



YouthAction Northern Ireland is a regional, voluntary youth organisation with bases in Belfast, Armagh, Ballygawley, Newry and the North West.

Through all our work we are striving to make a significant difference to the lives of young people throughout Northern Ireland.

Each year 4,500 disadvantaged young people engage in developmental programmes to maximise their skills, qualifications and potential through our six priorities:

- Youth Arts
- Gender Equality
- Training and Accreditation
- Area Based Strategies
- Rural Development
- Work with Young Men

Over 17,500 young people and adults are supported through our membership services and a further 8,000 attend shows, conferences, seminars and events.

We also contribute to the development of youth work by;

- Piloting and providing training to volunteers and professional workers
- Disseminating models of best practice
- Working in partnership with statutory, voluntary and community organisations
- Carrying out research into issues most pertinent to young people
- Lobbying government, drawing on our research and relationships with young people





*YouthAction*  
NORTHERN IRELAND

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# Building Leadership

Rural Community Leadership Programme

*July 2006 – June 2008*

External Evaluation by  
Anna Clarke  
Community Development Consultancy



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND



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## Biographical Note

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# Executive Summary

YouthAction Northern Ireland has delivered many different community leadership programmes for the past 18 years. During that time the model has been developed and refined into the exemplar programme that is the subject of this evaluation. Each programme has been customised to suit the specific needs and requirements of its target group whilst at the same time progressing the over-arching model to the point where it now meets the requirements for the Modern Apprenticeship Framework for Youth Work at Level 3.

*Building Leadership* is an 18 month employment based rural community leadership programme which targeted 17 young people between the ages of 18-25 from rural communities in counties Armagh, Down and Tyrone. In addition 566 young people participated in capacity building programmes in local communities.

The aim of the *Building Leadership* programme was to 'support the emergence of young community leaders to contribute to the development of peaceful and stable communities'. There is absolutely no doubt that the principles and values of Equity Diversity and Interdependence (EDI) are embedded within the *Building Leadership* Programme. The values of EDI are fully consistent with those of youth work and in this programme and they have been well woven together both in terms of theory and practice, and in relation to personal and professional relationships.

Alongside supporting the 'emergence of young community leaders' the programme also had a strong focus on reaching young people who had little or no formal qualifications but who did have a strong interest and commitment to youth work and developing their roles and experience as peer educators and leaders within their own communities.

The *Building Leadership* programme required a commitment of 30 hours per week, split between the training elements and the work placement. Throughout the programme, the trainees were employed directly by YouthAction Northern Ireland.

The programme comprised a number of different vocational training elements including the NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work and the Level 3 Technical Certificate in Supporting Youth Work, both of which are

mandatory for the Modern Apprenticeship Framework for Youth Work. In addition, participants completed Open College Network NI accredited training in Community Relations/Equity Diversity and Interdependence, Child Protection, First Aid, ECDL and entrepreneurial training. Furthermore, participants were given the opportunity to participate in two modules of study from the Part-time Certificate in Youth Studies course delivered at the University of Ulster.

Throughout the duration of the *Building Leadership* programme, each participant gained invaluable work experience on placement within a community youth work setting. Placements were provided by a number of rural organisations who recognised the valuable win/win potential of working with YouthAction Northern Ireland to support delivery of the programme. The placements provided a supported work environment within which the trainees gained vital skills and experience, enhancing their employability. At the same time, the host organisations benefited from increased staffing resources bringing in new and creative approaches to working with rural young people and initiating cross community and peace building projects. Over 566 young people have participated in projects initiated and delivered by the programme participants during their employment and 69 of these young people have also been supported in completing the Youth Achievement Award Scheme.

In evaluating this programme, quantitative measurement of the outputs demonstrates that the *Building Leadership* programme is a highly successful employment based model of vocational training. What is less easy to quantify but no less stark in the way it is evidenced is the momentous impact this programme has had on the young trainees taking part. Not only do they highly rate the quality of the training and opportunities afforded to them, they have clearly embraced and relished every moment of the 18 month experience. In particular, the strong relationship bonds between them and with the staff of YouthAction Northern Ireland.

Pivotal to the success of this programme, is the exacting dedication of YouthAction Northern Ireland to ensuring the most comprehensive range of support mechanisms for participants on a scale probably

unknown in any other training and development programme. The unmistakable passion for this programme and for nurturing its participants is palpable when talking to staff directly involved. That passion is rooted within the values of youth work and it is patently clear that staff have personal and professional commitment to these in equal measure.

The *Building Leadership* programme is a further response to the findings of rural action research work undertaken by YouthAction Northern Ireland during the 1990's. Furthermore, through the programme, the commitment of substantial resources to rural youth work practice and training of young rural community leaders, is further evidence that the principles of ensuring equity, valuing diversity and building interdependence is being embedded in youth work practice.

**What is also clear from this evaluation, is that the passion for youth work has been passed on to another generation of youth workers who will use it, along with the confidence, skills, qualifications and experience gained to create and offer new youth work opportunities for many other young people in rural communities across Northern Ireland.**



# Section One

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 About YouthAction Northern Ireland

YouthAction Northern Ireland is a voluntary sector youth membership organisation with offices in Armagh, Belfast, Ballygawley, Newry and the North West. The organisation works with youth workers and interested adults to enable young people to achieve their full potential by providing services, information, training and support to community groups, youth groups, young people, their trainers and workers. It also seeks to extend the understanding of youth work through the development of innovative models of practice.

YouthAction Northern Ireland works in conjunction with and complementary to statutory agencies and organisations. Particular emphasis is placed on young people (14 – 25 years) from disadvantaged urban and rural communities who are supported to become active and equal citizens whose voices are heard, respected and valued

#### Values

The work of YouthAction Northern Ireland is informed by a set of values, and underpinned by a set of practice principles as follows:

- **The potential of young people** – to develop their own capacity to improve the quality of their lives and to affect change in their communities.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** – to promote respect for the rights and responsibilities of each individual, to value young people as they are rather than as they should be and to include young people in the social and economic life of communities.
- **Peace building** – to contribute to a society in which communities live in peace with each other, in which every individual is valued as a citizen, and in which there is no place for violence.
- **Volunteering** – to promote voluntary commitment as an integral and vital contribution to society.

#### Underpinning Principles

- **Evidence based practice** – practice should be based on research and evaluation.
- **Community development** – to ensure the full inclusion of young people in the social and economic life of their community.
- **Partnership** – the inclusion of young people is best facilitated by effective partnerships.
- **Voluntary relationships** – young people will more readily participate in voluntary processes than those that involve coercion.
- **Young people led** – young people are more likely to engage in initiatives of which they feel ownership.
- **Innovation** – to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of young people today we need to be responsive, flexible and innovative

### 1.2 About the Community Leadership Programme

YouthAction Northern Ireland has been delivering the Community Leadership Programme since 1995. The current *Building Leadership* programme is the 6th programme of its kind to be delivered in Northern Ireland. However, between 1989 and 1994 YouthAction Northern Ireland ran three cross-border All-Ireland Community Leadership Programmes.

The *Building Leadership* programme is an employment based programme which combines community youth work training and practical experience of working with young people in rural communities.

This *Building Leadership* programme commenced in July 2006 and recruited 14 young rural people (aged 18 – 25 years) as trainee community leaders for an 18 month period.

The main aim of the programme is to support the emergence of young community leaders to contribute to the development of peaceful and stable communities. The programme has focused on rural areas that have been most affected by the conflict

**Andrew Magennis** aged 24. Andrew was based in the Keady and District Youth Office with the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB). During his placement Andrew had the opportunity to lead a group of young people on a Youth Aid Africa trip to Kenya. Andrew is applying to complete his professional qualification in youth work next year and is currently seeking volunteering opportunities in community youth work.



*“NVQ and university modules were great opportunities to gain qualifications and improve my youth work practice. The course has exceeded my expectations.”*

including communities in border areas. The programme is based upon a highly successful model, developed and refined by YouthAction Northern Ireland, which is targeted at young people who want to gain the necessary skills, experience and qualifications to move into and take on a leadership role within their communities, for example through the fields of youth work, community work and social work. In keeping with the values and underpinning principles of YouthAction Northern Ireland, the programme seeks to target and encourage take-up by young people who have not had the same opportunity to undertake further education and training or achieve formal qualifications.

The young people have been employed on a 30 hour per week basis which comprises two days per week of training complemented by a work placement within a community youth work setting. Work placements are with partner community organisations based in rural Armagh, South and West Tyrone, South Antrim and South Down.

In addition, the programme recruited two Peer Support Workers aged 18-25 years to provide a further two training and employment opportunities. Peer support workers work alongside the Programme Co-ordinator to provide support to the trainees during the 18 month programme.

The training programme is very comprehensive and includes the following elements:

- City and Guilds NVQ Level 3 in Community Youth Work
- Open College Network NI Level 2 in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence
- Modern Apprenticeship Technical Certificate, including key skills
- Modules from the University of Ulster Certificate in Community Youth Studies (20 CATS points)
- First Aid Certificate
- Child Protection Training
- European Community Driving Licence (ECDL)
- Entrepreneurial Training

In addition, up to £200 per trainee was available for those who wished to avail of driving lessons and take the driving tests.





# Section Two

## 2. Evaluation terms of reference and methodology

YouthAction Northern Ireland appointed the External Evaluator in December 2007 and the evaluation process took place from January to March 2008.

The aim of the evaluation was to:

Measure the outputs and outcomes of the *Building Leadership* programme using the young community leaders and local partner organisation as the key informants.

### 2.1 Outputs and outcomes to be measured were:

#### Young community leaders:

- The selection and recruitment of trainees
- Relevance and quality of training in meeting needs of trainees
- Support structures
- Experiences and opportunities provided for trainees
- Skills, knowledge and qualifications gained
- Youth work ethos and methodology for supporting young people into employment
- Progression routes and employability

#### Rural community partners

- Selection and involvement of partners
- Networking opportunities
- Youth Achievement Award scheme

#### Peace building

- Balance of partners, community background and gender of participants
- Opportunities for networking across communities for trainees and local partners
- Embedding EDI principles into youth work practice and throughout the programme

#### Strategic impacts

- Development of an NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work
- Development of the Community Leadership Programme through entrepreneurial training
- Alignment with coherent route and professional development
- Developing a Modern Apprenticeship using the Community Leadership Programme as a model of best practice
- Delivering on Department of Agriculture and Rural Development – Rural Development Programme, Department of Education and Department for Employment and Learning objectives



**Bronagh Devlin** aged 25. Bronagh was based with the Loughshore Youth Forum and established a young women's group in Moortown focusing on young women's health. She also supported the young women to complete their Bronze Youth Achievement Award. Bronagh has now secured employment with Horizon Care in Dungannon.



*“The group element was the programme’s main strength as we all helped each other and grew together. The EDI Training allowed me to look at my own values and beliefs in a safe and comfortable environment”.*

## 2.2 Evaluation methodology

The external evaluator utilised a range of methods to gather quantitative and qualitative information for the evaluation. These included:

- participant observation of group sessions,
- participant questionnaires,
- meetings with the trainees, placement supervisors, peer support workers, assessors, programme co-ordinator
- telephone interviews with key trainers/lecturers
- review of course evaluations conducted by Co-ordinator
- review of equality monitoring data
- questionnaire to placement supervisors
- questionnaire to NVQ Assessors



# Section Three

## 3. Aims and key outputs of the Building Leadership Programme

The aim of the *Building Leadership* programme is to 'support the emergence of young community leaders to contribute to the development of peaceful and stable communities.' The programme is focused on rural areas that have been most affected by the conflict including border communities between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

This will be achieved by the following objectives:

1. Supporting the skills development and employability of young people to enable them to play a greater role in their local communities and to contribute to the development of a peaceful and stable society.
2. Working in partnership with locally based community organisations to ensure area-based solutions to identified need.
3. Supporting and enhancing the educational attainment of 200 young people at risk from social exclusion within their local community.
4. Delivering training to 10 local youth and community practitioners on identified need in relation to A1/A2 Assessor Award and supervision training.
5. Contributing to the development of a Modern Apprenticeship Scheme through the Department for Employment and Learning that is responsive to rural young people's needs.
6. Recruiting and supporting young people as volunteers in local rural regeneration processes.
7. Collating learning from baseline data and ongoing practice to support policy and practice development across the rural, youth, training and employment sectors.
8. Supporting the development of good models of youth governance with the collaboration of key organisations in the rural and youth sectors.

In relation to these objectives the following output targets were set for the programme:

- 14 under-employed young people (18 – 25 years) employed for 18 months as trainee community leaders in local communities in South Antrim, Armagh, Down and Tyrone.
- 2 Peer Support Workers employed with appropriate training completed. (18~25 years)
- 14 young people complete a City and Guilds NVQ Level 3 in Community Youth Work
- 16 young people complete ECDL ICT training
- 16 young people complete First Aid Training
- 16 young people complete Entrepreneurial training
- 14 young people complete 2 University of Ulster Modules and receive 20 CATS points
- 16 young people complete Community Relations/Equity, Diversity and Interdependence training accredited by OCNNI at Level 2
- 200 young people engage in rural regeneration processes and develop good relationships within and across rural communities
- 50 young people participate in Youth Achievement Awards accredited by ASDAN
- 10 community organisations provide placements and support and supervision for 14 young community leaders
- 10 adults complete Assessor and Supervision training
- 12 young people supported in a voluntary capacity throughout the project
- Baseline data and needs analysis completed on 10 different communities.



# Section Four

## 4. Overview of programme content and delivery

The design, delivery and content of the *Building Leadership* Programme is based on a highly successful model, developed by YouthAction Northern Ireland, that has been rigorously evaluated and refined over the past number of years. The Community Leadership Programme was the subject of a very positive Education and Training Inspectorate Report in 2005.

