

Ballymoney Community Safety Partnership

Evaluation of the 2006-2008 Project Action Plan

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CONTENTS

Executive summary	3
1.0 Background	8
2.0 Methodology	9
3.0 Evaluation of outputs and outcomes	12
Individual project performance	12
Performance of key functions	27
4.0 Conclusions and recommendations	31
Appendices	34

Executive Summary

The opinion of the majority of the Ballymoney Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) members, the project sponsors and project participants that we have been able to interview as part of this evaluation exercise is that the individual Project Action Plans approved by the BCSP under the Ballymoney Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2006 – 2008 have served to reduce criminal behaviour and to improve overall community safety.

A representative of the local PSNI was so pleased with the progress made via the delivery of the 13 project action plans, that he stated

' ideally there would be sufficient additional funding available via the Northern Ireland Office Community Safety Unit (NIO CSU) to enable BCSP to build on the level of success so far achieved by each of the 13 projects supported under the current community safety strategy.'

However the difficulty we have had has been in trying to measure the actual level of impact both collectively and individually that these projects may have had on actual community safety. At the time of writing this report no baseline figures had been made available by the PSNI (these were requested in writing). However it must be stated that the tight timeframe within which the NIO CSU required the evaluation to be completed did not allow the PSNI much time to respond given other pressing priorities.

In addition the NIO CSU (who we did not speak to as part of the evaluation process as they circulated a memo to all Community Safety Co-ordinators stating that they would not be available to speak to any of the evaluators carrying out evaluations of the various CSP's – see appendix 1) does not seem to have identified standardised monitoring and evaluation tools. Such tools would have allowed for the collection of measurable outputs and outcomes and for comparative performance analysis between the Community Safety Partnerships.

Those who spoke positively about the impact of the project in terms of the delivery of the identified strategy drew our attention to the following specific quantitative and qualitative information:

- the numbers of young people who positively engaged in projects such as the Street Intervention Project who had previously come to the attention of the police and had not subsequently done so;
- the new relationships, both personal and professional, that were established within and between participating project sponsors. For example the links between the Street Intervention Project and Cheers Youth Club; the links between the Street Intervention Project and the Peer Leadership Programme run by the PSNI; the newly established

cross community links between Balnamore and Rasharkin, and between Loughgiel and Cloughmills;

- the positive links that had been established between the Partnership's co-ordinator, and especially the current occupant of the post, and many of the projects particularly the smaller less experienced projects without professional staff input;
- the positive working relationship between the BCSP and the local District Policing Partnership (DPP), which was attributed to the opening of good communications channels between the key staff who were all based in the Ballymoney Council Offices and committee members who sat on both Partnerships;
- the success of the current project co-ordinator in being able to lever matched funding in order to enable projects to happen;
- the continuity provided by the chairman who took both a close interest and hands on approach to the delivery of the agreed actions plans
- the flexibility of delivery (both from NIO CSU and BCSP) which enabled the project to veer away from the approved action plan where and when operational difficulties arose that could have proved insurmountable – for example the withdrawal of two estates from the CLEAR Project.
- The existence of positive prior relationships between many of the key players who sat on various inter-agency forums; relationships that were further developed and strengthened during the time spent in carrying out a community safety audit and the identification of a subsequent community safety strategy.

However any measure of success needs to be viewed with a degree of caution, after all

- BCSP covers an area that statistics show to have the lowest overall crime rate in Northern Ireland. Why this should be the case undoubtedly cannot be attributed solely to any one factor. A police spokesperson expressed the view that a key contributory factor was that strong links that had historically existed between many of the key agencies such as the PSNI, Housing Executive, Council and youth service, and that the BCSP in many ways built on these historical links.
- In a number of the projects BCSP was only one of a number of funders and as was the case with the Peer Leadership and the Street Intervention Projects were already being delivered successfully by experienced Police officers.

Furthermore the levels of success evident varied from project to project- once again why this was the case cannot be attributable to any one factor. The key inhibiting factors that impacted on performance identified via the evaluation were:-

- the small amount of grant aid provided by BCSP, a number of the organisations involved in delivering projects were receiving much larger sums from other funders and the spend of these larger sums was their first priority;
- the grant budget was too small in itself to be able to make a dramatic impact;
- managing projects where the grant support comes from a number of different sources frequently places a significant administrative burden on smaller community and voluntary organisations;
- given the size of the budget was it spread too thinly in supporting 13 separate projects? Could more impact have been made if the Partnership strategic tier had taken hard decisions at the outset about their priorities?
- the fact that the majority of projects were worked up by the Partnership in response to the strategy and different delivery agents approached as opposed to the projects growing naturally out of the communities themselves runs contrary to the community development model favoured by most voluntary and community organisations;
- the fact that there was a lack of continuity in staffing meant that there was not consistent pressure being exerted on the projects by the funder to maintain forward momentum;
- the complexities involved in tackling the underlying causes of crime such as drugs and alcohol, poor community infrastructure, paramilitary activity, etc have been shown to require high level of interagency co-operation and more importantly professional input;
- apathy, lack of community leadership and a potential reluctance to engage with those from a different religion and/or political position – for example the apparent failure of one rural community to participate in the Midnight Soccer League despite arrangements and transport having apparently been available;
- approving grants for two years with no real measure for detailed monitoring of outputs and outcomes having been identified by the CSU meant that projects were not under consistent pressure to perform;
- the lack of participation by certain agencies, political parties and appointed individuals to the Partnership strategic tier, for example the withdrawal of the Causeway Trust representative, and the failure of the appointed community representative to attend;
- in terms of success the positive (and negative) impact of the personality factor should not be ignored;
- the absence of structured project evaluation at the end of year one. This made it extremely difficult to try and evaluate projects, and in particular those involving young people which were finished some considerable time beforehand;

- Retrospective payments meant that some projects struggled financially to be able to deliver on their projects, the situation was exacerbated by the lack of continuity in terms of the co-ordinator's post leading to a number of delays in the processing of claims.

Some observations need also to be made about both the NIO Community Safety Unit role in the delivery and oversight of the agreed action plan. Unfortunately as the CSU stated that they did not wish to meet with the consultants carrying out the evaluation we have been unable to ascertain their views and opinions on the following issues:

- a) The templates provided by CSU for monitoring of the projects focused almost exclusively on spend and paid little attention to the actual quality and impact of the project delivery;
- b) The potential impact of numerous changes in Partnership Development Officers at CSU on relationships and in particular the levels and types of support that could be provided to CSP Chairpersons;
- c) The nature and type of guidance, advice and support that was available to the Chairman and the Partnership when faced with potentially more controversial issues, for example requests for support from Orange Halls, the participation of all political parties, etc.

In terms of the shape and content of a new community safety strategy for the Ballymoney Council Area the evaluation feels that any consultative process leading to the identification of a new strategy needs to look very closely at the following specific issues:

- 1) The composition and roles of the current Partnership Board – was the initial CSU template identifying 20 plus agencies who should participate on a Board too unwieldy to ever be truly effective? Would a core of key agencies (as has developed) with other key agencies to be kept informed via quarterly meetings, or email bulletins, or some similar alternative be more practical and appropriate?

