Programme for young males aged 14-17yrs during the summer of 2008.

As young people under the age of 16 years of age, legislation dictates that they are too young to participate in part-

time employment. Through the progression of the peer education programme it was intended that the existing skills of participants would be enhanced and new skills learned. These skills could then be transferred to future employment and everyday living.

In 2008, the young participants of the Peer Education Programme chose to research the Army as a career choice. Following a research period of 5 weeks the young people designed and delivered a half-day facilitated session on this topic to young people aged 11 - 13yrs who were participating on another Educational Action Research Project programme; The Summer Connected Programme.

The Summer Connected Programme worked with young people in the primary education system during summer holiday months of July and August. These young people attending this programme were from similar cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, as were the young people participating in the Peer Education Programme 2008.

BUILDING ON PREVIOUS LEARNING

An evaluation of the piloted Peer Education Programme 2008, highlighted the positive impact which the project had had on the young participants (Cunniffe and Cully, 2007). A series of recommendations were presented within the evaluation document for future consideration which included;

- The continuation of the Peer Education Service for young people aged 14 - 17 years during

the summer months on an annual basis.

- The possibility of expanding the service to include both male and female participants.
- To provide opportunities for young people to develop new skills which could potentially be transferred

future employment positions vis-à-vis programme development.

Due to the success of the first piloted project, Athlone Community Taskforce decided to seek funding to provide a second Peer Education Programme for young people aged 14 - 17 years of age living in Athlone Town for the summer period of 2009.

To maximise the learning from this process it was decided to progress the peer education project as a piece of action research during 2009. The overall aims and objectives of the 2009 Peer Education Programme were as follows;

Aim

- To facilitate the delivery of a Peer Education Programme with 14 - 17 year old young people, with a view to developing new skills and knowledge which could be transferred to future potential employment positions

Objectives

- To facilitate young people aged 14 - 17 years of age in the design, implementation and evaluation of a Peer Education Programme which

explored potential career options for young people

- To build the capacity of the young people participating in the Peer Education Programme to become Youth Peer Educators
- To support the Youth Peer Educators in their roles during the delivery of the Peer Education Programme to the young participants of the Connected Summer Programme.

Target Group

- Young People aged between 14 - 17 years of age living in Athlone Town

Number of Participants

- 9 young people

Gender Breakdown

- 6 Male Participants
- 3 Female Participants

WHAT IS PEER EDUCATION?

Peer Education occurs when people from similar age groups, backgrounds or social status educate each other on a particular issue. It is seen to be beneficial as it creates an environment where young people feel safe and able to share information, skills and values. It is beneficial for the educators as it teaches them communication and leadership skills.

The following definition provides clarity on the target group;

“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 of the informal definition of a peer group.

The following definition provides clarity on the education process;

“Education refers to the development of a person’s knowledge, attitudes, beliefs or behaviours as a result of the learning process” (UNPF, 2005)

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 them rather than between an adult and a young person.

“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).

Foroige (2002:pg 4) describes the benefits of peer education for young people:

“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”.

Therefore one can note that Peer Education should follow key principles which include;

- Consultation and Participation with Young People
- Adhering to High Ethical Standards
- Promotion of Equality
- Imparting of Knowledge to a specific target group of young people by young people

OUTCOMES FROM THE PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2008

Cunniffe and Cully (2008) outlined a series of recommendations based on the learning gained from the Peer Education Programme in 2008. These recommendations formed the bases for a change in the 2009 Peer Education programme structure.

The target age group for the Peer Education Programme 2008 was 14 - 16 year old males. In 2009, this target age group was changed to accommodate 14 - 17 year old participants.

In 2008, the project was specifically for males; however in 2009 the programme was of mixed gender.

The participants of the 2008 Peer Education Programme suggested that a male youth worker be employed to assist in the delivery of the project. In 2009, the Educational Action Research Project provided an opportunity for a male youth worker

to work on the programme for the seven week period. This male youth worker had been a past participant of the Peer Education Programme in 2008.

The commitment shown by this former participant to the Educational Action Research Projects Programme activities led staff to believe that he could act as a positive role model for the youth participants on the 2009 Peer Education Programme.

As a result the decision was taken to employ the young person as a Youth Peer Worker for the summer period.