Although now in its twelfth year, the *Building Leadership* programme continues to be highly innovative, not simply as a vocational work-based route into professional youth work practice, but also as a model of vocational practice development generally for the rest of the Community Learning and Development constituency.<sup>1</sup> However, simply to talk in terms of the *Building Leadership* programme as a training programme does not do it justice. Nor does it reflect the fact that above all, this is a programme of youth work. All the participants are young people under the age of 25. All are young people who have not (for varied reasons) progressed through more traditional routes into further or higher education or employment. All are from dispersed rural and often isolated and sometimes disadvantaged communities. These are the very young people that YouthAction Northern Ireland ordinarily seeks to work with. However, in this programme the organisation has very effectively married the two together. It has not sought to employ and train just anyone interested in youth work. It has sought to employ and train its own target group in youth work. Moreover, it has sought to do that from a youth work approach that supports,



nurtures and empowers. It is important to note that all the young people on the programme were starting from very different points. Given that, the nature of the support provided had to be flexible enough to meet the variation in need and circumstance.

Furthermore, it is clear that the *Building Leadership* programme operates at a number of levels and seeks to maximise potential outcomes at each of these different levels to promote professional development opportunities for all those involved, not simply the trainees recruited and employed by the programme. For example;

- the recognised training offered to those fulfilling the role as NVQ Assessors,
- the opportunity to gain experience in providing line management supervision in a supported way for placement supervisors
- the opportunity for previous programme participants to gain employment with YouthAction Northern Ireland as Peer Support Workers.

The opportunity for young people within the placement settings to gain recognition via the Youth Achievement Awards, accredited nationally by the awarding body ASDAN.

The model of the *Building Leadership* programme has already been used to successfully pilot the NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work in Northern Ireland and to pilot a Modern Apprenticeship Framework on behalf of the youth work sector. The programme complies with the required criteria for the Level 3 Apprenticeship Framework for Youth Work as agreed by the Department for Employment and Learning and Lifelong Learning UK, leading to qualified status within the Youth Work sector. In addition, the programme meets the requirements of the Youth Work Training Board as appropriate for inclusion within its 'coherent framework for training' offering progression into further training and employment within the youth work sector. The *Building Leadership* programme is also seen as fulfilling part of the entry requirements for access to the University of Ulster's full and part-time Community Youth Work qualifications.

<sup>1</sup> The Community Learning and Development Constituency is one of 5 constituencies within the remit of Lifelong Learning UK, the Sector Skills Council for the Lifelong Learning Sector. CLD comprises: Youth Work, Community Development, Work with Parents, Family Learning, Development Education, Community Education and Community Based Adult Learning.

**Emma Mullan** aged 20. Emma was based in Bardic Educational Arts and Media (BEAM) in Donaghmore. Emma had the opportunity to develop a young women's group in Donaghmore Youth Club focusing on young women's health. Emma has applied to the University of Ulster to study Community Youth Work.



*"I have learnt so much over the past 18 months and now realise I want to do youth work full time. I have achieved so much and am grateful for everything".*

The *Building Leadership* programme itself is both comprehensive and challenging. It is delivered in such a way as to integrate several of the component parts together so that they are covered simultaneously. There is a lot going on both in terms of training and employment placement activity. Comprising as it does a variety of different youth work practice and training components, trainees have much to contend with including competing demands on their time.

The main elements of the programme are as follows:

- City and Guilds NVQ Level 3 in Community Youth Work
- Open College Network NI Level 2 in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence

- Modern Apprenticeship Technical Certificate, including key skills
- Modules from the University of Ulster Certificate in Youth Studies (20 CATS points)
- First Aid Certificate
- Child Protection Training
- European Community Driving Licence (ECDL)
- Entrepreneurial Training

The majority of the training elements have taken place within the Cathedral Road Recreation Centre in Armagh.



# Section Five

## 5. Young Community Leaders – perspectives and impacts

### 5.1 Recruitment and selection of trainees

As stated previously, the target group for this *Building Leadership* programme was young people who had few or no formal qualifications and who lived in rural communities most affected by the Troubles, particularly along the Border region.

Over the years YouthAction Northern Ireland has worked closely with a number of rural community based organisations. In developing this programme YouthAction Northern Ireland has drawn on these contacts to help them identify the rural communities to target potential local placement organisations. In particular a number of discussions were held with the Rural Community Network and representatives from the 12 Rural Support Networks that operate at a sub-regional level across rural Northern Ireland. A number of meetings were then held with potential rural community partners who could offer a work placement and following this a number became more formally identified for the placement role. This formalising of the relationship early in the life of the programme, prior to the young community leaders/trainees being recruited was critical as the same organisations were then able to support the promotion and recruitment process at local community level. Indeed, the programme was seen by several of the placement organisations as an ideal opportunity for young people involved on a voluntary basis with them.

In addition to this 'word of mouth' promotion, the posts of young community leaders and peer support workers were advertised within the local newspapers in Armagh, Tyrone, South Antrim and Down in order to reach as many rural young people as possible. Articles were also sent to a wide number of rural and youth organisations for dissemination via newsletters and mailings.

Interviews took place in early September 2006 with 9 young community leaders appointed. A further promotion process took place and a subsequent 5 appointments made for the remaining places. All trainees came into post between October and November 2006. Feedback from the young community leaders indicates that most of them heard

about the programme either through their local paper or by word of mouth via a local Youth Worker.

Of the initial 14 recruited, 9 were male, 5 female. In terms of religious balance, 9 were Catholic and 5 Protestant. In terms of geographical spread, participants came from Counties Armagh, Down and Tyrone. At the time of writing, 3 young people have left the programme as a result of securing employment, leaving 11 young community leaders remaining on the programme, of which 6 are male, 5 are female, 8 are Catholic and 3 are Protestant.

Reflecting on their experiences of the interview process, the young community leaders found the experience daunting but beneficial, particularly as they are now preparing for forthcoming interviews again, as they apply for jobs and university places.

#### *Expectations of the programme*

As part of the evaluation process the young community leaders were asked to reflect back on their expectations of the programme. A range of views and personal goals emerged, all of which relate to the overall purpose of the programme. Expectations included:

- To increase personal confidence
- Be challenged re own learning and development
- Make hobby a full time career
- Gain more youth work skills and hands on experience
- Become a better youth worker
- Build relationships with young people
- Make own community a better place for young people
- Get an NVQ and other qualifications
- Further employment opportunities

### 5.2 Relevance and quality of training

#### 5.2.1 NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work

The National Vocational Qualification in Youth Work is a means of demonstrating and building performance in the workplace/occupational context. The majority of the evidence is generated and gathered naturally within the work environment. In some cases, in order to meet the required nationally agreed standards, in

this case Level 3 NVQ, candidates may be required to perform to a higher level than they have been performing to date. In other instances, where certain opportunities have not been available, they may need to take on additional duties/responsibilities in order to demonstrate their ability and generate the evidence.

The NVQ programme of study for the *Building Leadership* programme has been mapped to the requirements of the Level 3 Modern Apprenticeship Framework as recognised by the Department for Employment and Learning. Full details of the Units covered are set out in Appendix 1.

Each of the programme participants was provided with a candidate pack that provided them with the basic portfolio structure and pro-forma documentation required for the award. Each participant was appointed an assessor who mentored

them through the process of gathering evidence, determining what would be suitable, providing critical feedback and assessment and so on.

As part of this Evaluation, programme participants were asked to comment on the suitability, relevance and quality of the NVQ training element and rate from 1 – 5, 5 being the highest.

Half of the participants who responded to this question gave the NVQ element the highest rating of 5. 25% of respondents rated the NVQ element as 4 and the remaining 25% rated it 3.

The following comment was made by one of the trainees who gave a 5 rating:

*“The training, help and support was second to none. The help and support I had whilst completing the NVQ was fantastic and I couldn’t have completed it without this. The materials we were handed to complete the NVQ through training also made a major contribution.”*

Comments by those who gave 4 or 3 ratings were as follows:

*“I found some of the NVQ quite wordy at times. I felt that sitting down as a group and discussing the units independently helped me a lot. I was very lucky to get Brenda as my assessor as we worked well together.”*

In general the concerns expressed appear to have related more to varying levels of support than the NVQ content/materials directly, as the following comment reveals:

*“Didn’t have enough direct support as short on time due to over stretched Peer Support Workers and Assessors.”*



**Mairead Farrell** aged 25. Mairead has been working with the Rural Health Partnership in Cullyhanna. Mairead developed programmes for rural young women and supported them to complete their Bronze Youth Achievement Award. Mairead is currently seeking opportunities in the field of social work.



*“I have benefitted professionally and have adopted a new outlook for my life and can see a clear future although it will be hard work but I can be satisfied with myself and my achievements”.*

### 5.2.2 Level 3 Certificate in Supporting Youth Work (Technical Certificate)

The Technical Certificate in Youth Work (City and Guilds) is studied alongside the NVQ. Each of the 8 mandatory units in the Technical Certificate is mapped to the relevant NVQ unit. The Technical Certificate provides the underpinning knowledge required to engage in the practice of youth work, and therefore complements the skills/ability focus of the NVQ. Both the NVQ and Technical Certificate components are required to meet the criteria of the Modern Apprenticeships. Further details of the Technical Certificate units are set out in Appendix 2.

By contrast to the NVQ the Technical Certificate element of the programme was not viewed as favourably. Over 80% of respondents to this question rated the Technical Certificate element 3 or below. In general terms comments indicate that participants found the Technical Certificate very 'wordy' and full of jargon that was hard to understand. Detail and instructions within the units also appeared to be unclear and one participant felt there was too much repetition with the NVQ itself.

The following two comments are useful in terms of taking this element forward in the future. The first commentator rated it 2, the second commentator rated it a 4:

*“Didn't find this enjoyable at all. The assignments were not explained clearly and they were full of unnecessary jargon. I would like to see Youth Work made into an apprenticeship but not in this way.”*

*“A good addition but definitely needs work .....we were writing for the blind which felt disheartening when getting feedback.”*

With the Technical Certificate there appears to be a number of issues that need to be worked through to streamline and simplify its inclusion.

### 5.2.3 Community Relations/EDI Training

This element of the programme is accredited by the Open College Network NI and covered the following modules:

1. Understand the concept and meaning of community relations work.
2. Understand the rationale and principles of equity, diversity and interdependence.
3. Understand the causes and impact of prejudice, sectarianism, racism and discrimination.
4. Recognise how identity, tradition, culture and citizenship are formed and perceived by self and others.
5. Recognise the relevance of human rights law and conventions and equality legislation.
6. Recognise the causes and process of conflict and be aware of models of conflict resolution.
7. Recognise the skills, knowledge and competence required for developing a community relations programme.
8. Understand the process required to develop a community relations programme.
9. Recognise the importance and benefits of reflective learning within the context of CR/EDI work.

This course ran over 10 weeks and participants were also required to produce a portfolio of evidence to support the qualification. This proved to be challenging for participants in that they had to put together more than one portfolio at a time and in some instances it felt as if there was duplication of activity. However, despite this challenge the ratings were very high with over 80% of respondents rating it 4 or above. Many of the participants commented that they found the EDI course very interesting and challenging.



**Gareth Frew** aged 23. Gareth worked alongside the Rural Outreach Worker from YouthAction N.I in the South Tyrone Area. Gareth supported a number of community youth projects in Caledon, Aghnacloy and Augher. Gareth has now secured a position with Praxis Care in Kesh and has also applied to study Community Youth Work at the University of Ulster.



*“I am extremely thankful for the opportunity YouthAction has provided for me and I feel it has really benefitted me for the future. It has left me now that I have options!! I don’t think any other programme offers as much experience and qualifications to young people as this one.”*

*“I found this training very valuable as it tested my so called open mind. As the CLP group were mixed, it was interesting to hear other thoughts and opinions on EDI. The environment which was created was brilliant in that we felt comfortable to freely express ourselves.”*

A number of the participants expressed the view that the EDI programme had been helpful in equipping them with the confidence and skills to explore these issues in a youth work setting and challenge people’s comments in everyday situations.

One young man who did not enjoy the EDI course commented;

*“It is necessary to explore these issues; I just don’t think it was effective as too all over the place.”*

An important element of this evaluation was to explore the impact of the *Building Leadership* programme on good relations and the extent to which the principles of EDI have been embedded within youth work practice. However, effecting impact and embedding principles in practice does not happen simply by taking part in a ten week programme of learning. This does come from being able to develop as a reflective practitioner, having the awareness, understanding and ability to link not just theory to practice but also experience and practice on both personal and professional levels. All the participants spoke about their increased understanding and appreciation of critical reflective practice. Furthermore, the many comments about the power the EDI programme had on them

demonstrate the extent to which that element of the programme is informing their practice now. However, the extent to which this impact is evidenced most is in relation to their work placement experiences. For this reason a more detailed exploration of embedding the EDI themes follows the section on the work placement.

#### **5.2.4 University of Ulster Community Development and Group Work modules (part of the Pre-vocational Certificate in Community Youth Studies)**

As has already been stated, the target group for the *Building Leadership* programme was young people who had little or no formal qualifications but had an interest in and commitment to youth work. The prospect of taking up a course of study at University therefore was not one many would have considered. However, traditionally within Northern Ireland, the route to achieving professionally qualified youth work status lies within a University context. Through the *Building Leadership* programme YouthAction Northern Ireland has sought to span the divide between vocational and academic routes to achieving qualifications and enhancing employment opportunities.

All participants on the programme have the opportunity to complete two modules of study as part of the University’s Community Youth Studies course and all chose to do so. The ratings for this element of the programme was also high with over 80% rating it 4 or above.

These modules are delivered by University staff at the University of Ulster campus at Jordanstown. The academic requirements are the same as for any other participant on the University’s courses. The impact of this opportunity however, cannot be underestimated;

*“The university modules were a challenge as the quality had to be of a higher level and it gave an insight into the degree course which I now want to do.”*

*“I was not looking forward to the University of Ulster modules and even tried to get out of doing them. The reasons being the environment, lecture style which I do not enjoy and also the travelling to Belfast.*

*The assignments were also challenging. Looking back I am pleased I decided to follow through as I have now successfully completed the 2 modules.”*

One participant has subsequently applied for a place on the full-time degree programme at the University and a further six at least are considering the part-time degree course.

Richard Loudon, the lecturer from the University co-ordinating delivery of the two modules commented:

*“The point of this was to open the door for practitioners to see and experience university. The group were very keen and enthusiastic and happy to be at university but they found it harder to tune into university expectations. They should have finished their NVQ work by then but hadn’t.*

*They responded well under pressure as they didn’t have much time.....and the writing skills are very different from the NVQ approach.”*

### **5.2.5 ICT training**

As part of the *Building Leadership* programme all participants took part in ECDL training. Over 75% of respondents rated this training 4 or above. More than 60% gave it the highest rating of 5. One respondent

who rated it 3 still went on to describe it as good, as did several who rated it higher. Comments such as ‘well structured’, ‘straightforward’, ‘good materials’ were common.