Furthermore how should the Partnership look to recruit those from the voluntary community, business and the health sectors who are not currently engaging in the process?

- 2) Does the Partnerships focus new funding on the further development of existing projects or is there a need to streamline the funding in line with the identified new priorities of CSU and the likelihood that full political participation on the Partnership could lead to the identification of new community safety issues?
- 3) Does the nature of the project co-ordinators post need to change? Is

there the potential for the post holder to play a more hands on community development role in helping tackle issues such as lack of engagement with teenagers and young people in rural settlements within the Borough. This would help to ensure that the CSP is viewed not merely as a small (and in some cases relatively insignificant) funder but as an organisation that can offer both practical hands on assistance, as well as advice and guidance?

- 4) How can the Partnership seek to broker a more co-ordinated, joined up approach to tackling some of the key underlying issues that impact on community safety – for example paramilitary activity, and substance abuse? Is there real potential for the CSP to actively promote development of a more co-ordinated response to community safety within any future community planning process?
- 5) How (if at all) does the relationship with the local DPP need to change? Would there be merit in the two project staff working closer together if not indeed in the same office? How can they seek to clear up public confusion about the roles and responsibilities of each body. Could/should there be a joint public awareness drive?
- 6) How (if at all) can some of the positive learning in terms of the community relations and good relations practice experienced through joint projects such as the Balnamore and Rasharkins Get BART Active project be potentially utilised to tackle community relations issues in other communities within the Borough?
- 7). What measures can be agreed with CSU and subsequently put in place in order to enable a more co-ordinated and structured approach to the monitoring and evaluation of all project action plans within a specific community safety framework?

1.0 Background

1.1 As stated in the BCSP Tender document the purpose of this evaluation is to assist Partnerships to deliver on their strategic priorities by:

- (a) understanding what works and what works less well;
- (b) empowering partnerships to make evidence based decisions, and
- (c) demonstrating visible and constructive accountability to the local community.

As a minimum the evaluation must:

- (a) Measure the degree to which individual Action Plan projects have met their goals and objectives and how efficiently these were achieved; and
- (b) Review the overall Action Plan and progress of delivery against strategic priorities.

1.2 As stated in the BCSP Strategy an evaluation of the work undertaken by the Partnership, in terms of the indicative grant spend, was to be completed as the 2006 – 2008 strategy neared completion.

1.2.1 All 26 CSP's throughout NI are currently in the process of completing similar evaluations in preparation for the identification of their new strategies in response to the new priorities identified by the CSU.

1.3 BCSP at the time of agreeing the strategy had intended that the evaluation would have involved a two phase approach – with evaluation at the end of year one being built upon with a full evaluation at the end of year two.

1.3.1 However the impact of staff changes associated with the Community Safety Co-ordinator's post combined with no indicative spend on evaluation having been agreed with the CSU made end of year one evaluation impossible.

1.4 The end of project evaluation was meant to explore how effective each of the 13 individually funded project action plans were in addressing the various community safety issues associated with the identified BCSP adopted priorities. In addition the evaluation was to identify how, if at all, a spirit of collective responsibility for addressing the community safety agenda was being nurtured and developed within the BCSP geographical area of responsibility.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 In seeking to identify the clearly stated purpose and requirements of the evaluation the evaluation involved:

- analysis of the impact to date of the projects in meeting the stated objectives
- effectiveness of strategies being pursued in terms of both actual impact and community awareness
- perceptions – both positive and negative - of the participants, partners, and other stakeholders such as the funders and community of beneficiaries
- factors helping the implementation of the projects
- factors hindering the implementation of the projects
- value for money of the projects
- policies and procedures of the projects – examine these to establish effectiveness in meeting the needs of the Project and how policies and procedures have been implemented
- 'distance travelled' in terms of the agreed project outputs and outcomes
- effectiveness of self assessment (monitoring and evaluation) by staff committee leaders and participants
- any added value in terms of both hard and soft outcomes.

2.1.1 The evaluation also sought to assess the overall impact of the action plan via

- A measurement of 'actual distance travelled' against stated objectives
- Governance, participation and financial efficiency in terms of the management and delivery of the overall action plan by the partnership committee and staff
- Gaps – the identification of further needs that require addressing.

2.1.2 We also looked for added value factors such as:

- evidence of 'bridging' between either individuals and or communities which help to increase/improve performance

- sustainability – how further action may be maintained without the need necessarily for further grant assistance from the Community Safety Partnership

2.1.3 Feedback has attempted to provide BCSP with:

- the learning from each of the individual projects identifying the strengths and weakness of the strategies used to achieve the objectives.
- An indication as to how the performance of the overall Action Plan has been enhanced or inhibited by the performance of the management committee, staff and any other relevant stakeholders.
- The identification of any other issues/factors that are viewed as being relevant to the agreed outcomes of the evaluation.

2.2 In terms of the actual consultation approach taken we aimed to meet up with all 13 projects with a view to carrying out separate structured interviews with both the project sponsors and a sample of project participants. However this proved to be impossible in many of the cases. We will explore this in more detail when we assess the actual performance of each of the individual projects funded later in the evaluation, however there were a number of cross cutting issues that emerged:

- (1) The fact that a number of the projects had finished before the evaluation started made it difficult to tie down both leaders and young people who had moved onto other things;
- (2) The fact that the sum of money from BCSP was frequently a small part of a much bigger funding pot meant that the BCSP component got rather lost in the bigger picture;
- (3) A lack of continuity in terms of volunteer and paid project co-ordinators meant that key individuals were no longer available;

2.2.1 With the Partnership members a structured questionnaire was posted out with a stamped return envelope to 22 members identified jointly by the co-ordinator and chairman. Of the 22 only five members completed and returned the questionnaires. Three of these responses were subsequently followed up, one by telephone and two by face to face meetings.

2.2.2 As a consequence of this disappointing overall response to the initial questionnaire and in order to ensure that we obtained a cross party perspective we contacted and additional three councillors and completed the questionnaires by telephone interview. We also carried out a detailed structured face to face interview with the BCSP Chairman.

2.2.3 A detailed structured face to face interview was also carried out with the current Community Safety Co-ordinator.

2.2.4 Very unusually we were denied the opportunity to discuss any aspects of the evaluation, the performance of BCSP or the reporting measures put in place in terms of determining actual community safety outputs and outcomes via a meeting with the evaluation funders CSU. A memo was sent by CSU to all of the Community Safety Co-ordinators outlining CSU's reasons for not participating in any of these evaluations.

2.3 Underpinning our evaluation methodology was an attempt to utilise the **Putnam Social Capital model** of Bonding, Linking and Bridging Capital with:

Bonding Capital – being evidence of development of internal social capital within the groups of project participants, as shown by increased confidence, team building and taking of individual and/or collective responsibility.

Linking Capital – being evidence of development of links made by the projects to other projects, networks and inter-agency working.

Bridging Capital- being evidence of team-building, development of trust across perceived divisions, increased cross-community understanding and cross-cultural links and relationships with both individuals and a wider set of agencies.