OVERVIEW OF THE PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2009

The original Peer Education Programme of 2008 was designed as a youth led initiative as a response to a consultation process with young people. The participants of the original Peer Education Programme chose a topic which they found of interest and researched this topic.

The youth participants of the programme completed a research phase which identified appropriate materials and information based on their chosen topic. A written document was created by the young people based on a 'Career in the Army'. The document explored the history of the defence forces both nationally and locally and also explored the various divisions and ranks which exist within the Defence forces.

Having completed this information document, the youth participants then imparted this knowledge on to

the participants of the Summer Connected Programme, 2008. As Cunniffe and Cully (2007) note this framework provided a strong basis for the delivery of the peer education programme.

As a result of the dedication shown by the youth participants of the Peer Education Programme 2008, a celebration day took place in Custume Barracks, Athlone. The young participants presented their document to the Officer in Command in Custume barracks during this event. The Officer in Command of Custume Barracks commended the dedication and commitment which the young people had shown to the Peer Education Programme and welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with Athlone Community Taskforce on future projects of this nature.

Upon the successful completion of the programme, the Project Coordinator assessed the effectiveness of the 2008 framework and decided to maintain the status quo with regard to the delivery of the Peer Education Programme for 2009.

RECRUITMENT OF STAFF FOR THE PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2009

In April 2009, the Community Garda Sgt. of the Athlone Gardai Station was approached by the CEO of Athlone Community Taskforce with a view to establishing a work experience link between Student Gardai based in Athlone and the Peer Education Programme ran by Athlone Community Taskforce. Initial

meetings proved positive and work experience link was established between ACT and Athlone Garda Station. This link enabled student Gardai for a period of two weeks to work in collaboration with and support the seasonally employed staff of the Peer Education Programme ran by Athlone Community Taskforce.

In May 2009, Athlone Community Taskforce received funding from the Franciscan Order which was to act as the core funding for the implementation of the Peer Education Programme 2009. An employment advertisement was placed in local newspapers to advertise for a '*Community Based Youth Worker*' to oversee the running of the Peer Education Programme 2009. After an initial interview process with several candidates, one person was selected for the position.

Coinciding with this event, the project secured €750 funding from the Catherine Howard Foundation towards programme activities. The Project Coordinator took the decision to use this money to provide an employment opportunity for one young person who was a past participant of the project to work as a '*Youth Peer Worker*' for the summer period of the Peer Education Programme 2009.

The young person who had gained employment as the Youth Peer Worker had taken the initiative to apply for the post of Community Based Youth Worker but was unsuccessful in his application. It was felt that providing this employment opportunity to the young person would greatly enhance the projects

child-centred practice and also provide opportunities for the young person to develop new skills and knowledge.

In June 2009, both employees engaged in an induction process with the Project Coordinator. During this induction process information was provided relating to;

- Child Protection
- Child-Centred Practice
- Health and Safety in the Work Place
- The Educational Action Research Projects policies and procedures
- The activities and programmes of the Educational Action Research Project

RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2009

During the month of June 2009, a recruitment phase was conducted by both the Community Based Youth Worker and the Youth Peer Worker to identify potential participants for the Peer Education Programme.

The Community Based Youth Worker and the Youth Peer Worker both conducted a series of phone calls and house visits of past and present participants to identify young people suitable for the programme. This recruitment process resulted in 9 young people expressing an interest in participating in the Peer Education Programme, 2009.

In July 2009, the Peer Education Programme commenced activities. The gender breakdown of the participants who attended the first induction session for young people was as follows;

- 6 male participants aged 14 - 17 years of age.
- 3 female participants aged 15 - 17 years of age.

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC CHOSEN TO EXPLORE DURING THE PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2009

After a consultation process with the young people a topic was identified for further research;

“The Gardai as a Career Choice”

The project workers established links with the local Gardai Station to secure the placement of 2 Student Gardai for two week duration during the Peer Education Programme Activities. Over the 7 week duration of the Peer Education Programme a total of 4 Student Gardai assisted in the delivery of daily activities;

- 2 Student Gardai worked on week's two to four of the programme.
- 2 Student Gardai worked on week's five to seven of the programme.