One participant in particular acknowledged the important transferability of ICT skills and how such skills can enhance employability:

*“ECDL is a high qualification and an asset to many. I was not experienced in computing but feel I am better equipped now. Also, a lot of employers are looking for it.”*

### **5.2.6 Entrepreneurial training**

This was a short programme comprising of two and a half days incorporated for the first time into the *Building Leadership* programme. This element of the programme appeared to capture the imagination of the programme participants and all rated it 3 and above and over 77% rated it 4 or above.

The training was delivered by the Business Innovation Centre at the South West College and covered:

- What is an entrepreneur?
- The characteristics of entrepreneurship and the transferability of youth work skills to a business context
- The process of business planning.

The range of comments made in relation to this element of the programme indicated that participants valued the opportunity to explore another option and consider alternatives for their own futures.

*“This was a new idea opening up another path for group members to follow. It allowed me to put my business knowledge to practice. Great person was brought in.”*

As with the ICT training, participants were also able to recognise the transferability of skills they were developing through the programme via this element.

*“I loved this training and the facilitation was excellent. It was useful in looking at transferable skills and acknowledging own strengths and weaknesses.”*

At least one participant has expressed an interest in building on this element of the *Building Leadership* programme and is keen to set up her own business in the future.

### 5.3 Other aspects of delivery

As part of the evaluation participants were asked to comment on the weekly time commitment of 30 hours, the salary level and the provision of childcare and travel costs.

#### 5.3.1 Working week

Over half the group commented that it was difficult to keep the work within the contractual 30 hours each week. For a number of them, training and placement work went well over the 30 hours allocated primarily due to youth work activities that were scheduled at different times, residentials etc. For those who were also participating in organisational activities these were often in addition to their youth work sessions. Taking the hours in lieu also proved difficult although this was recognised as being part of the good work practice.

*“It was sometimes hard to work under these hours as when doing projects with a lot of meetings and organising them takes time. Then it was hard to try and use up time in lieu before it was lost.”*

One recommendation made by some of the participants was to increase the contractual hours to make the posts full-time. This was also suggested by another participant who felt that financially it would be more beneficial from an economic point of view;

*“For financial reasons I needed to work more hours, although I did have a Saturday job. I don’t see why in future the participants shouldn’t work a 37 hour week.”*



However, it is worth noting that nearly half the group were happy with working to 30 hours, summarised by the following comment:

*“Good amount allowed us to get work done for preparation also making us know what hours to work and work effectively.”*

#### 5.3.2 Salary Level

Evaluative feedback on this issue was interesting and indicated a high level of recognition among the participants that the value of the programme they were on could not simply be measured in financial terms.

*“A lot of people would say more but it is good for the work and qualifications we are getting that will increase our salary in our next post.”*

In general terms participants felt that the rate of pay was acceptable, the main comment being that if the contractual hours were 37.5, with commensurate pay, it would be a more accurate reflection of the hours worked.

#### 5.3.3 Travel

Again, while some were happy with the system in

**Ryan McGuire** aged 25. Ryan commenced his placement with Mid Ulster Community Arts Trust (MUCAT) before completing his work placement in Fintona. Ryan helped to establish a Town Youth Committee, and supported them to host a community fun day and a number of fundraising initiatives. Ryan is currently seeking employment within community youth work.



*“I would like to thank everyone involved for the help and support over the past 17 months, these people really gave me the confidence to really go after and continue youth work full time”.*

place for support with travel costs for others the issue of travel time and travel costs; particularly for those using public transport was not as positive. For some participants travel costs took up a substantial part of their budget. The mileage rate of 15p per mile was considered too low.

Set against this was the additional benefit to some of the participants of up to £200 towards the costs of driving lessons. Six participants have taken advantage of this.

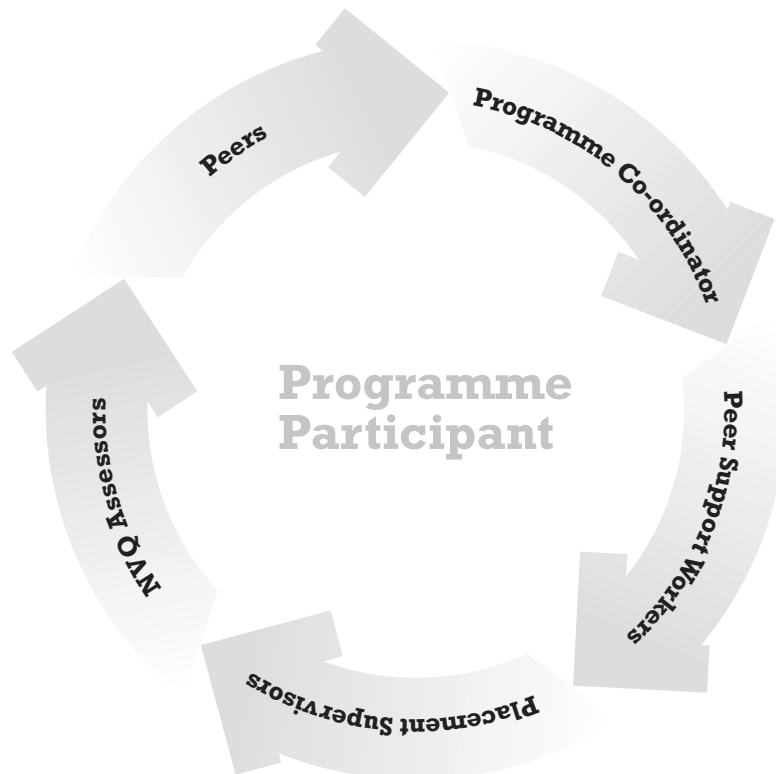
*“This gave me a push as I did not feel ready but now I hope to attain my licence soon. Thank you for the opportunity.”*

### 5.3.4 Support Structures

The level and nature of the support provided to programme participants is extensive and multi-levelled.

The *Building Leadership* programme is designed in such a way as to provide contextual support where and when it is needed, not only to the programme participants but also to those involved in delivery and support to the participants. Organisationally, YouthAction Northern Ireland appears to take quite an holistic view to the provision of support and take a whole organisation approach to it. For example, placement supervisors who provide day to day support to the programme participants during their placements are also offered support via a Supervisors' Forum.

The diagram below gives an indication of the main forms of support built into the programme.



**Sonya Brady** aged 24. Sonya was based in St Oliver Plunkett Youth Club, Crossmaglen and developed a variety of young women's programmes. These included a cross border programme with young women from the Muslim Community in Dundalk. Sonya is currently employed as a Youth Worker in St Oliver Plunkett Youth Club.



*"The programme has had a great positive impact on me. I have been able to use all of my training and put it into youth work practice in my placement".*

#### 5.3.4.1 The Programme Co-ordinator

The Programme Co-ordinator, came into post in June 06. As part of the role her main tasks were to:

- Recruit peer support workers.
- Liaise with and establish rural partners to provide the work placements.
- Draw up the programme and liaise with external providers and prepare materials.
- Advertise the programme.
- Recruit 14 trainees on to the programme, all of whom are employed directly by YouthAction Northern Ireland.
- Manage the programme on a day-to-day basis.
- Line manage the Peer Support Workers.
- Liaise regularly with placement supervisors and training providers.
- Provide ongoing support to all involved.

The Co-ordinator has previously taken part in one of YouthAction Northern Ireland's Community Leadership Programmes. She is therefore more than familiar with the workload and expectations of both participants and the peer support workers. Thus, she was able to approach the role of Co-ordinator from an informed and empathetic position.

Feedback from the programme participants in relation to the nature and level of support provided has been extremely positive.

*"Aileen and the 3 PSWs (Peer Support Workers) have been excellent!"*

*Advice, support and just generally being a rock to support us through the entire time."*

This comment reflects the general view from all participants in relation to the quality of support available. Words like 'excellent', 'superb', 'brilliant', were commonplace in terms of feedback on the level

of support provided by the Co-ordinator, who was very well thought of as the following comment also demonstrates:

*"She had a great working relationship with all personnel and a model professional. Learnt a lot from her."*

One participant did express the view that in his opinion more support was needed. That is to say, the quality was 'superb' but in his opinion he would have benefited from more of it.

In addition to the day-to-day management of the programme, the Co-ordinator is responsible for line managing the two peer support workers on the programme and all that this includes in terms of promoting team work, supervision and staff development.

The team appear to have worked very well together and have a good informal rapport which is clearly compatible in the context of the programme.

*"Aileen is extremely caring and a good source of support. Always know she is there if you need a chat."*



#### 5.3.4.2 Peer Support Workers

Given that 14 participants were recruited on to the *Building Leadership* programme and came from a geographically dispersed rural area, YouthAction Northern Ireland took the decision to appoint two peer support workers to the programme. Previous Community Leadership programmes have confirmed the crucially central role that the Peer Support Workers play in ensuring the success of the programme and in supporting the young community leaders in achieving their desired outcomes from participating. Again, as previously stated the young people taking part in the programme come from very different backgrounds and are all at different starting points.

These posts were also an opportunity for additional training and employment opportunities for young people aged 18-25 years.

The role of the peer support workers was to assist with planning and delivery of training on the programme, provide NVQ support to participants, gather resources and materials to be used to support youth work sessions and provide programme development support to the participants, particularly in relation to their youth work delivery on placement. In the early stages of the programme this included co-facilitating youth work sessions with the participants in their placement settings in order to build their confidence and skills and indeed to act as youth worker role models. However, stating this simply does not do justice to the way in which this support is delivered. For just as each of the participants had different needs so the support to each participant was tailored to meet those needs. In many respects the concept of peer support on this programme is one which is individually personalised mentoring and coaching support. This is work that is highly intensive and which can be emotionally demanding.

Two peer support workers were recruited to the posts in Sept 2006. One of them subsequently left for Australia and was replaced. This was a young man who up until that point was himself a participant on the programme.

All the programme participants spoke very highly of the peer support workers and praised the support, advice and guidance that was constantly available.

*“I depended a lot on my PSW for support with work and any problems that occurred. My work would have not been that good without her.”*

Two participants also highlighted the importance of the peer support worker’s role to the success of the Programme.

*“Excellent – great concept for support throughout.”*

*“Always there when needed and gave great support throughout. Big important part of the course.”*

The provision and availability of ongoing, group and one-to-one support is evidently pivotal to the effectiveness of the programme. Not only is a good level of support put in place, it is also needed and the comments made by participants reflect the importance of it in terms of securing retention and learner achievement.

As has been stated earlier in this report, the outcomes of the Building Leadership Programme benefit a variety of different groups of people but this by necessity means the programme is also reliant on these different people each fulfilling their role. As the level of support from placement supervisors and NVQ assessors to the participants varied, this influenced the amount of direct support required from the peer support workers for each participant. At times this has been an extremely challenging aspect of the role as one of the peer support workers noted;

*“NVQ and Technical Certificate elements were difficult. At times it felt like I was doing the NVQ myself.”*

It is fair to say that the peer support workers found the job very rewarding but challenging and demanding at the same time. Both agreed, that on reflection they felt the post should be full-time (it is currently 30 hours). This would concur with the view expressed by at least one programme participant that more time for support would be beneficial.

*“I think they have helped me extremely as my knowledge and confidence has risen greatly, but I think more supervision/peer support workers should have been employed as ours did a good job under hard situations.”*

It is worthwhile taking a bit of time here to consider the experiences of the peer support workers in more detail. Like many before them, both have been positive role models for the participants on the programme.

#### 5.3.4.3 Catherine's Story

Catherine McCormack has worked in a variety of youth work settings and has also been employed by YouthAction Northern Ireland to work on other programmes. She has undertaken a wide variety of youth work and related training and is currently being supported by the organisation to undertake the Diploma in Community Youth Work at the University of Ulster. This is another example of how YouthAction Northern Ireland seeks to support and encourage continuous growth and development of young people within its sphere of influence.

Catherine's personal journey through the *Building Leadership* programme demonstrates not only how she has benefited from the employment opportunity created but also, how that has informed her approach to the work and also the structured nature of support within YouthAction Northern Ireland.

*“I liked getting out into rural communities, engaging and working with rural young people. (Also) watching CLP'ers grow and develop – personally and professionally– great sense of reward and satisfaction when I saw examples of this.”*

In terms of support available to the peer support workers, the following comment is revealing;

*“The best way I can find to describe it is like ‘YouthAction as a family’ people care about each other genuinely and a*

*lot of time is spent on developing and nurturing staff.....Excellent support from the Rural Team and YANI staff in general. The Team Leader of Rural Unit is very supportive and inspirational.”*

From an evaluation point of view it is uplifting to hear someone speak with such genuine affection about their employer! It would be easy to put this down to an informal environment and friendly people. But it is much more. YouthAction Northern Ireland has worked hard to create and sustain an organisational structure of nurturing and supporting its staff and its users/beneficiaries. And it has created an organisational culture where that is explicit and where it is recognised and valued. Furthermore, it is perpetuated in daily working practice.

Like the programme participants, Catherine, whose post is also a fixed term contract, is looking to the future and her own career development.

*“I feel I have progressed a great deal both personally and professionally. The CLP journey has been an excellent experience and enabled me to develop my skills.....The CLP has kept me motivated and driven to continue doing what I enjoy. CLP has helped me prioritise my life and make a career plan.”*

#### 5.3.4.4 Patrick's Story

In many ways Patrick Murtagh's story is even more remarkable and another perfect example of how the culture and practice within YouthAction Northern Ireland supports and nurtures people. Coming from a counselling background, Patrick joined the *Building Leadership* Programme initially as a participant. In addition to the work placement element, during the first year of the programme Patrick completed the NVQ Level 3, the Technical Certificate, OCNNI Level 2 in CR/EDI and training in First Aid and Child Protection.