2.3.1 We firmly believe that these factors have a critical role to play if projects are to be able to continue to grow and develop beyond the duration of any project funding support. This is particularly so in the case of BCSP where action plans, in the majority of cases, were adopted and delivered by project sponsors as opposed to growing directly out of the communities concerned.

See appendix 2 for a full list of people and organisations consulted during this evaluation.

3.0 Evaluation outputs and outcomes

Please note; This evaluation has adopted an action learning approach with the specific intent of feeding constructively into the nature, design and content of any future Ballymoney Community Safety Strategy as opposed to documenting every action and step undertaken by each of the individual projects funded over the two year period in question.

Individual project performance

Strategic Priority One – Anti Social Behaviour

The BCSP, building on existing work involving broad based consultation with the local community and statutory agencies, identified anti-social behaviour as its key priority needing addressed in the 2006 -2008 Community Safety Strategy.

The following seven projects all represent a direct response by BCSP to the challenge presented to community safety by anti-social behaviour.

a) Ballymoney Peer Leadership Programme – direct consultation in the form of structured interviews took place with PC Colin Gibson and Inspector Noel Mitchell. We also spoke to two young people who completed a peer education programme using a structured interview approach.

BCSP were aware via the PSNI, Youth Service, the Housing Executive, the DPP and other agencies that anti-social behaviour was an issue that needed to be tackled with for example criminal damage accounting for 32% of all reported crime in Ballymoney District Command Unit in the 2004/05 period. Further 'hotspot' analysis by the PSNI established that 79% of reported criminal damage occurred in Ballymoney town and that 56% of incidents in Ballymoney occurred over the weekend.

Analysis also established that a clear link existed between criminal damage and youths causing annoyance during the time period of 14.00 and 23.59, with both types of incidence peaking during this stage.

Further analysis enabled the PSN to identify the lower end of Ballymoney town where youths tended to congregate and underage drinking is a problem as a specific area needing specific action.

In conjunction with other PSNI action including higher visibility patrolling, a partnership was established with a view to creating a Peer Education Programme targeted at youths who hung around the lower end of the town and more particularly in the area around Tesco's car park.

The project succeeded in:

- 1/ twelve unattached young people (a number of whom had already come to the direct attention of the police) achieving an Open College Network accredited, Level 2 Peer Leadership Programme qualification;
- 2/ two police officers successfully completed an OCN Accredited Level 3 'Train the Trainer' course;
- 3/ increased the participants knowledge and understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of different agencies such as the PSNI, BCSP, the DPP, Housing Executive, Council Departments such as Good Relations, etc;
- 4/ enhancing many of the network relationships that already existed between the key personalities and agencies such as the PSNI, The Housing Executive, the BCSP, the DPP, local community and voluntary organisations, as well as establishing and promoting new relationships. For example the valuable input provided by Coleraine Rural and Urban Network (CRUN) in the training of the police officer to be able to deliver the course and the accreditation of the actual course, the links established with the police and youth services in Stoke-on-Trent where the participants went on a residential as part of their course, and new relationships with the various community and voluntary organisations which a number of the peer educators either joined or kick started upon completion of their peer education course;
- 5/ while we are unable to attribute any one action to an overall decrease of 57.4% in reported crime in the lower end of Ballymoney Town the police officer who both delivered the programme and assessed its impact are confident that it was a major contributory factor;
- 6/ the issue of youths causing annoyance dropped off the agenda of both the DPP and anecdotal evidence also existed about its removal from the agenda of a local community association;
- 7/ encouraged many of the young people involved to pursue other training opportunities – it gave them the personal confidence to be able to recognise that they could achieve as well as highlighting the negative life impacting consequences that being involved in crime at an early age can have;
- 8) religion, politics, a lack of opportunity, were not really the problems, the common denominator was that the young people themselves did not feel that they fitted into established programmes and activities;
- 9) gaining both regional and national recognition via the PSNI 'Policing With The Community Awards' and the 'National Tilley Award Scheme'.

Key learning outcomes:

- **The agencies by working collectively were able to identify the key target group and were able to develop a programme of learning pitched at the right level.**
- **That intervention of this nature can have a direct positive outcome in terms of actually reducing levels of crime.**
- **It is difficult to be able to attribute or proportion success to any one intervention. We would have**

- anticipated discussing this matter with the CSU.
- **The PSNI have specific internal output and outcome focused reporting mechanisms in place that they were able to utilise to fully capture the impact of this project. We feel that knowledge of this approach would be invaluable to other projects that had difficulty in doing likewise.**
 - **Any programme is only as good as the people involved and the level of commitment shown by them. Such commitment was clearly evident in the case of this project.**
 - **How is the momentum of success to be maintained if key personalities involved in the delivery of the programme change and you are invariably faced with a new generation of young people following the non engaged attitude of their predecessors?**

b) Ballymoney 'Off the Street Project' – A structured telephone interview took place with Deidre Bradley from the NEELB Youth Service who line managed the project.

The project focused on working with unattached young people in a number of areas of identified weak community infrastructure. Two 12 week on the street intervention sessions were delivered each involving 12 young people in each of the two years in which the project was funded by BCSP.

The project recruited participating young people via work undertaken in the Castle Street/Tesco car park area, Dervock and Balnamore and also through the assistance of the PSNI who identified target kids.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) obtaining 100% attendance from the participants in each area, which indicates that the content and delivery was pitched at the right level;
- 2) developing stronger links between the various partners organisations involved in the delivery of the project namely the Youth Services, PSNI, Midnight Soccer and local community organisations;
- 3) encouraging a number of the participants to engage in further learning and training opportunities, for example some engaged in the police's Peer leadership programme, others in the Youth Intergenerational Drugs and Alcohol Programme. Some also enrolled to undertake specific Youth Service's training programmes.

Key learning outcomes:

- 1) The Youth Service stated that a 12 week on the street delivery programme is not long enough to create sustained attitudinal**

change; especially while working with young people from areas of low community infrastructure. The future strategic preference would be to run fewer courses of longer duration.

2) There was clear evidence of some young people taking a progressive project route via the partnership relationships established by this project. For example some young people moved through this project into the police Peer Leadership Programme and others into midnight soccer.

3) The underlying problem of weak community infrastructure in key target areas needs to be addressed if project participants are not to regress or their behaviour to be mimicked by the next generation of young people from the areas in question after any short term intervention programme is completed. Tackling such a problem requires a co-ordinated strategy for action by a broad range of organisations and agencies.

4) There were no specific measures in place that would enable this project to assess or to be able to evaluate its overall impact on community safety.

c) Rural Focus Project year one – Loughgiel Pro – Active Partnership and Cloughmills Community Action Team. We carried out a structured telephone interview with the project co-ordinator Ms Orla Quinn from Loughgiel. As the project was finished in the first year of the strategy it proved impossible to be able to speak to any of the young people who directly participated.

This project took place during year one. It was aimed at bringing young people together from different religious backgrounds with a view to reducing anti-social behaviour in both of the participating villages.