Over the course of a six week period during July and August the participants of the peer education programme developed a half-day facilitated peer education programme which was to be delivered to the young people participating on the Summer Connected Programme 2009.

As part of the young people's Peer Education Programme, a half hour radio documentary was created by the young people for use during the delivery of the Peer Education Programme. This radio documentary comprised of a number of one to one interviews which the young people recorded with local Gardai from Athlone Town Garda Station.

In order to provide variety to the programme a number of activities took place which included;

- An orienteering and map reading workshop
- Presentation and Public Speaking Workshops
- Radio Presenting and Media Skills Workshops
- A day trip to Templemore Gardai Training Centre
- A day trip to Lillyput Adventure Centre
- A day trip to the Bowling Alley

In August 2009, eight participants of the Peer Education Programme delivered their information to 21 young people who were participants of the Summer Connected Programme.

STRUCTURE OF THE PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2009

1. Induction

The purpose of the induction was to;

- Enable participants to meet and form relationships with each other
- To outline the programme structure for the following seven weeks
- To agree rules and acceptable behaviour boundaries
- To discuss potential topics which could be explored for the Peer Education Programme 2009

The induction session was attended by the following people;

- The Community Based Youth Worker
- The Youth Peer Worker
- The Student Gardai assigned to the Programme

- The parents/guardians of the young people engaging with the project
- The youth participants of the project

2. Identification of a Topic

The young people were provided with the opportunity to brainstorm potential topics which the Peer Education Programme could focus upon. A number of suggestions were put forth by the young people that included;

- A career in the Gardai
- A career as a Prison Officer
- A career as a Mechanic
- A career as a Beautician
- A career as a Hairdresser

As a Student Garda was present during the brainstorming session, some participants felt that they were being coerced into choosing 'A career in the Gardai' as the Peer Programmes topic. Both the Community Based Youth Worker and the Youth Peer Worker strived to ensure that the participants did not feel that the topic for the Peer Education Programme had been predetermined.

It should be noted that due to the mixed gender of the group, challenges did present when identifying a topic which was of mutual interest to both male and female participants. A decision was taken by the Community Based Youth Worker to explore each topic based on its own merit. Young people were asked to outline what potential benefits there were to exploring each career choice. The youth participants were also asked to consider what

potential learning outcomes could be gained from exploring each career choice.

After a lengthy consultation process between participants of the programme and the workers, An Gardaí Síochána was decided as the best topic of choice by the majority of participants. Young people chose this topic based on a number of factors;

- The variety of career choices which are offered within the Gardai Síochána
- The accessibility of relevant and accurate information relating to the Gardai as a career choice via the Student Gardai
- The possibility of a day trip to Templemore Gardai Training College
- The possibility of a day trip to a Prison such as Mountjoy Prison.

3. Structure of the Peer Education Programme 2009

Much consideration was given to the structure of the programme. In 2008, a written document had been produced by the participants of the Peer Education Programme which documented '*The Army*' as a career choice. This formatted document was used as an educational tool which the young people utilised during the delivery of the Peer Education Programme.

Both the Community Based Youth Worker and the Youth Peer Education Worker gave consideration to replicating this format for the 2009 Education Programme. However

having consulted with the young people on the Peer Education Programme, a written document did not seem to capture their interests. A number of options were explored with the young people that included;

- A film project
- A radio documentary

The young people elected to pursue the development of a radio documentary. Having agreed a clear format through which a career in the Gardai Siochana would be explored, staff within Athlone Community Radio Station were approached to work with the young people and develop a radio documentary on the Gardai. Initial meetings proved positive and Athlone Community Radio Station agreed to work in collaboration with the Peer Education Programme participants to develop a radio documentary based on their chosen topic.

Each of the participants then decided which aspect of the Gardai they had a special interest in researching. A set of interview questions for the relevant Gardai sections were developed by the participants. The Community Based Youth Worker facilitated each participant of the Peer Education Programme in developing these research and interview questionnaires.

During the process of designing the questionnaire templates, some members of the group became distracted. The project workers took the decision to divide the group into two smaller groups (each group consisting of 4 young people). While one group worked on developing a questionnaire template, the other

group were provided with an alternative activity of their choice which they wished to engage in. Both group chose to play the Nintendo Wii during their allocated times.