When one of the peer support worker posts became vacant in the Autumn of 2007, Patrick, who by now

**Ryan Quinn** aged 21. Ryan was based with YouthAction's Rural Outreach Project in Armagh. He supported a number of young people to become involved in community projects throughout the South Armagh area which included developing a community garden and a mural in a local bus shelter. Ryan also supported the young people to complete their Silver and Bronze Youth Achievement Awards. Ryan is currently employed with YouthAction NI on the Newry and Armagh Area Based Strategy as a Peer Support Worker. Ryan has secured a place with the University of Ulster to study Community Youth Work.



*"This course has made me more confident....,furthered a lot of my skills and I now have the confidence to go and further my youth work career".*

felt he was ready to move on to a new challenge, successfully applied for the job. However, taking the job required Patrick to move from being a participant to being a peer support worker within his own group of peers. For anyone this would be a daunting prospect. Nonetheless, Patrick had the confidence to do it, the support from YouthAction Northern Ireland to do it, and critically, the support of his peers to do it. That, in many respects is testimony to the enduring and explicit culture of mutual support and trust fostered within the organisation and within its work, all of which is drawn from and informed by the values and underpinning principles of youth work. What this leads to is a positive endorsement that these values and principles are not only valuable in the context of youth work practice with young people, they also contribute significantly to creating a welcoming, nurturing and learning focussed workplace, and more importantly still, a dynamic and productive workforce.

Well aware of the challenges this particular position presented to him, Patrick has nevertheless grasped the opportunity and made sure it turned into a valuable experience he hoped for.

*"I expected the PSW post to be challenging, working with young people the same age as myself.....Overall, it's been a great experience. Coming from a counselling background this has been a really good learning experience for me. Areas of youth work and counselling overlap and compliment each other. This has really opened up possibilities for future training and employment for me."*

Having moved from being a participant to being a peer support worker, Patrick has also been able to benefit from additional professional development and support.

*"There is a lot of support offered to employees within YouthAction. As PSW I have gained ECDL computer training and an additional module on my Counselling Diploma – all of the above training has been provided by YouthAction. The support structure within YouthAction is second to none."*

Summing up his time in the post, Patrick concludes;

*"As peer support worker within the rural Unit of YouthAction, I have gained invaluable experience of working within a number of teamwork settings. These include; the Rural team, the Rural Community Leadership team, and the CLP staff team. This entails regular team meetings, staff training days and supervision to promote professionalism, critical reflective practice and effective youth work practice."*

#### 5.3.4.5 Placement supervisors

A key element in the model of support was provided by the placement supervisors from the youth and community work organisations where participants were placed. The Placement Supervisor is the person within the placement organisation who will take responsibility for the trainee during the placement.



**Mark Crawford** aged 24. Mark was based with the Omagh Forum for Rural Associations and carried out his youth work practice with the Owenkillew Community Development Association in Gortin. He was responsible for planning and delivering youth club activities. Mark also helped to facilitate a personal development programme for young people aged 14 – 18 years. Mark is currently seeking employment in community youth work.



*“I know that I can be myself and that I will be accepted in the group... I have really enjoyed the experience and I’m really going to miss everyone involved”*

The role of the placement supervisors is to:

1. Build a positive professional working relationship with the trainee and plan an induction into the placement.
2. Ensure that the trainee is clear on what is expected of them.
3. Meet the peer support worker and the Co-ordinator along with the trainee in week one to complete the work placement agreement.
4. Agree a work plan with the trainee based on agreed placement objectives.
5. Meet quarterly with the support worker and trainee to review trainee’s progress.
6. Create learning opportunities for the trainee who will develop their skills and knowledge through face-to-face work, administration and preparation.
7. Liaise with the support worker/co-ordinator and bring any problems to their attention.
8. Meet regularly with the trainee to discuss his/her progress.
9. Provide regular and agreed support and supervision sessions which will be recorded and a copy sent to the Co-ordinator.

The work placement element of the programme was critical to the overall programme success and to the quality of the experience for each individual. As has been demonstrated through the participants’ perspectives; while all the programme participants acknowledged the value and learning gained from their placements the experiences have been varied somewhat and within this the level of support that was available. The following comments in terms of the general placement experience are fairly typical of the range:

*“I got a good chance to work with a team and alone designing projects and getting feedback.”*

*“Youth club was enjoyable. I delivered various activities, sessions, dance,*

*drama, art, kickboxing, indoor soccer etc. Learnt how to facilitate programmes.”*

While the majority of programme participants received regular and structured support, for some this was a more ad hoc experience. This appears to have been due to a number of reasons which included; time constraints on supervisor in relation to own job role, turnover of staff within placement organisation and changes in staff member responsible for supervising the placement, ill-health and also maternity leave. The practice of supervision whilst on placement ranged from regular structured and formal sessions that were recorded through to more informal conversations that took place daily but were not recorded. As one Supervisor put it

*“a lot of reflection happens in the car.”*

Of the participants interviewed only two raised specific concerns about a lack of support at any point within the placement. In both instances YouthAction Northern Ireland took steps to remedy the situations either by ensuring other forms of support were in place to meet the needs; or by securing an alternative placement for the participant.

While two participants expressed reservations about the suitability of more generic community organisations for the placement element, another participant made the following comment;

*“My placement was a great place for learning about community development and how communities work and support the residents who live there.”*

In all instances, the key factor for success in terms of the placement would appear to be down to the nature of the relationship between trainee and

placement supervisor and the opportunities afforded to the trainee that fit with the nature of the *Building Leadership* programme.

#### 5.3.4.6 NVQ Assessors

The remaining formal source of support for the programme participants was from the NVQ assessors.

The role of the assessor was to:

- Help the programme participant plan their assessment.
- Assess the participant against the performance criteria using a range of methods including observations, questions etc, for each unit of study.
- Judge the participant's work, provide feedback and inform them what else is required to meet the standards.
- Ensure that the participant is working progressively towards completion of their portfolio
- Record the results.

The majority of the people acting as assessors were undertaking the A1 Assessor Award at the same time and so this was a learning experience for them too. A smaller number were working towards the VI Assessor Award.

In terms of the Community Leadership Programme participants, the process of assessment support varied based on a judgement of how much direct support the participant needed in terms of gathering evidence for the portfolio and according to the time the assessor had available. As one assessor put it:

*“While everyone had their own style of working they were all keen to obtain this qualification and worked hard to achieve it. For some people this was quite a challenge and at times additional support was required on a personal level.”*

The reality of this comment is probably also reflected in the variety of comments from the programme participants. By and large the experience was helpful and positive and several made comments like this one:

*“Helped me a lot with the completion of NVQ. Without my assessor's support would not have got NVQ complete.”*

However, some assessors did provide more support than others and in a minority of instances a feeling of insufficient support was reported. It should also be noted that over the course of the 18 month programme assessors' circumstances also changed with people moving to new jobs or away from the area. Where the assessor was not available to provide significant additional support, this role fell predominantly to the peer support workers, who once again had a critical role to play.

#### 5.3.5 NVQ Assessors' experiences

As has been noted earlier, the majority of the NVQ Assessors were also gaining a recognised qualification by working towards the A1 or V1 Assessor Awards. This was also a target output of the Community Leadership programmes.

The Assessor Award training was provided by PCM Associates who have registered centre status with both City & Guilds and OCR. Following an induction meeting, candidates for the Assessor Awards are taken through the process and requirements and shown sample portfolios illustrating what they will be expected to produce. Each candidate also has to be observed undertaking an assessment meeting with one of their own NVQ candidates from the *Building Leadership* programme.

Once complete, each assessor's portfolio is assessed by PCM Associates, by an internal verifier and then finally by the external verifier from the awarding body. All the different stages are completed to ensure the appropriate level of quality.

Given the critical role that the NVQ Assessors play within the programme, and the extent to which the credibility of the programme relies upon successful completion of the NVQ, the issue of quality assurance is a priority.

As part of this evaluation Paul Murray from PCM Associates was asked to comment on the effectiveness of YouthAction Northern Ireland's approach in taking a group of professionals through

the Assessor Awards at the same time as taking a group of young people through the NVQ process. He had this to say:

*“I am very happy with the process and have no concerns. YouthAction Northern Ireland has very experienced internal verifiers who helped design and write the programmes. They are able to provide support, regular staff meetings, team briefings and have their own internal audit system.”*

When asked if there was any way in which he felt the Assessor Awards process could be improved, Paul noted that the timescale for achieving the award can be as swift as a month. In practice, due to workload commitments and other pressures on candidates, most workers take longer than this, but in his opinion this need not be the case.

Paul was also asked to comment on the process of quality assurance in relation to the A1 and V1 Assessor Award programmes. His response was unequivocal.

*“Excellent. One of the best support systems I’ve seen anywhere. Experience, portfolios, students, regular meetings of assessors and verifiers (minuted). external verifier reports are excellent on the centre and the quality of work produced by young people. I don’t see how it could improve.”*

As part of the evaluation, the NVQ assessors were also asked to comment on their experiences. Those who responded all reported a high level of support from YouthAction Northern Ireland for them in fulfilling the assessor role. Some had candidates who worked well and met deadlines for completing units of work, while others had candidates who struggled with some aspects of the NVQ, particularly in terms of language or found it hard to cope with multiple course work requirements for different elements.

These experiences reflect the range of experiences of the programme participants. All the NVQ assessors stated that the role was in addition to their current workloads and while some may have had the capacity to provide a higher degree of support with the NVQ requirements, others clearly were not able to, despite the best intentions.

Assessors were asked if they had any suggestions for how the programme might be improved. Suggestions included:

- Simplify the programme so that participants work to one element at a time.
- Simplify the language within the NVQ (although it should be noted that this is not a straightforward task with a nationally recognised qualification)
- Ensuring participants are fully aware of what is required of them for assessor meetings.
- That placement supervisors and NVQ assessors meet in advance to agree what evidence can be generated in the workplace and the role of the Placement Supervisor in supporting the generation of evidence and signing it off.
- That all assessors attend the standardisation meetings.

### 5.3.6 Peer support

It is clear from talking to the participants that they gained a tremendous amount of support from each other, outside of the more formalised support structures provided as part of the *Building Leadership* programme.

*“I have met and spent 16 months with 15 great individuals. I have built a lot of positive relationships.”*

Periodically throughout the programme participants met on a cluster basis to take part in peer support sessions which were self directed. This was wholly in addition to the regular weekly sessions the group had together.

In terms of the self-directed peer support the majority of the feedback was positive.

**Kyle Stewart** aged 20. Kyle was based in the South Eastern Education Board Area alongside the Rural Outreach Worker supporting the development of youth work programmes in rural Lisburn. He worked with rural young people in Aghalee, Glenavy, Moira and the Maze. Kyle also helped to establish a Rural Youth Forum for this area. Kyle has now successfully secured employment with the Portadown Local Action for Community Engagement Initiative (PLACE) in Portadown. He has also secured a place on the Community Youth Work Degree at the University of Ulster.



*“I have achieved all the goals I set out at the beginning of the course. I have gained knowledge and experience with a group that I will treasure as workers and as friends”.*

*“Was good helping me through difficulties with groups.”*

*“The support network – working as a team with great people.”*

*“This was good as we went through Technical Certificate.”*

*“The peer support and peer education structure. The group element is (the programme’s) the strongest point as we all helped and grew together.”*

*“Really good, helped motivate each other.”*

Others found that they sourced their support elsewhere and found the self-directed peer support meetings less beneficial. However, many spoke with warmth and conviction about the value of the group:



**Carolyn Bell** aged 23. Carolyn entered the programme in September 2007. Carolyn was based in Galbally Youth and Community Association, where she supported a group of young volunteers to coordinate the running of the Youth Club. Carolyn had the opportunity to complete the University of Ulster Modules, ECDL and Entrepreneurial training. Carolyn is currently seeking employment in community youth work.



*“I would recommend this to any young person. It’s a great opportunity to undertake and the qualifications I have gained offer me great hope for the future”.*

In fact, the sense of collective unity within this group is quite profound and the following 'eulogy' written by one of the group members clearly articulates the impact that working and learning together has had.

#### ***Please be upstanding for the epilogue for Rural Community Leadership Programme***

**Born:** 2nd October 2006

**Died:** 28th March 2008

*Fourteen young youth workers from locations in the counties of Armagh and Tyrone regrettably ended their fight for employment as they passed the above date. They are sadly missed by surviving members of the YouthAction organisation, in particular the Co-ordinator, Aileen O’Callaghan.*

*During their time together, the group have met many challenges and obstacles and experienced many highs and lows, but on this date, the group left Cathedral Road knowing that their lives had in fact been brightened in some way because of the involvement of the CLP.*

*Throughout the time with YouthAction, the fourteen leaders have had an opportunity to play an important role within the community that they were placed, and each and every one of them had a massive impact on the young people that they met during numerous fun projects and events that they all embarked on together.*

*Whether it be in Fintona, Keady, Caledon, Cullyhanna, Crossmaglen, or Moortown, Gortin, Donaghmore, Omagh, Aghalee, Galbally or Newtownhamilton, each young leader has left a huge legacy, a legacy made on a basis of trust, fun and hard work which cannot be commended and rewarded enough.*

*And so, as the period of mourning and loss begins to creep slowly into the hearts of the remains of the CLP, it’s important to remember the good times. Residentials, Killarney, murals, young women’s/men’s groups, sexual health, NVQ, overseas expeditions, Youth Achievement Awards, university modules, memorial gardens, EDI workshops, summer events, Technical Certificates, Town Development Work, partnership work to name a few things that can only shed a bright light on the darkness that is known as the end.*

*However, the end of the CLP should not, and won’t be looked upon as a down point in people’s lives. Instead, this is an opportunity for people to spread their wings, to identify that they do have the ability, the knowledge, the confidence and the skills to go forth from this terrible day, and to bring joy in full amounts to their lives again as they strive further into the dark, ugly world of work.*

*The CLP group has been a marvellous, loving, caring family, who have been there for each other and continue to be as they go their separate ways. But the main thing to remember is that wherever the CLP group members go, no matter how far they may travel and how far they may be apart, the truth is that no-one who has been involved in this 18 month rollercoaster of a ride will ever forget the fond memories that have been made and shared and the spirit of the now extinct CLP group will live long in our hearts for all eternity.*

***Bronagh, Emma, Mairead, Sonya, Gareth, Carolyn, Gareth, Andy, Kyle, Quinn, Crawford, Fryer, Jamie and Matthew.***

***Aileen, Paddy and C-Dawg  
(The CLP Group of 2006-2008 – Together Forever)***



Such expressions of personal feeling as this, as well as the previous comments about the strength of the group, offer considerable insight into the extent to which the *Building Leadership* programme has impacted on these young people's lives. Such an effect is not achieved by accident. Attention to building trust and confidence within the group has not only reaped benefits in terms of the participants' learning experiences, it has also modelled a way of working that they can take with them into their own youth work practice and indeed, into their own daily lives. This experience, the bonding, the sharing and the caring culture that has been nurtured and created within this group, will inform the relationships that these young people build with others for the rest of their lives.