The impact of the project was slightly impeded by the withdrawal of Cloughmills Community Action Team due to internal difficulties. This placed the onus on Loughgiel to identify and establish new partners.

The project based around sporting activity is described as having been very successful in terms of attracting both young girls and boys – with numbers exceeding the target agreed in the actual Action Plan. In addition new relationships and friendships have been established and educational diversionary activities successfully utilised in order to highlight the negative impact that crime can have not only on the victims but ultimately on the lives of the perpetrators.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) establishing relationships that kids from Loughgiel have been able to maintain via their participation in the Ballymoney soccer Friendship League.
- 2) delivering a diversionary education programme demonstrating the negative impact of crime on all concerned.

3) enhancing relationships between those involved in delivering the project in both Loughgiel and Cloughmills.

Key learning outcomes:

- **The project demonstrates that it is frequently easier to do successful cross community/ good relations work with young people who are not from your immediate doorstep. This means that the problematic issue of internal village community relations remains to be addressed in both the villages of Loughgiel and Cloughmills;**
- **antisocial behaviour in both areas seems primarily down to an older age group whom the project did not set out to target;**
- **the input of paid professional staff meant that Loughgiel was able to deliver on the project despite the internal difficulties that their Cloughmills partner encountered;**
- **that while things are gradually improving there is considerable scope for improvement in relations between the PSNI and predominantly catholic communities like Loughgiel, improvements which should in the long run make it easier to directly address community safety issues such as anti-social behaviour;**
- **there are difficulties in measuring other than anecdotally the impact of such projects on community safety issues;**
- **the impact of BCSP staffing changes and staffing gaps on the processing of claims and the need to send information again that has already been provided (appendix 3).**

d) Rural Focus year two – Get BART Active partnership project between Balnamore and Rasharkin. We meet with three co-ordinators from both groups who were involved in the delivery of the project plus two female participants and carried out structured interviews with two co-ordinators and two participants

As single identity areas historically there has been little structured youth contact between these two villages.

In both low levels of anti-social behaviour was identified as being an issue. By participating in a joint project the BART project targeted at young people aged 11-1X, aimed to equip them with the life skills, knowledge and cultural awareness to be able to recognise the causes and impacts of their behaviours within their respective communities.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) establishing relationships that young people from Rasharkin and Balnamore are very keen to build on;
- 2) delivering a diversionary education programme demonstrating the negative impact of crime on all concerned;
- 3) enhancing relationships between those involved in delivering the project in both Rasharkin and Balnamore;
- 4) building relationships with the PSNI community officers with the children, the parents and the leaders who participated in the project.

Key learning outcomes:

- **highlighting the difficulties that still exist in undertaking community relations work within communities which are polarised;**
- **highlighting the difficulties in getting older teenagers to engage, particularly boys, in projects like BART;**
- **highlighting problems for groups caused by retrospective grant payments and by delays caused through continued staff absence;**
- **the critical input of enthusiastic and committed volunteers especially where there is no paid staffing capacity;**
- **the difficulties in measuring other than anecdotally the impact of such projects on community safety issues.**

e) Midnight Soccer League – structured interview carried out with John Fall the project sponsor plus one parent and two young people who participated in the project.

The project sought to attract young people aged 14-16 who were often found hanging about in the town of Ballymoney and other Borough villages with nothing to do in the evenings.

As a consequence a number had already come to the attention of the police for minor criminal damages and a range of anti-social behaviours.

The cross-community project attracted young people who as well as playing football were exposed to an informative input from the youth services on the impacts of anti-social behaviour.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) Building relationships between young people from different communities who in normal circumstances would never have come into contact with each other;
- 2) Providing an opportunity for young people who participated in other BCSP projects such as the Loughgiel and Cloughmills joint project to be able to formally maintain contact;
- 3) Gave a formal structure and discipline to many young people mainly males, who were not engaged in any similar type of structured educational or leisure activity.

Key learning outcomes:

- **The value of competitive sport in being able to engage with detached young males in the target age range 14-16;**
- **The natural links that had developed between both individual sponsors and projects funded under the BCSP Action Plan which enable young participants to be able to maintain newly established friendships and contacts;**
- **The value of competitive sport as a good relations tool.**

f) Safer Bonfire Project – run over two years. As part of the consultation process we carried out structured interviews with both Bryan Edgar the project sponsor, and Gary Blair from the 2007 bonfire winners Bendooragh.

Similar to other parts of Northern Ireland the project worked over a two year period with organisations behind the traditional July and October bonfires with a view to addressing the negative impact that bonfires have both on locals and wider civic society.

The project which involved many of the key agencies such as the PSNI, NIHE, NI Fire & Rescue, Ballymoney Borough Council, worked throughout the year but more particularly during the period April to November.

While the emergency services were able to confirm less incidents involving bonfires one slightly disappointing aspect of the bonfire competition has been the reticence shown by the majority of areas to actually enter the competition as opposed to being automatically entered by the Bonfire Committee.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) reducing the number of callouts required by the various emergency services;
- 2) reducing the number of complaints associated with the bonfires relating to, for example the burning of tyres, alcohol, loud music, etc;
- 3) reducing the amount of white goods discarded onto bonfires that were built up far too early;
- 4) encouraging bonfire organisers to leave the construction of their bonfires to as near the date as possible thereby reducing noise and other antisocial behaviour.

Key learning outcomes:

- **the opinion was expressed that the nature, location and timing of meetings serves to put many potential participating communities off entering the bonfire competition. It was felt that more informal meetings held in community halls in areas where bonfires are traditionally held would have more success;**
- **that communities do appreciate the need to reduce animosity caused by the traditional bonfire and that the input (and the financial support) available has had a key part to play in helping to broker new relationships;**
- **More still needs to be done in a number of areas to reduce the burden placed on the relevant statutory services to clear up bonfire sites;**
- **The impact on community safety within the areas involved is very much a holistic one and as such it is extremely difficult to identify and quantify the overall community safety impact;**
- **The added value benefit to be had in addressing the carbon footprint agenda via the Carbon Sink project.**

g) Youth Estates Alternative Project (YEAP) – Replaced by the PSNI Street Intervention Project after agreement could not be reached by the three estates involved in the YEAP. In terms of the Street Intervention Project we carried out structured interviews with PC Tommy Linton and Inspector Noel Mitchell from the PSNI as well as John and Margaret Scott from Cheers Youth Club. Two participants had to cancel an arranged meeting at the last minute due to a family illness.

This project specifically targeted a group of young people aged 14 to 23 most of whom had already come to the attention of the PSNI for a range of different reasons. The group of about 30, who were described as Goths hung about the Tesco car park especially late evening at weekends.