This strategy of working in smaller groups and providing an alternate activity was extremely successful. The young people worked more effectively as part of a smaller group and the alternative activity acted as an incentive for the young people to participate in the design of the research and questionnaire templates.

4. Peer Education Programme Project Delivery

The structure of the Peer Education delivery was discussed by the young people and the workers during planned weekly sessions. After consultation with the youth participants of the Peer Education Programme, the young people decided that they would divide into two teams to focus on the various topics to be delivered to the youth participants of the Connected Summer Programme.

Once the members of each group were agreed the young people then chose the different elements that could be included in the delivery of the Peer Education Programme. This method of working in small groups once again proved successful and the young people remained engaged for the duration of the session.

A time and date for the delivery of the programme was agreed with the Project Coordinator. In total, 21

young people who were participating on the Connected Summer Programme participated in the delivery session of the 2009 Peer Education Programme. It was agreed that the delivery of the programme would commence as follows;

- *Number of Peer Educators participating in the delivery of the Project: 8*
- *Number of young people from the Connected Summer Programme who would participate in the Peer Education Programme: 21*
- *Number of young people from the Connected Summer Programme to be present during each delivery session:- 20 (group one) & 11 (group 2).*
- *Length of Peer Education Sessions:
1 ½ hrs per session*

The programme delivery to the young participants of the Connected Summer Programme was a great success. Participants of the Peer Education Programme highlighted that they enjoyed the Peer Education Process. Below are several direct quotations from the Peer Educators which highlight their satisfaction with the delivery of the programme;

“I think the presentation went good today - the kids actually listened and enjoyed it”

“I thought the presentation went absolutely great. Everything went well although we were messing too and did make a few mistakes. But we got ourselves together and the presentation has gone well”

“I thought the kids loved the presentation because they were laughing and listening”

“I learnt so much stuff it was fun telling the kids about the guards”

“The last day presentation was fun. The kids and I learned a lot about the Guards”

5. Development of the Radio Documentary.

As previously mentioned, the young people chose to develop a 30 minute radio documentary which explored the Gardai as a career choice.

In collaboration with Athlone Community Radio, training was provided to the young people of the Peer Education Programme 2009 in relation to editing, radio presenting, sound mixing and public speaking. The young people found these sessions very informative and enjoyed participating in the planned sessions.

After completing the necessary training in relation to radio production, the young people engaged in the interview process with local Gardai. This process was conducted over a three day period. Once all information was recorded, the young people then began work on the production of their Radio Documentary. The editing and production of the Radio Documentary was conducted over the course of three sessions.

The young people were very proud of the end product. Athlone Community Radio Station was also impressed by the final creation and agreed to broadcast the show in September 2009. It was clear that the young people worked hard on the presentation and radio documentary and took pride in its delivery.

REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES WHICH THE YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED IN

The young people who engaged in the Peer Education Programme participated in a variety of activities over the summer months. The following is a breakdown of the activities which the young people participated in:

1. Bowling

6 young people attended this activity. All young people who attended stated that they enjoyed participating in this activity. The workers present noted that the young people were very engaged in all planned activities during this session and that there was a great sense of comradely amongst the group.

2. Templemore Gardai Training College

7 of the participants cited this day trip as their favourite part of the project. Some participants were disappointed that they did not get the opportunity to engage in previous planned activities due to a triathlon taking part in the Garda College. This triathlon placed certain restrictions on planned activities which the young people were to engage in (e.g.; assault course and fitness testing). However the young people of the Peer Programme were provided with a tour of the facilities and were shown a selection of Gardai uniforms and equipment.

3. Map Reading and Orienteering

This activity was classroom based and focused on the theoretical elements of map reading and orienteering only. The young people did not engage in this activity with the same enthusiasm as other planned sessions. Some of the participants stated that the map reading

and orienteering session reminded them of school activities and therefore they did not become interested in the sessions content.

4. Trip to Athlone Garda Station

The group found this day trip interesting and enjoyed being shown around the holding cell's etc. A total number of 8 young people attended this event. Both the Community Based Youth Worker and the Youth Peer Worker stated that the young people had a genuine interest in asking questions relating to the operations and activities of the station.