### 5.3.7 Work placement

Initially 14 organisations were signed up to offer the work placement experiences which would last from November 2006 to March 2008. Collectively, the organisations identified reflected the main traditions

within Northern Ireland and provided a geographical and community balance. This was a crucial factor to ensure, since as many rural communities are predominantly single identity, it was essential that participants from the main traditions had placement options to consider. Additionally, YouthAction Northern Ireland sought to identify placement locations that would enable the organisation to place resources (the participants) in areas of greater social need.

Each participant on the *Building Leadership* programme was expected to work approximately 2.5 days per week on placement and receive placement support from an appointed placement supervisor. The placement locations were advertised as part of the recruitment process. Therefore, at the time of applying for a place on the *Building Leadership* programme, applicants were also able to express their work placement preference and apply for a specific area.

*“The placement organisation's role is crucial in ensuring that the Young Community Leader has opportunities to*

*engage with young people and adults within the community meaningfully, develop their core skills and gather evidence of this experience for their NVQ Level 3 in Youth work”*

Although all participants are employed directly by YouthAction Northern Ireland, the placement offered the opportunity to work in a sustained way at local community level with young people, build relationships, contribute effectively to being part of a team and experience the responsibilities of being an employee at first hand.

Over the duration of the programme some placements have worked out very well and some less so. This is understandable in many respects and mirrors the range of situations that employers and employees might experience, for example; people moving jobs, maternity leave or long term sick leave. Also, and not surprisingly, some relationships work better than others. In some instances placements have been reorganised to meet the needs of the programme participants.

Overall, the feedback from participants in relation to the work placement aspect of the *Building Leadership* programme has been excellent.

*“Loved it! Full of challenges, experiences and fun...I have been able to deliver and co-facilitate programmes that I’ve never had an opportunity to do before.”*

*“Enjoyed it very much working with my supervisor – good relationship. I enjoy actually getting out and working with young people. I have learnt a lot of new skills and experiences with working with young people. I have also learnt the importance of teamwork and reflection and monitoring.”*

*“I have been very fortunate in that loads of project and funding opportunities*

*were there for the taking in the areas that I worked in. I work alongside Sean Murray – Rural Outreach. Sean has been a great help to me and we are currently facilitating a health programme together.”*

Not all the work placements were with youth organisations and this does appear to have had an impact on the quality of the placement experience from both the trainee’s and placement organisation’s perspective, although not exclusively so. In some instances the opportunity to practically engage with young people was more limited, particularly where the community organisation was not directly running youth activities. In other instances the community organisation’s expectations of the trainee were perhaps somewhat unrealistic. For instance, a lot of rural community organisations want to do something to address the lack of youth facilities within their community. A trainee on placement therefore may seem a means of doing this. However, a trainee needs direct support, and certainly, depending on their previous experience ought not to be expected to take on a leadership role in setting up and running a youth club/project etc. The trainee may only be at the stage of being to able to work in an assistant role.

*“I found working in the youth club both very enjoyable and challenging as I was the only person there with any youth work experience, so I had to run all the games and activities. My placement was very good at the start but became more difficult when a new supervisor came in as the environment changed.”*

Clearly from the trainees’ perspective, the most successful placements were those that were with youth work organisations and where there was plenty and frequent support, both in terms of youth work practice and via supervision be it formalised or less so. In these instances the trainees flourished

*“Being on work placement has been a great experience for me...I have learnt new skills. I have also learnt how to*

**Matthew Murray** aged 22. Matthew commenced his placement within TADA Rural Support Network before moving to Drumgor Youth Centre. Matthew supported the running of the Summer Scheme alongside helping to develop youth club activities. Matthew has secured employment with the Devon Youth Service as a Youth Support Officer.



*“My time in YouthAction has been integral in preparing me for the interview process and in giving me the knowledge, experience and confidence I needed in order to further myself in the youth work field.”*

*facilitate and my confidence has been built through placement... The programme has pushed me to become a better youth worker and has opened opportunities for me.”*

A number of the trainees expressed the view that the *Building Leadership* programme would benefit from increasing the time spent on placement which is an indication of how beneficial they found it. Furthermore, several are hoping to stay with their placement organisation in either a paid or voluntary capacity after the programme ends.

### 5.3.8 Youth work ethos and methodology of the programme

There can be no doubt that the *Building Leadership* programme really is an innovational approach to youth work that combines the values and principles of youth work practice with professional youth work practice development. Drawing on and learning from the previous community leadership programmes YouthAction Northern Ireland now has a framework for supporting young community leaders to become qualified youth workers and, that programme is fundamentally from a youth work perspective. It follows therefore, that what has been created now, is a modern apprenticeship framework delivered using youth work practice. It is not simply ‘about’ youth work, it is youth work.

The emphasis placed on underpinning values is not unique to the field of youth work, but the existence of a programme of this kind is evidence of an organisation and indeed a sector that has taken the ethos of what it is about and transferred that to every facet of its work, in practice, strategy and policy. In one programme essentially designed to offer employment based training to 14 young adults, it is critical to note that young people, rural communities, a number of rural community and youth work

organisations and workers, the peer support workers and programme co-ordinator all also benefit from multi-level outcomes in terms of new opportunities, experiences and further personal and professional development.

At every level the *Building Leadership* programme is infused with the ethos of youth work and added value is built in at every stage.

The methodology utilised is fully in keeping with this ethos and in this the trainees are able to see and experience the values and theory of youth work being put into practice. In essence, the peer support workers, co-ordinator and other YouthAction Northern Ireland staff are modelling the practice that they are advocating with the trainees and through the placements this good youth work practice is witnessed in action within a diverse community context.

As a model for supporting young people into employment the *Building Leadership* programme is exemplary.

*“I am extremely thankful for the opportunity YouthAction has provided me and feel it has really benefited me for the future. It has left me now, that I have options! I don’t think any other programme offers as much experience and qualifications to young people as this one.”*

### 5.3.9 Progression routes and employability

**For the trainees themselves it has given them an 18 month contract of employment with a regional youth work organisation which in itself is a great asset on any CV and to any prospective job applicant. However, more than**



**Arlene Brady** aged 20. Arlene worked within Opening Doors Community Relations Project before completing her placement with ROSA Rural Support Network. Arlene is currently pursuing a career in Veterinary Nursing.

*“My time on the CLP programme really built up my self esteem & confidence through the people I met and the help and support I got throughout the programme.”*



**that, the trainees have had the experience of being an employee with all that that entails. They have had to learn to manage their time, be responsible and accountable to their employer for their actions, work as part of a team and on their own initiative, seek and manage resources, work to a work plan and produce work reports, experience line management and supervision, support and supervise volunteers, deal with purchasing and contracting and so on. The list is endless, just as it is for any other employee in any other organisation. However, for these young people, those 18 months experience have given them numerous and diverse transferable skills that will be transferable to any employment context. The value of this cannot be underestimated or indeed overstated. The life chances that these young people have been afforded through the Building Leadership programme have put them ahead of many a graduate who despite leaving university with a degree, may never have gained any work experience.**

Confidence and familiarity with the world of work is crucial not only to employees, but also to employers and the economy as a whole. This is not just a point worth noting, it is an imperative for the youth work workforce in Northern Ireland. In the Sector Skills 2007 Report prepared by NICVA<sup>2</sup>, research indicated that 75% of all vacancies for youth workers were perceived to be hard to fill. 24% of employers cited applicants' lack of high-level/specific skills as the main reason for the difficulty in recruitment. 14.8% cited applicants' lack of qualifications and 11.1% cited applicant's lack of experience. While there were other reasons in addition to these, clearly lack of employable skills followed by lack of qualifications and experience were significant factors in youth work employers' ability to recruit. This combination is essential in terms of enhancing employability and, critically, the *Building Leadership* programme has supported and nurtured the simultaneous development and acquisition of all three.

YouthAction Northern Ireland has not only developed a model apprenticeship framework that is tailored to the specific needs of young people, it is attending to the workforce needs of Northern Ireland's youth work employers. In so doing, it is also addressing the future skills requirements of both the youth work and wider lifelong learning sector. Stage 3 of the Sector Skills Agreement for Northern Ireland's lifelong learning sector asserted that:

*“half of all employers in Northern Ireland reported that their professional and paraprofessional staff lacked transferable skills including communication and bilingual skills. Stakeholders in Northern Ireland revealed that transferable and wider employability skills are a priority. These include interpersonal and outreach skills and skills to promote social inclusion and empower communities. In particular it is anticipated that youth workers will need to develop advice and guidance skills.”<sup>3</sup>*

In addition to all of this, from the participants point of view the *Building Leadership* programme has given them real and sustained coal face experience of working with young people which all have relished and left them wanting more. The outcome is a confident, energetic and experienced pool of workers eager to join the workforce.

All the participants questioned were asked to rate out of 5 the extent to which their skills and employability were increased. All responses were 4 or above and more than half of these were rated 5. All expressed the view that they want to pursue employment in the field of youth work. Those that are planning to apply for a place on the part-time degree programme at the University of Ulster all hope to secure some part-time youth work employment to support them through their studies. One participant has already applied for a place on the full-time degree programme.

2 Sector Skills 2007, Understanding Skills Development Across the Voluntary and Community Sector in NI. Produced by NICVA on behalf of 9 Sector Skills Councils (including LLUK) and funded by DEL.

3 A Sector Skills Agreement for the Lifelong Learning Sector NI, Stage 3 Analysis of the Gaps in Provision and Market Testing, June 2007

All the participants expressed the view that they feel more confident, skilled and experienced. Some of the participants put it thus:

*“I feel very lucky to have been on the Community Leadership Programme. The amount of training, knowledge and skills I have gained and developed have been unreal.”*

*“A great sense of community and achievement. An element of self-belief and confidence. Skills that will carry on to any line of work, life and interpersonal skills.”*

*“This was the best experience of my life. I have improved personally and professionally and it’s given me a positive outlook on life. ....I am hopeful for the future and am going to continue in my education and strive for a better quality of life.”*

An example of this potential transferability of skills is demonstrated by one of the programme participants who is keen to build on the entrepreneurial training and set up her own business running alternative therapy courses which she sees as complementary to her youth work.



At the time of writing another participant, has already secured employment in a youth work setting and was told that he was 'excellent' at the interview. The post is funded for two years with a possible extension. When asked what difference the programme had made to them, they responded:

*“Before this I was stuck in doing small jobs. This opportunity got me qualifications and has given me more focus in my life and sorted it out.”*



All of this cannot be said without acknowledging the huge investment put into this programme not just from an organisational point of view but also from a human point of view. The participants have clearly demonstrated their appreciation of YouthAction Northern Ireland and its staff. There can be little doubt that the staff involved in directly and indirectly supporting delivery of this programme give total commitment to the young people participating. This cannot be without its tensions, not least because YouthAction Northern Ireland is not only delivering the programme, it is also the employer and as such the organisation is fulfilling different roles. Roles that potentially may, at times, conflict. However, despite the stresses that duality of roles can bring, YouthAction Northern Ireland has mediated a course that seeks to nurture the young person first and foremost within an employment context and indeed gone the extra mile to do so where other employers may not.

# Section Six

## 6. Rural community partners (Placement organisations) – perspectives and impacts

A wide variety of organisations offered placements to participants on the *Building Leadership* programme. Some of these have been working in partnership with YouthAction Northern Ireland for a number of years and for some it was a completely new experience.

Also, there was diversity in the type of organisation offering placements. Several were youth organisations, but in rural areas in particular it is common to find one organisation catering for different age groups. Therefore, some of the programme participants were placed with more generic community organisations who were also seeking to meet the needs of young people.

All the placement supervisors interviewed expressed the view that they thought the *Building Leadership* programme was an excellent opportunity for young people offering employment, experience, qualifications and pay. All felt they would encourage young people from their own communities to take part if possible and some were disappointed that no young people from their areas had taken part. As one placement supervisor pointed out, participants get:

*“the chance to develop employment skills which even graduates don’t have.”*

Other placement supervisors were clearly impressed with the benefits the Programme offers:

*“I feel this is a very worthwhile programme and should be fully endorsed and made more widely available. The young people and the community benefit greatly in terms of new skills for the young people..and.. produces young educators who can fully engage with their peers.”*

*“I found that it allowed young people to see that a career in Youth Work could commence before going to University. I*

*think the whole 3rd level education experience would scare many, less academic young people. The CLP would perhaps be seen more in line with an apprenticeship.....I wish it had been around when I was that age. Many young people cannot afford to attend 3rd level education due to financial difficulties.”*

All the placement supervisors recognised the win/win potential of the *Building Leadership* programme for both participant and placement organisation, a fact highlighted by at least one of the programme participants as well.

Several placement supervisors acknowledged the fact that the 'extra pair of hands' was of benefit to the organisation. However, others were more specific and saw the benefits to their organisation in terms of:

*“young people from rural areas could be involved in peer education programmes with a trainee leader who had empathy for issues specific to young people in rural areas.”*

And;

*“able to offer support to areas ...in terms of youth provision – try and see if we could get young people more engaged.”*

Even to contribute to the profile and work programme of the host organisation;

*“To highlight our eagerness to help others and especially our young people. This helps to raise our profile and also in term of operational plans and targets it meets key goals for us.”*

This latter point is important in that the operational plan targets and goals referred to here were set in relation to key DARD Rural Development Programme objectives. This demonstrates synergy in that by

**Jamie Frew** aged 19. Jamie was based in the South Tyrone area with YouthAction's Rural Outreach Project. Jamie helped to develop work with young people in Aughnacloy focusing on issues around road safety. Jamie left the programme in October 2007 to pursue a career as an electrician.