An inter-agency approach was adopted to target this group. The young people were allocated a dedicated night (Wednesday) at Cheers Youth Club which was within walking distance of where they mostly hung out. Here they participated in a range of leisure and educational interventions delivered by both Cheers staff and the PSNI.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) playing its part in reducing the levels of youths causing annoyance and also criminal damage compared to the previous year;
- 2) getting a number of the participants to attend Cheers on other nights apart from the dedicated project night;
- 3) the young people becoming more engaged in the local community – for example they have engaged in discussions with Castle Street Community Association and have been given access to their premises as well as three joining the committee;
- 4) encouraging a number of the participants that they could achieve success when it comes to undertaking courses and learning and as such they have either gone back or on to the local colleges of further education;
- 5) encouraging a number of the participants to get involved in the Peer leadership Programme (12) which they successfully completed;
- 6) three currently undergoing a Trainee Leadership Course with Youth Services; and
- 7) a number being invited by Youth Service's to go to Cape Cod in America, where they will work in a summer camp.

Key learning outcomes:

- **The agencies, by working collectively, were able to identify the key target groups and were able to develop a programme of learning pitched at the right level;**
- **Intervention of this nature can have a direct positive outcome in terms of actually reducing Levels of crime;**
- **It is difficult to be able to attribute or proportion success to any one intervention, we would have anticipated discussion on this matter with the NIO CSU.**
- **The PSNI have specific internal output and outcome focused reporting mechanisms in place that they were able to utilise to fully capture the impact of this project. We feel that knowledge of this approach would be invaluable to other projects that had difficulty in doing likewise.**
- **Any programme is only as good as the people involved and the level of commitment shown by them. Such**

commitment was clearly evident in the case of this project.

- **How is the momentum of success to be maintained if key personalities involved in the delivery of the programme change and you are invariably faced with a new generation of young people following the non engaged attitude of their predecessors?**

Strategic Priority Two – Drugs and Alcohol Abuse

The BCSP, building on existing work involving broad based consultation with the local community and statutory agencies, identified drug and alcohol abuse as the second priority needing addressed in the 2006-2008 Community Safety Strategy.

The following project represents a direct response by BCSP to the challenge presented to community safety by anti-social behaviour.

a) Youth Intergenerational Drugs and Alcohol Project: A structured telephone interview took place with Julie Finlay from the NEELB, one of the Youth Service? Coordinators involved in the delivery of the project.

The PSNI and projects such as Off the Streets enabled the identification of young people interested in participating in this project.

The young people were trained by Coleraine Rural and Urban Network (CRUN) to be able to deliver a level 1 drug and alcohol workshop and a range of communities approached about having the workshops delivered in their area.

Some did not engage – while a reason was never given the coordinator felt that there was an element of suspicion relating to why their particular area had as they saw it been singled out.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) giving the peer mentors the skills and confidence to be able to deliver the workshops to groups of young people;
- 2) producing materials, content and resources pitched at the right level – positive feedback on these factors was provided by the various project leaders;
- 3) increasing awareness in relation to the subject matter – once again this was confirmed by the various group leaders.

Key learning outcomes:

- **Uptake could have been made easier if not indeed improved by appropriate usage of marketing and PR before the training in order to make the public aware of the programme and what it was all about;**
- **Young people react better to engaging with their peers;**
- **Evaluation at the end of year one would have been useful in order to identify whether the project was actually achieving its outcomes and to identify if any amendment was required;**
- **No specific measures were in place to enable an accurate assessment of the overall impact of the project on its identified community safety outcomes.**

Strategic Priority Three – Paramilitary Activity

The BCSP, building on existing work involving broad based consultation with the local community and statutory agencies, identified paramilitary activity as the third priority needing addressed in the 2006-2008 Community Safety Strategy.

The following projects represent a direct response by BCSP to the challenge presented to community safety by paramilitary activity.

a) Changing the Look of the Environment and Roads (the CLEAR project). A face to face structured interview was carried out with the project sponsor.

The sponsor raised the following specific concerns:

- a) The drop out of other estate partners;
- b) The need to recognise that in terms of flags, murals and kerb painting things had been slowly but surely improving within the Glebe for a number of years

An audit of the views and opinions of Glebe estate residents was completed by the project sponsors and suggested actions identified. The project found difficulty in getting residents to action the finding and as a consequence designed and implemented a Cultural Identity Programme as away of completing the project.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) identifying how difficult it is for residents to be able to implement a strategy for change;

- 2) identifying options that would improve the current appearance of the general estate and the housing stock without diluting the cultural identity of the community;
- 3) there was also a considerable amount of apathy within the community with people simply not wishing to be bothered.

Key learning outcomes:

- **The need for co-ordinated and constant response/interventions by key lead agencies such as the NIHE, Road Service, PSNI, etc. The issue is too complex and controversial for residents to tackle on their own. Could the community safety coordinator play a bridging and brokerage role in the future?**
- **The failure on the part of certain areas and estates to recognise that they have even got a paramilitary issue that needs addressing;**
- **The need to recognise that a short term fix approach is not likely to work and what is needed is a series of small steps forward;**
- **Again measuring the impact of this project on overall community safety is extremely hard to do. The project sponsors were adamant that a joined up, holistic, consistent long term intervention is required if major sustained change is to be achieved.**

b) Glebeside Youth DVD Project: A face to face interview took place with the project sponsor

The project sought to build relationships between excluded youth and the broader community within three identified estates in Ballymoney.

However in the end only the Glebe Estate actually participated in the project. As a consequence the capacity of the project was considerably reduced and the project ended up focused on a group of children with whom it was already engaged as opposed to the identification of a new group of excluded young people.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) Highlighting that there may be an issue of concern when it comes to the three estates originally identified working together;
- 2) Producing an end product but failing to embrace a new audience of young people;
- 3) Highlighting some of the practical difficulties that arise when working with young people, for example some of the training took place in Coleraine. Not

only were the only available dates clashing with exams but transport was an issue.

Key learning outcomes:

- **danger of proceeding with a project that is significantly different than the funded action plan in terms of achieving identified outcomes vis- a-vis excluded youth;**
- **Need for development help and support in terms of the actual roll out of the project.**

Strategic Priority Four – Offences against the Individual

The BCSP, building on existing work involving broad based consultation with the local community and statutory agencies identified Offences against the Individual as the fourth priority needing addressed in the 2006 -2008 Community Safety Strategy.

The following project represents a direct response by BCSP to the challenge presented to community safety by Offences against the Individual

Regional NSPCC Stop it now Project: we carried out a structured telephone interview with the current project co-ordinator

The NSPCC project coordinator recognised that participation in the local information event had not been on as high a level as anticipated – with a poor participative response despite local advertising, information fliers and billboards.

As a consequence in future they were going to vary their approach with a view to delivering workshops in the premises of host community and voluntary organisations as opposed to just one central location.

Due to maternity leave there had also been a considerable delay in getting the aforementioned local workshop/information sessions set up.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) raising awareness among a small nucleus of people about the issue of abuse;
- 2) drawing public attention to the existence of the website and free phone number;
- 3) ensuring that the public in Ballymoney were included within a National NSPCC campaign.

Key learning outcomes:

- **Making key contact information more accessible which the PSNI believes to be essential;**
- **Because of the distasteful nature of the subject matter levels of attendance and engagement at public fora are always likely to be comparatively low;**
- **More need to be done in terms of the NSPCC looking to feedback to funders on the local impact of the project;**
- **Again in terms of overall community safety outcomes as identified in the BCSP strategy it has proved impossible to measure the actual impact.**

Strategic Priority Five – Prejudice and Hate

The BCSP, building on existing work involving broad based consultation with the local community and statutory agencies identified Prejudice and Hate as the fifth priority needing addressed in the 2006 -2008 Community Safety Strategy.