5. Self-defence Classes

6 participants engaged in this activity. All the young people who participated in this activity stated that they found the activity enjoyable. The facilitator of the Self Defence Classes noted that they young people listened to and followed instructions very well.

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2009

On week 4 of the programme a mid-term evaluation was conducted with the young people of the Peer Education Programme to ascertain their views and opinions on the general direction which the programme was taking and to identify if the programme was meeting the needs of the youth participants during the summer period. A total of 6 young people participated in this mid-term evaluation of the project.

The young people were asked to document their opinions on the programme based on a number of factors;

- Are the planned activities during session age appropriate?
- Are opportunities being provided for the young people to input into the programme structure and development?
- Are the requests of the young people being responded to by workers on the programme?

The feedback from this review was very positive. Examples of feedback provided by the young people are highlighted below;

“It is a fun programme. The staff here have been really nice and cool and I would definitely come back next year”

“This programme is class and its sort of educational”

“I think this programme is deadly. I like the way we get to do research on stuff that we don't know about. This programme helps me think of what kind of career I wanna do when I grow older”

ATTENDANCE LEVELS FOR THE PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2009

In June 2009, nine young people had expressed an interest in participating in the Peer Education programme. However one young person did not remain engaged with the Peer Education Programme as he was involved in a number of other summer activities. This young person was encouraged to maintain links with the project so that he could access future activities ran by the project.

With this exception, all other participants remained engaged with the programme during the 7 week summer period. A

breakdown of attendance levels is illustrated in the table below;

Week Number	Date	Maximum Number of young people availing of programme	Number of young people attending planned session
Week 1	07 th July	9	8
Week 1	08 th July	9	8
Week 2	14 th July	8	7
Week 2	15 th July	8	7
Week 3	21 st July	8	5
Week 3	22 nd July	8	5
Week 4	28 th July	8	6
Week 4	29 th July	8	5
Week 5	04 th Aug	8	6
Week 5	05 th Aug	8	6
Week 6	11 th Aug	8	7
Week 6	12 th Aug	8	4
Week 7	18 th Aug	8	6
Week 7	19 th Aug	8	6

Six of the eight participants attended the final celebration event to mark the closing of the Peer Education Programme. Two of the female participants were not available to attend the final celebration event.

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE PEER EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2009

On the final day of planned Peer Education Programme sessions, the participants were asked to participate in a final evaluation of the programme. All six young people who were present on this day participated in the final evaluation.

The young people were asked to identify their attitudes and beliefs towards a number of topics which are explored in greater detail in the following section;

1. *What was the highlight of the Peer Education Programme for you?*

- Going to the Garda College
- Lillyput
- Working in the Radio Station
- Using the Computers

2. *What changes could be made to improve the programme in the future?*

Four participants stated that there were no improvements that could be made to the programme. However, two participants made the following suggestions;

- “On some days they could watch movies”
- “We should be allowed to go on the internet for one hour”

3. *Have you developed any new skills as a result of participating in the Peer Education Programme?*

- Computer skills
- Presentation skills
- How to write interview questions
- Life skills such as planning
- Self-defence skills
- The Gardai as a career choice

4. *Have your attitudes towards the Gardai changed as a result of engaging in the Peer Education Programme?*

- “The Gardai are sound people and people shouldn’t make fun of them”
- “Learnt about the Gardai and about what they do for a living”
- “Yeh, they are cool enough and pretty sound”

However one young person stated that their attitudes towards the Gardai did not change as a result of engaging in the project;

- “No not one bit”

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

The overall evaluation of the programme was a very positive one. All young people who participated in the project stated that they enjoyed the programme and had a positive experience participating in the planned activities.

“The camp was good enjoyment. I also learnt a bit about the Gardai that I did not know. The overall experience was brilliant” (Participant 1)

“It’s really cool and everything’s free” (Participant 2)

“It was really fun for the 7 weeks. I learnt so much stuff and it was run telling the kids about the Gardai and I would definitely come back next year. I will really miss the programme and the staff. It has been a fun experience” (Participant 3)

“This programme gave me an idea of what the Gardai is like and let me investigate into it” Participant 4)

“I enjoyed the programme and it was good altogether” (Participant 5)

“I think the programme went very well and we had good organisers that helped a lot. Aine and Michael were very good” (Participant 6)

LEARNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of implementing the Peer Education Programme for a second year a number of learning outcomes and recommendations should be considered for to assist in the future development of the project. These are explored in greater detail below;

1. Gender Structure of Participants on the Peer Education Programme

A series of recommendations were made by Cunniffe and Cully (2008) during the Peer Education Evaluation “Their Voice - Their Choice”. One of these recommendations was to introduce a mixed gender group of participants to any future Peer Education Programmes. As a result a mixed gender group of participants were recruited for the Peer Education Programme, 2009.