*"Loved getting support from group and giving support to team members. Paddy and Audrey were brilliant – listened to me and took time out to help me understand"*



working in partnership with rural community/youth organisations, YouthAction Northern Ireland is directly contributing to key government strategy and assisting others to do so as well.

Yet another placement supervisor saw benefits in terms of his own professional development:

*"As this young person was learning so was I. Being a positive role model helped me improve my style of leadership and management."*

The merits of a youth work organisation versus a community work organisation have already been explored. It would appear from the placement supervisors' experiences that the youth focussed organisations generally proved to be the more successful from both the organisation and trainees perspectives. This is most likely to have been because there was already a youth work/club structure in place for the trainee to work within in a supported way. Another factor that appears to have had some bearing on the quality of the work placement experience has been if the trainee had prior involvement with the club/centre and has come from that local community.

Some placement supervisors spoke with obvious warmth and pride about the trainee on placement with them. Lynn Bradley from St Oliver Plunkett Youth Club in Crossmaglen was very impressed by one of the participants from the programme;

She had a baby early on in the programme and had a difficult time. Never the less, she came back and hit the ground running and has been really enjoying it.

*"It's hard to come back to the group after being off – but she did it. She picked up on the NVQ and completed it and is really motivated. She has co-facilitated two young women's groups*

*and since Christmas been working with a cross community/cross cultural group. She has also had experience of opening up and running the centre in my absence and was great at it. We'll be sorry to lose her."*

At least two placement supervisors expressed the view that (with hindsight) they would like to have had some input into deciding who they take on work placement rather than simply have someone placed with them, based ostensibly on the trainee's preference. Of these two organisations, one supervisor raised the practical issue of competing expectations i.e. the need to satisfy NVQ requirements getting in the way of what she saw as the needs of her own organisation. The other Supervisor expressed the view that although the trainee was placed with them and essentially working to their remit, they were employed by YouthAction Northern Ireland and as he saw it – had two masters.

Placement supervisors were supported in their role by the *Building Leadership* programme co-ordinator. Prior to the programme starting an information meeting was held in Armagh for all prospective placement supervisors and followed by workplace visits from the programme co-ordinator. Partner organisations were asked to agree to the following;

- to provide structured supervision and support the trainee for a minimum of 2 hours per month.
- to provide developmental learning and practice opportunities for the trainee leader.
- to attend the Supervisors Forum which will take place approximately every 10 weeks.
- to participate in CLP tripartite meetings to assess learning to date and progress of the trainee.

In practice, the process of structured and formal supervision has varied from organisation to organisation. Several supervisors acknowledged that:

**Patrick Murtagh** aged 24. Patrick Murtagh was initially based in Galbally Youth and Community Association where he supported a group of young volunteers to establish a youth club. Patrick secured the peer support worker post on the project in September 2007. Patrick has secured employment with The Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health (NIAMH).



*“The experience I have gained from this programme has been first class. I have also met and built relationships with a wide range of people from various backgrounds.”*

*“Could have spent more time on formal supervision. It was very informal and if I had someone else again I would probably want to make it more formal.”*

The establishment of a supervisors' forum provided the placement supervisors with the opportunity to come together to explore common aspects of the placement experience.

*“These meetings were very helpful in providing guidance in supporting the student particularly around accreditation (NVQ etc). They also provided an opportunity to discuss any concerns or issues.”*

Although placement supervisors were asked to agree to attending the Forum meetings attendance has been limited. Several Placement Supervisors cited other work commitments as the reason for this. At least one person stated they found the Supervisors Forum of limited use and another said he had not been informed. It should be noted here, that the latter was an alternative placement, subsequently set up some months into the Programme.

### **6.1 Impact of the Building Leadership programme within communities**

A key element of the programme for trainees on placement was engaging in youth work practice within a community youth work setting. This constituted a substantial 60% of the programme.

#### **Participants' practice in communities**

##### *Keady*

Andrew Magennis undertook his placement with the Southern Education and Library Board in Keady where

he was involved in numerous youth work programmes. Andrew was involved in the Phoenix project where young people from different backgrounds came together and devised a DVD of what it's like growing up and living in Keady. He was also involved in Youth Aid Africa where he led a group of young people from Keady and the surrounding areas to Kenya in Summer 2007. The preparation involved in this project took several months, and included various fundraising initiatives as well as ensuring the young people were well prepared for the trip.

##### *Fintona*

Ryan McGuire was the young community leader who developed a youth project in Fintona. This was a partnership project with the Omagh Forum, PSNI and Omagh Community Safety Partnership. As part of the project the young people decided they would like to host a fun day for the community. The young people took the lead role in this supported by Mark Crawford and Catherine McCormack, the peer support worker. This was an extremely successful event with over two hundred people turning up on the day. Since then the young people have become a constituted committee, undertook training in participation and have been involved in various fundraising events to raise money for the community and the youth group.

##### *Galbally*

Patrick Murtagh initially began his youth work placement in Galbally Youth and Community Association. In the first few months of placement Patrick brought a group of young volunteers together. They subsequently decided to open a youth club for young people from the area. The youth club was very successful with over sixty members. Activities were varied and included dance and drama, Patrick also secured funding through the Southern Education and Library Board to buy new equipment for the club. Carolyn Bell took over this placement in Sept 2007

when Patrick secured the peer support worker post and ran the club very successfully until March 2008.

#### *Newtownhamilton*

Ryan Quinn undertook his placement with YouthAction's Rural Outreach Project within the Armagh area. Ryan had the opportunity to engage young people in a variety of projects in a number of local rural communities. One of the projects which was extremely successful was an arts based project in Newtownhamilton. When work began in Newtownhamilton it was evident that relationships between the young people and the community were difficult. The young people now have a very strong relationship with the community and have been involved in numerous projects and have also completed the Youth Achievement Awards at Bronze and Silver levels.

#### *Rural Lisburn*

Kyle Stewart was on placement with the South Eastern and Library Board and helped to establish a Rural Youth Forum. The young people who took part in the forum were from different backgrounds and rural communities including Aghalee, Glenavy, Maze, and Moira. Alongside being an opportunity for young people from rural communities to come together, share experiences and have fun the young people also organised a youth conference focusing on how young people are labelled and exploring stereotyping.

#### *Crossmaglen*

Sonya Brady was based with St Oliver Plunkett Youth Club, Crossmaglen and established a multi-cultural young women's group comprising young women from Crossmaglen alongside young women from the Muslim community in Dundalk, Co Louth. This group explored each other's cultures including visiting each other's place of worship. Sonya also assisted her supervisor in running the youth club and facilitated a range of activities and issue based sessions within the club.

#### *Cullyhanna*

Mairead Farrell established a young women's group in the Rural Health Partnership in Cullyhanna. This group were involved in organising an International Young Women's Day event in St John Bosco in Newry and also completed a young women's health programme over an eight week period. The young women also had the opportunity to complete a Bronze Youth Achievement Award to recognise their achievements.

#### *Moortown*

Bronagh Devlin was based with the Loughshore Youth Forum and established a young women's group with young people from Moortown. They were involved in a drama project alongside an International Women's Day event and completed Bronze Youth Achievement Awards. Bronagh also delivered a range of health programmes to suit the needs of young women and young men in the Moortown area. These were very successful and delivered over a number of weeks.

#### *Donaghmore*

Emma Mullen was based with Bardic Education Arts and Media (BEAM). She also established a young women's group in Donaghmore Youth Club. After successfully recruiting a group of eight young women Emma also supported them to complete community projects alongside drug awareness and health programmes. These young women also completed the Bronze Youth Achievement Award as recognition for their participation.



### *Gortin*

Mark Crawford was based in the Omagh Forum for Rural Associations and through them established contact with Owenkillew Community Development Association in Gortin. Mark supported the community development association to run the youth club on a weekly basis. Mark also established a youth group for young people in the area between the ages of 13 – 19 years. Mark helped to facilitate a personal development programme, a cookery programme and they also had the opportunity to become volunteer youth leaders within the youth club.

### *South Tyrone Area*

Gareth Frew was based with YouthAction's Rural Outreach Project for South Tyrone. Through this programme Gareth had the opportunity to work in a number of rural communities. One of the highlights of Gareth's placement was supporting young people in Caledon to engage in an arts based programme, where they helped to brighten up the local park by painting a mural in the form of graffiti art. The young people



saw this as an opportunity to show the Caledon Community that they can make a positive contribution to their area.

### *Aughnacloy*

Jamie Frew was also based in YouthAction's Rural Outreach Project in South Tyrone. Jamie had the opportunity to work in partnership with young people in Aughnacloy alongside the Aughnacloy Development Association, the Police Service of Northern Ireland to organise a road safety event. This event aimed to highlight the importance of young people driving carefully on local roads. The young people involved had the opportunity to profile the event, and took on various roles on the day of the event.

### *Craigavon*

Matthew Murray was based in TADA Rural Support Network and Drumgor Youth Centre, Craigavon. Within his placement Matthew had the opportunity to support youth club based activities including a summer scheme. Matthew also had the opportunity to co deliver issue based sessions on personal and social development.

It is not surprising that for Ryan Quinn, the participant based in Newtownhamilton this project was the main highlight of his 18 month placement.

The following is a copy of the transcript from Newtownhamilton Community Association's Application to the Calor Village of the Year Competition. It highlights perfectly the impact that youth work, supported by YouthAction Northern Ireland via the *Building Leadership* programme has had for those living in the village.

*Newtownhamilton is a small rural village situated in South Armagh with a great community spirit. This has been symbolised by the recent launch of a community garden. Newtownhamilton Community Association works from the local community centre. Various activities take place to meet the needs of the whole community including art classes, Irish dancing, Scouts and Cubs and Weight Watchers.*

*The group identified a patch of waste ground to convert into a community garden. As work was*

*beginning in the garden the community was shocked and saddened by the sudden death of a 14 year old girl who was a keen member of the community group. The young woman also had a disability and so helped the whole community individually, raising awareness of the needs of those with disability and encouraging greater acceptance of people, regardless of whether they use a wheelchair or not. At this point the group decided to change the focus of the community garden to becoming a memorial garden in her memory.*

*Contact was made with YouthAction Northern Ireland for help to support a group of young people from the area to get involved in the completion of the garden. The young people were all aged between 14-16 years old who felt they had no space for themselves in their area. At the prospect of getting involved in the memorial garden, the young people were highly motivated and appreciated the opportunity to play an active role in Newtownhamilton. The young people's participation in the programme helped them to cope with the loss of the young woman, it was particularly moving for them as not only were all the young people friends of the young woman, but her twin brother was also a member of the group.*

*The young people were also invited to complete a mural to add colour and character to the garden. They agreed to complete a graffiti wall working in partnership with Youth Action Northern Ireland and the Creative Youth Partnership. The young people worked very hard, meeting on a weekly basis and sacrificing their Saturdays to ensure that they completed a mural that was a suitable testimony to the young woman.*

*The group believe the mural symbolises not only the life of the young woman but life for a young person living in Newtownhamilton. It also highlights aspects of the history of Newtownhamilton which taught the young people about their community heritage. Throughout the duration of the project people worked in partnership, encouraging each other and helping out when needed, even for the difficult tasks of cleaning and moving furniture. The launch of the garden took place on the 24th June 2007. This was a moving day for the family of the young woman and the entire community of Newtownhamilton, but for everyone present it symbolised the great partnership that has formed between young and not so young within the community.*

*As has already been stated, the community partner organisations were able to identify clear benefits for their own communities arising from having a trainee on placement.*

*The point about having an extra pair of hands is not insignificant, particularly for voluntary youth clubs;*

*“A big benefit to us was having an extra body here to help. As a voluntary organisation we are dependent on volunteers. Taking a trainee on placement allowed us to bring YouthAction training and experience back into our organisation that we could not have done otherwise.”*

But the benefits were not confined to the voluntary sector as one representative from the SEELB Youth Section noted:

*“The placement happened at a good time in our area as we were developing youth provision in rural areas. The benefits were that young people from rural areas could be involved in peer education programmes with a trainee leader who had empathy for issues specific to young people in rural areas.”*

Another benefit identified by workers within the organisations involved having a male worker to complement female staff already employed and having a worker nearer in age to the young people and who could relate to them on their own level and build up a relationship.

It was also accepted that much of the work within communities just would not have happened without the worker on placement. Finally there was acknowledgement that not only was the worker an extra resource, but that many of the workers on placement brought in new skills to the youth groups particularly around new technologies and media which was a great asset to project based work.



As part of their placement all the trainees were required to undertake a community profile of existing youth provision, identify any gaps in provision and then carry out a needs analysis with the young people and develop youth work programmes based on the young people's needs. A flavour of just what was developed in response has been captured in the eulogy set out previously and included residential, murals, young women's and young men's groups, sexual health projects, overseas expeditions, summer events, town development work, partnership work and so on. In total, some 566 young people have taken part in youth work projects and activities delivered by *Building Leadership* programme participants in the last 18 months. Of these 262 were young men and 304 were young women. Participants came from both of Northern Ireland's main traditions.

One of the key areas for all the trainees during their placement was supporting young people within the communities to work towards attaining the ASDAN Youth Achievement Award. This is a nationally accredited award recognised throughout the UK.

The Youth Achievement Award scheme has been developed to recognise and accredit young people's achievements through their day to day engagement and participation in youth work activities. Achievement of the award is based upon the successful completion of one or more challenges that the young person has set themselves with the support and guidance of their youth work. Each challenge takes a minimum of 15 hours to complete, and also requires the completion of a booklet in which the young person plans, records and reflects on the challenge and their own personal learning. There are four levels of award, - Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Significantly;

*“Youth workers who participate in the scheme can use the Awards as a tangible measure of the quality of their work with young people.”<sup>4</sup>*

It is important to note that during the course of the *Building Leadership* programme, 69 young people, participating in youth work projects lead by the trainees, have completed Youth Achievement Awards. This is a positive validation of the quality of the trainees' youth work practice.