The following project represents a direct response by BCSP to the challenge presented to community safety by Prejudice and Hate.

a) Ethnic Minority Awareness: We carried out a structured face to face interview with one of the PSNI officers involved in the design and delivery of this project. We also spoke to one of the training deliverers about accessing the event evaluation materials they had obtained. Unfortunately these were not subsequently forthcoming despite repeated requests.

The ethnic minorities project was delivered in partnership by the PSNI and the Council's Good Relations Officer to a broad range of children in schools throughout the Ballymoney Council Area. The delivery involved an interactive workshop and drama sessions, covering a broad range of relevant topics. The opportunity also existed to introduce the young people to a range of speakers from different nationalities and cultures.

The project succeeded in:

- 1) Broadening overall knowledge of cultural diversity;
- 2) Giving young people the opportunity to assess their past behaviour, attitudes and prejudices.

Key learning outcomes:

- **a more clearly defined built in project evaluation process would have enabled the testing of attitudinal change in**

- terms of the distance travelled by participants before and after participation in the project;
- there is no built in mechanism for trying to measure the impact of the project in terms of overall community safety;
 - it must be viewed primarily as a preventative approach aimed at any potential future escalation in hate crime incidents in the Ballymoney area.

Strategic Priority Eight – Car Crime and Road Safety.

The BCSP, building on existing work involving broad based consultation with the local community and statutory agencies, prioritised Car Crime and Road Safety as an issue to be addressed by the BCSP.

The following project represents a direct response by BCSP to the challenge presented by Car Crime and Road Safety.

Safer Driver initiative - we were not able either to obtain additional information or a meeting with the named project sponsor.

The only information we were able to obtain about this project was via the project file retained by the BCSP Project Coordinator.

As we were unable to make contact to speak to the project we are not in a position to identify the learning that was evident via the project. However we would state that :

- A) an end of year evaluation may have helped to identify and resolve any problems, issues or concerns that may have arisen.
- b) the lack of response should be taken into consideration when discussing the future community safety plan for the Ballymoney Borough.

Performance of key functions

Ballymoney Community Safety Partnership:

In terms of learning we have been able to identify the following specific points:

- a) The size of the partnership committee as suggested by NIO CSU and the need for monthly? meetings means that the structure is somewhat unwieldy and very time consuming especially given the relative size of the funding budget.

b) Some key sectors are not represented – for example the commercial sector, the voluntary and community sector and the local health sector. There are a number of factors evident which currently limit the extent of the involvement of three sectors that we need to be explored much more deeply in any subsequent strategic review and these are:

- The fact that meetings take place during the day in the Council offices is not always convenient for voluntary community representatives many of who work during the day. The atmosphere and top heavy professional nature of the committee can also be quite daunting. Perhaps holding a number of the meetings in community venues throughout the Borough could be one possible solution to consider;
- The withdrawal of the Northern HealthTrust Senior management representative without identifying a replacement has left a very obvious weakness that needs to be addressed. As the BCSP tries to encourage collective 'buy in' in terms of community safety responsibility a major player such as the Health Trust with a brief and budget to spend on community safety issues critically needs to be involved;
- The reluctance in terms of the local business sector to buy into the partnership is something that is indicative of other partnerships elsewhere in NI. While it is surprising given that local businesses always highlight both their vulnerability to and fear of crime as an important priority, it is probably not so surprising if you consider that many of the people concerned might find difficulty in getting away to attend meetings during the day.

c) There is added value in having the chair occupied by a council officer. This facilitates both ease of communication between chair and the Community safety coordinator and ease of access to key partners such as the DPP, Good Relations Officer, etc. It also ensures that the chair has a good 'hands on' awareness of not only the key issues but also of the projects themselves. This proved particularly valuable in the past two years given the high level of fluidity in terms of staffing of the project co-ordinator's post.

The current chair, while recognising the aforementioned points stressed that he felt there was an inherent weakness in him occupying the chair feeling that an elected representative may have more influence in developing and raising the profile of the Partnership.

d) The full participation of political parties representing the Council will bring both new expertise and new ideas to the table regarding the potential nature and content of any future BCSP Strategy.

e) Did the partnership spread itself too thinly in supporting such a broad range of projects given the small size of the budget? Would the impact on

community safety have been easier to evaluate if a smaller number of projects had been given bigger packages of support?

f) The partnership needs to give greater consideration in the future to monitoring and evaluation and in particular with regard to how year one performance could potentially be a key determinant in whether funding is continued into year two of a project.

g) That the partnership needs to look to strengthen its position vis a vis the Community Safety Unit. For example why did they fail to participate in the evaluation process? Why are the monitoring materials they provide lacking in the need for project detail? Why did they not provide some techniques or methodologies that would enable the actual measurement of the impact made by projects in terms of community safety and also to allow local regional comparative work to take place? Why have they placed such a low emphasis and value on evaluation?

Community Safety Unit

They did not engage in the evaluation process and as such we could not measure their input as part of this evaluation process.

See appendix 1 for a copy of the letter provided by NIO CSU Partnership Development Officer stating their reasons for not participating in the evaluation process. While this is both unusual and unfortunate we would recommend that the partnership take responsibility for asking the CSU for written answers to the following specific questions:

- Why was so little emphasis placed on the value of ongoing project evaluation at the end of both years one and two? Given the time frame for the evaluation of the action plan it is quite clear that the requirement to undertake evaluation was very much an afterthought on the part of CSU.
- Why were the reporting materials provided for project monitoring so basic and no real emphasis placed on the importance of year one performance for those organisations with two year grant approval?
- Why was no emphasis placed on the community development capacity of the project coordinators especially given the small budgets they were handling?
- Why were no agreed templates for measuring community safety impact designed and used as a standard measure of performance across the 26 partnerships?

Community Safety Co-ordinator

In terms of learning we have been able to identify the following specific points:

- a) That a lack of continuity in staffing (see appendix 2) that occurred during the two year delivery of the 13 individual project action plans did have some negative impact on a number of projects; for example a number of projects stated that staff absences resulted in delays in the processing of claims, others stated that it resulted in duplication of effort replacing information that had either been mislaid or lost and as such not in the project files.
 - b) That the burden of administration placed on the projects was minimal.
 - c) That both a willingness and capacity exists for the project coordinator to be able to play more of a hands on community development role. It was stressed by various groups (and especially those with no staffing input) that community development support would have been invaluable in terms of helping them to be able to increase the impact of their projects.
- The point was also made that given the broad nature of the organisational composition of the BCSP and the proximity of the coordinator to other key council staff such as the Good Relations Officer the coordinator is ideally placed to play a brokerage role in terms of negotiating packages of support for addressing some of the key underlying issues impacting on community safety, e.g. paramilitary activity, weak community infrastructure, underage drinking.
- d) The chairman pointed out that unlike the current occupant of the post previous staff members would not have had the experience to be able to engage in community development.
 - e) The current coordinator has been very successful in using the budget as leverage to access additional funding in support of project delivery
 - f) The current coordinator has been successful in ensuring the organisation and content standardisation of each of the project files.
 - g) With regard to project spend the fact that groups did not always have a project coordinator encouraging them to keep up the momentum in terms of delivering on their projects meant that the retrospective payment process similarly got delayed. This means that many of the projects still have to process claims for work completed in the final quarter of year two.