Having reflected on the impact which a mixed gender group had on the structure and delivery of the Peer Education Programme, both the Community Based Youth Worker and the Youth Peer Worker agree that greater levels of productivity could have been achieved if the programme targeted a single gender for recruitment.

Both workers agreed that the female participants of the Peer Education Programme had a tendency to become distracted and sometimes found it difficult to focus on the task at hand.

Recommendation: The delivery of future Peer Education Programmes should occur with single gender groups. Consideration should be given to the possibility of working with one group of 5 male participants for one day per week during the summer period and one group of 5 female participants for one day per week during the summer period. This would allow for a peer education programme to be designed and implemented for both male and female participants during the summer period.

2. Methodology used during the Young Peoples Final Evaluation Session

The final evaluation adopted a quantitative approach to extracting information from the young people relating to their experience of the Peer Education Programme.

Both the Community Based Youth Worker and the Youth Peer Worker agree that adopting a qualitative and quantitative approach to gathering data would be more beneficial. The use of focus groups and interviews would have provided in-depth analysis of the young people’s experiences during the Peer Education Programme and would have supported and extended the information gained via the questionnaires.

Recommendation: Chose to adopt a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach to gathering data during an evaluation process with young people in

future programmes. This would provide greater opportunities to gain insight into the young person's individual experience of the Programme. The use of a quantitative approach should not be used in isolation when conducting evaluations with young people.

3. *The Importance of Maintaining a Child-Centred/Youth Led approach to Professional Practice*

Consultation and Participation in decision making is advocated for via the National Children's Strategy (2000) and is identified as key to working from a child-centred/youth led perspective. The importance of the youths being involved in the decision making was seen as a key success of the project.

Young people were provided with opportunities to engage in decision making relating to the structure and implementation of the Peer Education Programme. Regular evaluations were conducted by project staff to ascertain how effective the project was in meeting and responding to the needs of the young people on the programme.

Recommendation: Staff should strive to work from a child-centred/youth led perspective and provide opportunities to engage young people in consultation and decision making processes.

4. *Supporting Young People to explore Various Approaches to Completing Tasks and Engaging in Activities*

At times the young people were slow to take ownership of certain tasks. This could be attributed to various factors including lack of confidence, lack of motivation and fear of making mistakes.

Once the young people were helped with the division of tasks, work production became much more fruitful. Workers strived to support and praise young people for their efforts and this resulted in greater productivity in tasks.

The main tool to be used during the Peer Education Programme was initially intended to be a written information document similar to the one produced in the 2008 Peer Education Programme. However, the participants of the 2009 Peer Education Programme did not find this option very exciting or fulfilling.

After careful consideration during a consultation process, the young people decided to create a radio documentary. This generated greater excitement amongst the participants and motivation levels to create an educational tool increased.

Recommendation; It is important to investigate creative approaches which can be utilised when working with young people. Identifying viable working approaches must be done in consultation with young people to ensure interest in tasks can be maintained.

CONCLUSION

The recruitment and employment of a young person who was a previous participant of the Educational Action Research Projects previous activities was cited as a success by the Project Coordinator. This young person adapted to the role of Youth Peer Worker with ease. The young people who participated in this year's Peer Education Programme respected the position of their peer as an employee of the project.

As a result of being provided with the opportunity to work as a Youth Peer Worker, this young person is now considering a career in social care or a related field. Hence the project successfully enabled both participants and staff of the Peer Education Programme to explore potential career paths.

On the whole the project was very successful with all of the participants attending planned sessions on a regular basis. Information gained via the mid-term evaluation and the final evaluation conducted with the young people identified that all young people enjoyed participating in the Peer Education Programme and would welcome the opportunity to participate in a similar project in 2010.

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