A breakdown of the Awards completed is as follows:

**Caledon** - 10 young people completed Youth Challenge

**Cullyhanna** - 5 young women completed Bronze Youth Achievement Award

**Donaghmore** - 8 young women completed Bronze Youth Achievement Award

**Newtownhamilton** - 9 young people completed Silver Youth Achievement Award, 3 completed Bronze Youth Achievement Award

**Whitecross** - 14 young people completed Bronze Youth Achievement Award

**Keady** - 14 young people will complete Silver Youth Achievement Award, 1 young person will complete Gold Youth Achievement Award

**Moortown** - 9 young people completed Bronze Youth Achievement Award

## 6.2 Recognising the Nature of Impact

Recognition for the impact of the programme has come from a variety of different sources. Comments from a letter below from a Youth Diversion Officer with the PSNI Omagh District, is of major significance in demonstrating the worth of the programme, the benefits and value of rural youth work provision and indeed, the quality of that youth work, delivered by participants in the programme.

*‘It's incredible what a difference a year can make and a few dedicated people. When I first went to Fintona to try some diversionary work in September 2006, I found young people in the Fintona town area suffering from low self-esteem with a sense of hopelessness.*

*I know that, without the valuable support that YouthAction have provided in the Fintona area, (via Catherine, Ryan and Mark) it is very unlikely we would have made such excellent progress.*

*The event in Fintona on 27th October 2007 was a great achievement, thanks almost totally to your staff and the Town Youth Committee.....*

*I have read the evaluation of the day and can see from the young people's comments how their esteem has risen and their aspirations have grown.....*

*It would already appear from police statistics that youths offending in the area may be showing a decrease which is really good news. Here is more evidence that you can make an impact on a community when people stop talking about what could be done and actually go and do it.*

*I want to take this opportunity to thank YouthAction NI and particularly the staff working in the Fintona area for all their good work. The area commander .....has also asked me to pass on his thanks and his acknowledgement of your role'*

A quick glance through press cuttings from local newspapers also highlights effectively just what kind of impact the presence of the trainees from the *Building Leadership* programme has had in the communities they have been working. The following excerpts demonstrate this;

#### **Aghaloo/Blackwater Youth Kick into Action**

*"Ten weeks ago a new programme began in McCreedy's Mill, Aughnacloy, aimed at 14-18 year olds to encourage us to do something better with our lives. At first, we weren't sure what to expect, but as the weeks progressed, friendships were forged between*

*people that, without YouthAction we would never have known..... Barry and Gareth ensured that a balance was created between time spent in McCreedy's Mill and outside excursions. Perhaps one of the highlights of the ten week programme was a residential trip to Loch Melvin in Fermanagh.....The programme climaxed with a presentation evening in which we shared our experiences with an attentive audience. The presentation included a DVD and powerpoint slides, with every member playing their part in a fitting pinnacle to a successful ten weeks."*

#### **Caledon Youth Brighten their Community**

*"The Mayor of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, Barry Montieth and the Caledon community unveiled a mural, which was created by a number of young people from the village. The young people wanted to create something vibrant and visible to help brighten up the local play park and help express what Caledon means to them and the rest of the community.*

*....Community representatives who attended the unveiling felt a sense of pride in their area and showed their appreciation towards the young people 'its great to see the Caledon community being highlighted in a positive sense and we are so delighted to have these dedicated young people to make this possible'.*

### Raising awareness for rural young people

*“YouthAction NI, Rural Community Network and Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network hosted an action packed event in Eskra Community Centre. Attended by over 40 young people from rural communities in Tyrone and Armagh, the event aimed to bring rural young people from different communities together to raise awareness about various issues that impact on their lives as well as a chance to meet new people and have fun. Workshops included; cultural awareness, self-esteem, looking at stress and depression, relaxation and a chance to try out sporting activities normally organised for people with disabilities and hip-hop dance.”*



# Section Seven

## 7. Impact of the programme on Good Relations

Given that the aim of the *Building Leadership* programme was to 'support the emergence of young community leaders to contribute to the development of peaceful and stable communities', having a positive impact on the building of good relations is clearly also an anticipated outcome of the programme.

It was anticipated that this would be evidenced in the following ways;

- The balance of partners, community background and gender of participants.
- Opportunities for networking across communities for trainees and local partners.
- Embedding EDI principles into youth work practice and throughout the programme.

In terms of participant representation of the initial 14 young people recruited, 9 were male and 5 female. In terms of religious balance, 9 were Catholic and 5 Protestant. In terms of geographical spread, participants came from Counties Armagh, Down and Tyrone.

At different points during the course of the programme, three young people left as a result of securing employment. This left 11 remaining on the programme, of which 6 were male, 5 were female, 8 were Catholic and 3 were Protestant.

In terms of staff balance, initially all the direct staff involved were female. When one of the Peer Support Worker post became vacant it was filled by a young man participating on the programme. Throughout the programme a wide variety of guest tutors have also contributed. There has been a good balance of male and female, and from Northern Ireland's main communities and this is also reflected in the group of NVQ Assessors.

The host organisations were explicitly chosen to ensure a mix of community representation, some single identity (of both communities) and some more mixed. In terms of young people participating, 410 were Catholic and 156 were Protestant.

While the majority of trainees gained experience working in single identity contexts, they were also able

to develop cross community projects and in some instances cross cultural projects too. Significantly, both the trainees and their placement supervisors have acknowledged that in many instances projects of this kind would not have happened had the trainee not been there to undertake it. This confirms the impact the programme has had on facilitating networking across communities.

The trainees created opportunities to encourage networking across communities by organising events such as the Parkanaur Summer Event in 2007, where they brought together over 120 young people from the different communities that they were working with for a day of art, drama/dance and sport. This was just one example. Many more took place on smaller scales. Other examples include;

- the establishment of a Rural Lisburn Youth Forum bringing together young people from different communities,
- The Phoenix project set up by one of the trainees in South Armagh, that brought together Catholic, Protestant and Lithuanian young people,
- The Cross Cultural young women's group developed by one of the trainees that brought together young women and young Muslim women to explore common issues over a period of weeks.

The opportunity for engagement in cross community and cross cultural work has been a highlight for many of the participants. Andrew Magennis had the opportunity to support and participate in a 5 week expedition to Kenya as part of his work placement. During the preparation time a serious amount of fundraising had to be undertaken.

*"The Kenya trip had the whole community working together to raise the £48,000 in funds needed for the 12 young people to go.....While we were there we were working with young people too, visiting tribes, taking orphans to the beach, taking part in different cultural events and we climbed Mount Kenya....EDI is all about cultural diversity....5 weeks in Kenya, it doesn't get much more cultural than that."*

By creating the space and opportunity for the participants to gain new experiences, the *Building Leadership* programme has helped to influence and have an impact on not just the number of qualified youth workers but their drive to engage in youth work that contributes to the building of good relations. Again, Andrew sums this up well in his own words;

*“As a Protestant young man I wanted to work with Catholic groups in a Catholic area. I went to Keady before I even got a place on the programme and met some of the young people there. It was a brilliant experience for me. In future I’d like new challenges - different and diverse communities. I do believe that I could bring something to it.”*

In addition, to the practical youth work opportunities afforded them to develop peace building skills, the participants took part in a substantial programme of Community Relations/ EDI training which has already been highlighted earlier. As a result of the training and the practical opportunities to develop this within their youth work practice all the participants felt they had improved their peace building skills, with over 80% rating 4 or above.

A number of participants commented that they felt the good relations element of the programme had had a positive personal impact on them and in particular in relation to being less judgemental and more open minded.

*“I found the EDI training great as it allowed you to look at your own beliefs and values. It helped create a more open-mind.”*

*“The community relations work has been my key learning – I enjoyed this work and continue to carry it in my personal life.”*

*“I feel it has made me less judgemental and I am aware of the benefits of diversity.”*

### **7.1 Embedding EDI principles**

There is absolutely no doubt that the principles and values of Equity Diversity and Interdependence are embedded within the *Building Leadership* programme and that the effect of this is that they are embedded within the participants’ youth work practice. The values of EDI are fully consistent with those of youth work and in this programme they have been well woven together both in terms of theory and practice, and in relation to personal and professional relationships.

While there are some practical issues to work on and tease out in terms of streamlining the delivery of the programme content (i.e. simplifying and reducing duplication in terms of multiple portfolio/evidence requirements, and timing delivery of the EDI element) these are minor matters that can be addressed.

Perhaps one of the most important factors to consider in relation to embedding EDI within youth work practice, and a factor which could be easily overlooked, is that the *Building Leadership* programme had a rural focus. The reason why, was based firmly upon the research findings of previous work undertaken by YouthAction Northern Ireland which reported;

*“(rural) young people being somewhat disillusioned and feeling powerless within their community. Many highlighted frustrations at their inability to contribute to decision-making processes.”<sup>5</sup>*

The *Building Leadership* programme is a further response to the findings of rural action research work undertaken by YouthAction Northern Ireland during the 1990’s. Furthermore, through the programme, the commitment of substantial resources to rural youth work practice and training of young rural community leaders, is further evidence that the principles of ensuring equity, valuing diversity and building interdependence is being embedded in youth work practice.

# Section Eight

## 8. Strategic impacts of the Building Leadership programme

In delivering the 2006-2008 *Building Leadership* Programme, YouthAction Northern Ireland sought to strategically influence the development of youth work practice and youth work training in a number of ways. These can be summarised as;

- Development of the NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work
- Development of the Community Leadership Programme through entrepreneurial training
- Alignment of the programme with the coherent route and professional development for Community Youth Work
- Developing the Youth Work Apprenticeship framework using the Community Leadership Programme as a model of best practice
- Delivering on key Government departmental objectives including; Department of Agriculture and Rural Development – Rural Development Programme, Department of Education and Department for Employment and Learning.

The Community Leadership Programme delivered by YouthAction Northern Ireland 2004- 2006 successfully piloted the NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work in Northern Ireland. Building on the independent evaluation recommendations of that programme, YouthAction Northern Ireland has refined the programme delivery mechanisms and has also tested it further in relation to having a rural focus.

This work has been further progressed by the addition of the Technical Certificate and other mandatory elements such as ICT, Key Skills, Child Protection and First Aid training which has enabled YouthAction Northern Ireland to effectively test and trial the programme as a model for delivering the Modern Apprenticeship Framework for Youth Work at Level 3. As can be seen from Appendix 3, the model of the *Building Leadership* programme now conclusively meets the requirements of the Apprenticeship Framework approved by DEL and Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the relevant sector skills council. DEL and LLUK approval indicates that the *Building Leadership* programme will strategically contribute to Government's wider skills agenda.

In April 2008 the CBI/Edexcel Education and Skills Survey 2008 was published. In a press release on 17th April, Jerry Jarvis, Managing Director of Edexcel said

*“The Leitch review of skills<sup>6</sup>, published well over one year ago, provided a wake-up call for us all. The implications for our global economic competitiveness are clear. All of us involved in the UK's education and skills must work ever closer in partnership to address this major challenge by breaking down the institutional barriers between education and the workplace to create a new culture of learning.”*

The CBI/Edexcel Survey also highlighted the fact that employers do not believe that going to university at 18 is the only or indeed best route to success for young people. Furthermore, around half of the employers surveyed offer apprenticeships, giving young people a chance to develop valuable vocational skills and have a strong start to a rewarding career.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly then, the *Building Leadership* programme is fully compatible with the current skills agenda and strategy being implemented by DEL in Northern Ireland, and contributes also to the drive to improve skills across the UK.

Furthermore, the *Building Leadership* programme responds to a number of key requirements set out in DARD's Rural Strategy 2007-2013 and the new Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (NIRDP).<sup>8</sup>

The changing nature of the rural economy has been well documented, particularly in relation to the downturn in fortunes of the agricultural sector, outward migration of young people, and in many instances a growing marginalisation of certain sections of the rural community.

*“Lack of economic opportunities, networks and access to training infrastructure are a particular problem for women and young people in these more remote rural areas. With high*

6 Leitch Review of Skills, Prosperity for all in the Global Economy, Final Report, published 5th December 2006, HMSO

7 Full press release available at: [www.cbi.org.uk/ndbs/press.nsf/](http://www.cbi.org.uk/ndbs/press.nsf/)

8 Available to view at; <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-dard-rural-development/nirdp-2007-13-approved-programme.htm>

*levels of deprivation in six of the seven domains within the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (i.e. income, employment, health and disability, education skills and training, proximity to services and living environment), less accessible rural areas face particular challenges that need to be targeted.”<sup>9</sup>*

The new Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 highlights a number of key areas that can be seen as weaknesses to the progress of rural development and which require action. In particular the following are important to note;

- Over 87% of rural communities in Northern Ireland can be classified as “single identity”. The increased polarisation between the two main communities has reduced the opportunities for building cross-community relations. The NIRDP proposes an integrated approach, at village level, to assist villages and their surrounding areas to realise the potential of their economic, social, cultural and environmental resources.
- The Noble Deprivation Index, indicates that the top most deprived wards based on the “access to services” domain are all rural. Consequently, those living in rural areas generally need to have to travel to access services. This presents an even greater challenge to young people. The NIRDP proposes a community development partnership approach to the delivery of some aspects of key services to create an affordable means of service delivery in rural areas.
- DARD Rural Strategy for 2007-2013 notes that rural areas can remain attractive places for current and future generations to live and work. Greater economic opportunities in rural areas can be provided through business creation and development, diversification of farm businesses into non-agricultural activities, tourism and the increased use of ICT.

In targeting rural young people for the *Building Leadership* programme and delivering it in a rural context in partnership with rural community/youth

organisations, YouthAction Northern Ireland is already responding to a range of key priorities identified for attention through DARD policy and strategy. The *Building Leadership* programme promotes the development of positive cross community relations in rural areas, it is ensuring greater access to educational and training services by working in partnership to provide youth work programmes within rural communities. It is also creating opportunities for young people to consider business creation and farm diversification via the inclusion of entrepreneurial training and ICT.

Furthermore, the delivery of more Community Leadership programmes targeting rural communities will continue to directly contribute to DARD’s Rural Strategy 2007 – 2013 Key Aim 4 (Strengthening the social and economic infrastructure of rural areas) which recognises that strong and vibrant communities and the associated community infrastructure will come through engaging with those communities to identify and address local problems and opportunities, building community capacity and leadership, and encouraging village renewal.