The under spend in year one enabled the partnership to add two additional one year projects in year two.

h) A good working relationship seems to exist between the staff members in the DPP and the CSP and this helps to ensure a natural exchange of relevant information.

i) More work needs to be done in terms of community awareness and PR especially among young people. Of the eight young people we consulted with who had participated as project participants not one knew that their project had been funded by BCSP.

4.0 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusion

Overall there can be no doubt that the BCSP has both functioned effectively and managed to successfully deliver on the majority of the action plans adopted under the identified key strategic priorities.

Unfortunately in terms of actually measuring the impact of individual projects in terms of community safety we have in the case of most of the action plans had to resort primarily if not exclusively to anecdotal information from project participants, sponsors, BCSP staff and Partnership members.

We feel that specific guidance (if not indeed training) should have been given to each of the CSP by the CSU on how to measure the impact of the projects in the 26 proposed local action plans that were signed off by the CSU.

The absence of these guidelines is indicative of what we feel is a lack of overall emphasis on the part of CSU on the need for detailed ongoing evaluation of the project action plans vis-a -vis their actual impact on community safety.

Unfortunately we were not given the opportunity to discuss either this or any other matters with the CSU. However we would recommend that the partnership as a matter of urgency stress their desire to have answers to this and the other questions raised on pages 28 and 29 preferably before submitting any new action plan underpinning the development of a further community safety strategy for the Ballymoney Borough Council area.

The overall success of the action plan (if not indeed also partially responsible for the low crime rate to be found in the Ballymoney Borough Area) is undoubtedly due to the strong commitment on the part of both individuals and organisations to work together to bring about real change.

Many of the projects supported were built on a bedrock of existing good relationships between individuals and organisations, for example the existing relationship between the PSNI and the NEELB Youth Services had a key part to play in the ultimate success of projects such as the Off the Streets Project, the Street Intervention Project and the Peer Leadership Project, to name but a few.

For most of the projects that were successful the completion of their action plans represent not the end but the beginning of a need for sustained intervention to address underlying community safety causes that result in the effects the action plans sought to address.

Sustained intervention is not something that the CSP can do on their own. Consequently there is a real need for the various agencies represented on the partnership to appreciate that their involvement is not solely about ensuring best value for money in terms of the spend of any allocated budget from CSU, but also about identifying and agreeing how their own organisational budgets and expertise can be harnessed along with that of the CSP in order to try and develop a strategic best fit. A consistency in terms of approach is critical if the potential to seriously tackle once and for all underlying community safety issues such as, underage drinking, paramilitary activity and weak community infrastructure is to exist.

Recommendations

As agreed we have presented our recommendations in the form of an agenda that we feel could be utilised as the basis for discussion by BCSP regarding the future strategic direction of community safety intervention in the Ballymoney Borough Council Area.

We firmly believe that any consultative process leading to the identification of a new strategy needs to look very closely at the following specific issues:

- 1) The composition and roles of the current Partnership – was the initial NIO CSU template identifying 20 plus agencies who should participate on a Partnership too unwieldy to ever be truly effective? Would a core of key agencies (as has developed) with other key agencies to be kept informed via quarterly meetings, or email bulletins, or some similar alternative be more practical and appropriate?

Furthermore how should the Partnership look to recruit those from the voluntary community, commercial and health sectors who are not currently engaging in the process?

- 2) Does the partnership's focus any new funding on the further development of existing projects, or is there a need to streamline the funding in line with the identified new priorities of CSU and the likelihood that full political participation on the Partnership could lead to the identification of new community safety issues?
- 3) Does the nature of the project co-ordinators post need to change? Is there the potential for the post holder to play a more hands on community development role in helping tackle issues such as lack of engagement with teenagers and young people in rural villages. This would help to ensure that the BCSP is viewed not merely as a small (and in some cases relatively insignificant) funder but as an organisation that can offer both practical hands on assistance, as well as advice and guidance?

- 4) How can the Partnership seek to broker a more co-ordinated, joined up approach to tackling some of the key underlying issues that impact on community safety – for example paramilitary activity, and substance abuse? Is there real potential for the BCSP to actively promote development of a more co-ordinated response to community safety within any future community planning process?
- 5) How (if at all) does the relationship with the local DPP need to change? Would there be merit in the two project staff working closer together if not indeed in the same office? How can they seek to clear up public confusion about the roles and responsibilities of each body could/should there be a joint public awareness drive?
- 6) How (if at all) can some of the positive learning in terms of the community relations and good relations practise experienced through joint projects such as the Get BART Active project be potentially utilised to tackle community relations issues in other communities within the Borough?
- 7). What measures can be agreed with NIO CSU and subsequently put in place in order to enable a more co-ordinated and structured approach to the monitoring and evaluation of all project action plans within a specific community safety framework?

Appendices

Community Safety Unit letter

List of evaluation participants

Community Safety Project Coordinators employment time line.

Two presentations by Peer Educators project participants

Community Safety Unit letter

List of evaluation participants

Mr Bryan Edgar – Chairperson, BSCP member project sponsor
Ms Cathy Watson – Community Safety Co-ordinator BSCP member
Ms Deidre Bradley – NEELB Youth Service – BSCP member and project sponsor
Mr John Dempsey – Chief Executive & Town Clerk BBC – BSCP member
Inspector Noel Mitchell – PSNI – BSCP member
Mr Jonny Donaghy – DPP – BSCP member
Ms Mairead Myles-Davey – NIHE – BSCP member
Cllr Anita Cavlan – BSCP member
Alderman Frank Campbell – BSCP member
Councillor Malachy McCamphill – BSCP member
Councillor Ian Stevenson BSCP member
PC Colin Gibson – project sponsor
PC Tommy Linton – project sponsor
Ms Sinead Hegarty – project sponsor
Mr Iain McAfee – project sponsor
Ms Margaret Scott – project participant
Mr John Scott – project participant
Ms Louse Watson – project sponsor
Mr John Fall – project sponsor
Ms Julie Finley- NEELB – project co-ordinator
Ms Jemma McAllister – project participant – get BART active
Ms Stephanie Watson – project participant- get BART active
Mr Gary Blair – project participant
Mr David Shirley – parent/Midnight soccer
Mr Mark Blair – project participant
Mr David Shirley (junior) – project participant
Mr Jonathan McFarland – project participant
Ms Orla Quinn – project co-ordinator
Ms Nicole Camas – project participant
Mr Gordon McAllister – project participant.

Community Safety Project Coordinators employment time line

Julie McGarry - 01/01/2003 – 17/01/2007. Of on maternity leave between the 30/10/2005 and the 23/11/06 when her post was covered by Coleen McAuley – 03/10/2005 -31/07/2006. Coleen resigned to take up a permanent job.

Clare Henry (jobshare post with Julie) – she only worked one day (01/11/2006) and then resigned.

Cathy Watson (jobshare job with Julie), 01/12/2006 – present. Made f/t when Julie finished 17/01/07. Off maternity leave between 03/02/07 and 6/08/07. Post was covered by agency workers via Grafton Recruitment. Please note there was a 3 week gap at the start and a 1.5 months gap at the end.

Two presentations by Peer Leadership project participants

1/ I just want to take a couple of minutes to tell you about how Peer Leadership has been a benefit to both myself and my colleagues. It has equipped me for the responsibilities I now hold today. Nine of us were given the opportunity to form a committee responsible for forming and running a local youth club. We decided to call the Youth Club 'The Zone'.

Together as a team we were eager to put the skills we had learned during Peer Leadership into action. In the very first planning stages of the youth club we found ourselves using the core skills that we had developed. The efforts of the team from the beginning provided a strong framework on which 'The Zone' still runs over two years later. The Peer Leadership course taught us that communication is not just verbal but also non-verbal, not just speaking but listening to and giving consideration to the opinions of others.

Currently at 'The Zone' we have over 250 registered members. Luckily for our sanity, they haven't all turned up at the same time, YET. However, we still have on average 130 young people on any given night. Not that we mean to boast but we think this is absolutely fantastic and the best youth club within at least a 50mile radius. Coping with such large numbers has had its challenges, especially when you're having one of THOSE days, some people having more of those days than others. However, our improved organisational skills have enabled us to cope under what is, at times, immense pressure.

The witty conversation and craic (of the NON-drug type!!) was a bonus element to Peer Leadership. During the course the most invaluable lesson in preparation for youth work perhaps has been to develop thick skin. Indeed, some are thicker.....SKI NNED than others. Such a lesson has been

invaluable in enabling me to do my bit at the Zone every week without having to take any prolonged breaks due to stress.

I also believe that utilising the skills that I learned during Peer Leadership has equipped me in giving something back to my community. Having the skills to be able to be part of the running of a Youth Club has allowed me to aid in the provision of a social facility where young people can come to engage with each other and the staff.

The professional relationship that has been built up between the youth and the staff helps young people to feel included and accepted and can be effective in not only tackling anti-social behaviour, but also in developing their social skills. This is beneficial to society as a whole. Criminology studies have shown that those who have social bonds with family, friends and are integrated into organisations such as a Youth Club are less likely to commit crime because they feel that in doing so they have something to lose, the respect of others.

I therefore believe that it is important to integrate young people into social activities and provide them with a sense of belonging to help make criminal activity seem less attractive because of the sense of loss that would result, rather than labelling them as troublesome teenagers. I believe that it is much more beneficial to take preventive measures rather than reactionary measures.

The role that I have been able to play in this process is as a result of the opportunities that the completion of the Peer Leadership course has provided. Without such a course I would not have developed the necessary skills for youth work, MOST of which I like to hope I now possess today. The Peer Leadership course has also given me the enthusiasm to continue to further my skills and as a result it has opened the door to

courses such as a Youth Information course and Child Protection course, which many of those who participated in the Peer Leadership course are now in the process of completing.

In conclusion, the principles developed are only the beginning of the benefit of the course. Peer Leadership invests in the youth of today and in doing so also invests in the leaders of tomorrow. I would thoroughly recommend participation in this course. It is amazing how it can broaden your horizons and open up a variety of opportunities, while having great craic at the same time. Indeed, I hope those of the age I was when completing Peer Leadership will be able to make the most of this beneficial course for many years to come. Thank-you

2/ Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing the youth of today's society and what young people often come up against is the feeling of compulsion to conform to peer pressure. All too often this peer pressure is to conform to the wrong kind of behaviour. Peer Leadership has taught me that those who conform generally don't make much of a positive difference in our society; they are not change agents, nor do they aspire to be. I think that this realisation is a quality in itself and if we approach not only young people but people generally with this in mind it will greatly benefit our communities in the long run.

The OCN Level 2 in Peer Leadership has been and continues to be instrumental in developing my sense of self-awareness and my ability to instigate change in our community and I am certain that this also applies to the other young people who completed the course. Peer Leadership has taught me that it is more productive to engage with young people, tackling issues at the roots and involving them in decision-making than labelling them early on in their lives as troublesome. Indeed, studies

have shown that in labelling a person in the early years of their lives, in particular the early years of adulthood, often (but not always) they become exactly what they are labelled as, whether this is for good or for bad. Looking back over my own adolescence, I can see that it has been people who have believed in my abilities and my potential that has got me to where I am today. Peer Leadership has taught me what I believe is a valuable quality- that believing in other young people often increases their self confidence to overcome difficult circumstances of their own; and that I can empower others to make the most of the opportunities they have been given.

Before Peer Leadership I was greatly lacking in self-confidence, in fact, I would not have been confident enough to stand here this evening and talk about it, at least not without my knees knocking together! A very handy bonus quality of the course has been to acquire a very thick skin! In fact, those involved in the course had the potential to completely shatter what fragments DID exist of my confidence, and indeed they did... just to build me back up into the wonderful, confident, well-rounded, outstanding, *humble*, individual I OBVIOUSLY am today! Through Peer Leadership I have gained not only confidence but with this the invaluable quality of communication and all its aspects; and how to assert myself without being intimidating or aggressive, a quality, having lacked so much self-confidence I never thought I would learn!

Another core quality I have gained from the course is good teamwork skills. Along with confidence and good communication, it is a quality that I can, do and will take into possibly all other areas of my career, future opportunities and voluntary work. Along with this is the priceless quality of organisation. By this I not only mean the ability to put together a project or to organise a trip for a group of people, but the

ability to explore things from different angles and viewpoints, to pursue all possibilities and to think outside the box so that I am prepared for perhaps not all, but most foreseeable problems!

This in turn has taught me another invaluable quality, to use my initiative, to think and act critically, to identify problems and make the best out of what are at times, quite frankly, bad situations! I have already mentioned that from Peer Leadership I have gained the quality of increased self-awareness and the ability to instigate change in the community. It is from this quality of being able to use my initiative that, in turn, I possess the quality of empowering others, and not only young people, to realise that complaining about the problem does not change it, as much as we all give the complaining a go anyway!! but rather that taking steps to instigate change is what actually makes society a better place both for themselves and for others.

I believe that I have gained what I am sure you will agree are invaluable qualities from a course that is relatively easy to complete. If I can empower others to complete a course like this one at the age I did it, I can only imagine what benefit it would have for society because young people who possess these qualities will mature into the competent citizens and leaders of tomorrow.

Perhaps most importantly, the qualities I have gained from Peer Leadership did not cease to exist on completion of the course, as I have mentioned, I do, and will continue to use them in the future, and this is what Rachel will talk to you about in a moment.

Thank you for your time.