Finally, in relation to the new NI Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, there is a strong degree of complementarity between the *Building Leadership* programme and two of the four themes or ‘axes’ around which the NIRDP will operate. These are:

- Axis 3: Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity
- Axis 4: The LEADER method which draws on the benefits and best practice gained from the experience of local delivery mechanisms. Clear links can be made with the model of the *Building Leadership* programme and the LEADER approaches to be implemented as part of the new NIRDP.
  - Area-based strategies based on clearly defined local needs to be developed and delivered
  - Local people to be involved in the decision making processes
  - The partnership ethos which is central to the success of rural regeneration to be further developed. This approach will also ensure cross-community participation
  - Innovative projects to be developed
  - Private sector involvement will lead to enhanced economic growth and job creation

- Development and implementation of co-operation programmes and projects

In summing up the linkages between the *Building Leadership* programme and the NI Rural Strategy and Rural Development Programme then, some key points can be made. It is essential that in order to build peaceful, vibrant and sustainable rural communities there needs to be an investment in building the skills and capacity of those that live there. Rural communities need to be championed and its leaders nurtured. Those leaders are today's young people. In the global economy, the workforce needs to be multi skilled and talented, with a diverse range of abilities that can transfer across the world of work, play and indeed, contribute to rural regeneration. Through the *Building Leadership* rural community leadership programme, YouthAction Northern Ireland has championed young community leaders in rural areas and has a significant role to play in contributing to delivering rural development strategic policy in Northern Ireland.

The Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in NI 2005-2008<sup>10</sup>, does not make any explicit reference to meeting the needs of rural young people, although these needs would be included within the context of ensuring inclusion of marginalised and disadvantaged sections of the community.

The aims and priorities set out within the strategy are grouped under four key themes of:

- Effective inclusive youth work
- Participation
- Resources and funding
- Implementation

Closer examination confirms that the aims and objectives of the *Building Leadership* programme currently fit well with the strategic priorities set out. Indeed, it is hard to find a strategic theme to which the programme does not respond, addressing as it does the provision of quality inclusive youth work and the need to train and support the professional development of youth workers. However, the Department of Education is to develop new Priorities for Youth for 2008 onwards which will build on the current strategy. The new priorities will be set within the existing strategic framework rather than emerging

from a review of the overall Strategy. In setting the new priorities the Department intends to work with all stakeholders to identify the main issues currently facing youth work and determine the priorities. This is also expected to inform the strategic priorities for the new Education and Skills Authority.

This is an opportunity for YouthAction Northern Ireland to seek to work with the Department to more explicitly recognise the needs and circumstances of rural young people and respond to those needs through innovative programmes such as the *Building Leadership* programme. The justification for doing so is well expressed by the parent of one young woman who took part in a programme organised by one of the *Building Leadership* programme trainees.

*"I just wanted to let you know that my daughter was one of a group of young girls from the Dorsey area who attended the programme for teenagers in Cullyhanna over the past number of months. Their last outing together was on Saturday (8th March) to mark International Women's Day.*

*Although they had a very enjoyable day and found it extremely interesting meeting a variety of women/girls at the event, it was a sad occasion too, as they were saying goodbye to their youth leader, Mairead.*

*Mairead has been a fantastic role model for the girls. Her enthusiasm and genuine care for the girls has been outstanding and she is someone whom they all hold in great affection and admiration.*

*My daughter has asked me to write and say that if there is any opportunity in the future for Mairead to return to the area to run another course with them, they would be delighted to have her back again.*



*For my own part, I am also sad to see the programme come to an end. There is very little in this area specifically for teenage girls (or indeed boys) outside of sport. Whilst there are some youth clubs, most of the activities are a little dated for the modern teenager of today.*

***I know from speaking to young people that they are at a total loss for anything to occupy themselves with, and spend most of their free time walking about the streets. Whilst they are doing nothing wrong and causing no problems, it would be great for them to have something just for themselves, which they could all enjoy. Perhaps some thought could be given to continuing on the good work done by Mairead with our young people.”***

Two further factors are important to note in relation to the strategic impact of the *Building Leadership* programme on meeting the needs of rural young people and on building the rural youth workforce.

1. Research conducted with community youth work students at the University of Ulster in 2007/08 indicated that there is a clear and common route into the sector and that this is from being a youth group member, to becoming a volunteer, to undertaking basic and then more advanced leadership training through to becoming fully qualified.<sup>11</sup>
2. Those that do come up through such leadership roles are more inclined to stay with the youth work sector.<sup>12</sup>

These factors are a further indication of the strategic value of this programme to supporting the development of the youth work workforce and in particular those from more disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds.



<sup>11</sup> Research into the Workforce Profile of the Youth Work Sector in NI, commissioned by LLUK, Research undertaken by Maucaulay Associates and Vision Management Services, 2008

<sup>12</sup> Worth Your Weight in Gold

# Section Nine

## 9. Conclusions

The following outputs were achieved as a result of the *Building Leadership* programme. (The original output target set, is in brackets):

- 15 (14) under-employed young people (18 – 25 years) employed for 18 months as trainee community leaders in local communities in counties Armagh, Down and Tyrone.
- 3 (2) Peer Support Workers (18 - 25 years) employed with appropriate training completed.
- 12 (14) young people complete a City and Guilds Level 3 in Community Youth Work
- 12 (16) young people complete ECDL ICT training
- 12 (16) young people complete First Aid Training
- 12 (16) young people complete Entrepreneurial training
- 11 (14) young people complete 2 University of Ulster Modules and receive 20 CATS points
- 11 (16) young people complete Community Relations/Equity, Diversity and Interdependence training accredited by OCNNI at Level 2
- 566 (200) young people engage in rural regeneration processes and develop good relationships within and across rural communities
- 69 (50) young people participate in Youth Achievement Awards accredited by ASDAN
- 16 (10) community organisations provide placements and support and supervision for 14 young community leaders
- 9 (10) adults complete Assessor Supervision Training
- 27 (12) young people supported in a voluntary capacity throughout the project
- Baseline data and needs analysis completed on 18 (10) different communities.

It should be noted that 3 young people left the Programme mid way after securing employment or moving into further training and one young person joined mid way. For these reasons not all participants were able to complete all elements of the programme.

In the opening paragraph to the evaluation of the 2004-2006 Community Leadership Programme; Learning for Leadership, Clarke Frampton, the evaluator commented:

*“Programmes such as the Learning for Leadership (CLP) do not occur by accident or chance. They evolve from a particular expression of a need, identified by an organisation which has the vision to offer opportunity to develop people and the necessary values, resources, processes and skills to meet the challenge.”*

The comment is worth repeating because it is as valid in 2008 as it was in 2006 and captures the essence of not just this programme but the entirety of the Community Leadership Programme model.

The Community Leadership programme model developed by YouthAction Northern Ireland is highly innovative and the *Building Leadership* programme demonstrably addresses a number of clearly identified needs expressed by young people in rural communities, using flexible and responsive approaches.

**The ethos and values of YouthAction Northern Ireland are central to the success of this programme. The agency has fostered and grown an organisational culture that is young people centred and which has embedded good youth work practice as its means of doing business. Everything the organisation does is based around and informed by, these two fundamentals.**

The programme delivery mechanisms are structured around a multi-tiered support system which is also tailored to the specific needs of each participant and which can be seen to a great extent to be demand rather than supply lead. This structure of support is nurtured organically at every level and is manifest as much in the organisation's approach to professional staff development as it is to growing a culture of open trust and care among and between peers.

Critical to the support process has been the employment of young people as peer support workers, whose valuable role and contribution has been universally acknowledged by all who have had any dealings with the programme. As stated earlier, this commitment and resourcing has been no accident but

a planned and measured response by YouthAction Northern Ireland to put in place what is needed to effectively meet the needs of the young people participating. All be it in keeping with the values of youth work, such additional resources carry financial implications and such a commitment as this should be fully commended. The *Building Leadership* programme is targeted at rural young people, many of whom have not benefited from more traditional routes through further education and training and who have a diverse and sometimes demanding range of needs. Having identified its target group, YouthAction Northern Ireland has drawn on a range of criteria and approaches to ensure it reaches that group and has fully met its responsibilities to those young people in terms of supporting them to achieve their own goals as well as those of the programme.

The quality and standard of all elements of the *Building Leadership* programme has been consistently good with highly positive feedback from participants in relation to each component of the training and the work placement. Feedback from external tutors and assessors has endorsed the quality of the programme content and methodology which has also been supported by some suggestions for streamlining the content to avoid duplication between elements. For example, between aspects of the NVQ and the Technical Certificate and in relation to the requirement for multiple portfolios.

While certain aspects of the programme are mandatory in terms of modelling the Apprenticeship Framework, other elements have also received strong endorsement. These include the inclusion of the CR/EDI programme and the 2 University of Ulster modules.

The CR/EDI element of training has equipped the trainees with knowledge and understanding about the potential contribution that youth work can play in supporting cross community and good relations work. The opportunity has also been afforded for them to put this into practice and therefore to develop peace building skills through the work placement. Importantly too, the CR/EDI element has had a significant impact on their ability to develop skills or critical reflective practice, exploring themselves and their own roles as well as the views, experiences and circumstances of others. This process has been

validated by the many very real examples of the impact the trainees have had in terms of enabling cross community work and engaging in peace building with young people in rural communities

The partnership that YouthAction Northern Ireland has developed with the University of Ulster and the inclusion of the 2 modules from the Community Youth Work Studies degree has had a major impact on the trainees. This experience has been so important in breaking down many personal barriers that prevent young people even considering university an option. In working towards these modules the trainees have overcome a number of personal and cultural barriers and now have their sights set firmly higher than they would have previously. The significance of this cannot be underestimated given that most of them acknowledge they are the first person in their family to study at university.

Organisationally, YouthAction Northern Ireland has progressed a range of partnership arrangements in order to meet the demands of the programme. This is also evident in relation to the working relationships developed with the community and youth work organisations acting as hosts for the work placement. Again, considerable time and effort has been given over to building these relationships and ensuring good communication mechanisms and support are in place, which is in itself a full time job. On the whole this has worked very well and all the organisations have expressed strong support for the model of the *Building Leadership* programme. This is evidenced by the extent to which the partner organisations have promoted the programme within their own communities and encouraged young people to apply.



Again, a number of positive suggestions have been made, building on the positive experiences of involvement, including the participation of the host organisation in recruitment and selection of the trainee to be placed with them. This would also help to embed the ethos and programme objectives within the host organisation and heighten clarity around roles and responsibilities.

Much has been made of the fact that the *Building Leadership* programme is more than just a training programme for young people. However, that does not lessen the fact that it is a vocational employment based training and development programme and clearly needs to be a successful model to meet the requirements of the Modern Apprenticeship Framework. In fact the *Building Leadership* programme is exceptional in terms of its complementarity with the Modern Apprenticeship Framework and also with a wider range of Government departmental strategies and policy. Not least those of DEL, DE and DARD. However, as has been seen, employers are demanding more than young people with qualifications or even vocational skills. They require what this programme gives in abundance and that is confidence, inter-personal and transferable skills, the ability to work as part of a team, ICT skills, problem solving and so on, the very skills and qualities that enhance employability within the workplace. It could be argued that this programme delivers on all these fronts because it is based on and informed by youth work values and practice. Given its success, it offers a good practice model for the development of other Modern Apprenticeship Schemes, not just in youth work.

# Section Ten

## 10. Recommendations

### 10.1 Programme delivery

1. YouthAction Northern Ireland should ensure the content of the Community Leadership Programme incorporates:
  - The Approved Modern Apprenticeship Framework for Youth Work
  - The Certificate in Supporting Youth Work Level 3 - Technical Certificate
  - Key and Essential Skills to support the Department for Employment and Learning Skills Strategy.

This will ensure that young people participating in the programme are equipped with nationally recognised vocational skills and qualifications.

2. YouthAction Northern Ireland should ensure that the individual components of the Community Leadership Programme are delivered in a more cohesive format to facilitate completion of the relevant qualifications. These include the NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work, Technical Certificate and the Community Relations/Equity Diversity and Interdependence Level 2 Programme.
3. YouthAction Northern Ireland should explore creative ways of integrating the use of ICT and digital media more effectively throughout the programme. For example, usage and application in the workplace, in the production of youth work resources and activities and in the development of specific projects within communities.
4. Given the additional benefits gained by the Young Community Leaders in visiting Kerry and the Young Community Leaders' experiences with YouthAid Africa in Kenya YouthAction Northern Ireland should consider incorporating a transnational study component into future Community Leadership Programmes as incorporated in previous cross border programmes. This will enhance the overall learning and development experience for the participants.

### 10.2 Assessment

1. YouthAction Northern Ireland should continue to lobby over use of 'jargonised' language within the NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work and Technical Certificate with the relevant awarding bodies.
2. YouthAction Northern Ireland should reduce the number of NVQ Assessors to improve efficiency across the programme.

### 10.3 Work placements

1. Similar to the urban programme YouthAction Northern Ireland should adopt a partnership approach with host placement organisations in the recruitment and selection of trainees.
2. YouthAction Northern Ireland should give clearer guidance to placement supervisors on the role, regularity, format and recording systems for supervision.
3. YouthAction Northern Ireland should consider running a short course on support and supervision for placement supervisors that can count towards their own Continuous Professional Development (CPD). This will ensure effective support systems are available within the programme.
4. YouthAction Northern Ireland should complete a thorough induction programme to ensure placement organisations are fully aware of their role and responsibilities.

### 10.4 Strategic considerations

1. The Department of Education, in recognising the role of the Community Leadership Programme should draw on this experience and learning to inform the development of its new Priorities for Youth 2008 onwards.
2. The Department of Education should collaborate with the Department for Employment and Learning to meet the employability needs of young adults (18 – 25 yrs).

3. The Department for Employment and Learning and the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development should invest in the delivery of the Modern Apprenticeship Framework for Youth Work in those areas designated as 'more remote'.
4. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development should provide financial support for a new programme to enhance the integration of ICT and entrepreneurial training in accordance with the aims of the new Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.
5. In implementing a Workforce Development Strategy for the Lifelong Learning Sector, Lifelong Learning UK and the Department for Employment and Learning should seek to ensure recognition for the development and support needs of workers entering the workforce from volunteer and part-time routes.
6. Life Long Learning UK should be drawing on the learning from the Community Leadership Programme as a model to support workforce development in other related community learning and development constituencies.
7. The Youth Work Training Board should ensure there are sufficient qualified assessors to support the delivery of vocational youth work training.
8. The Youth Council for Northern Ireland should commission a longitudinal study of previous participants to demonstrate the longer term impact on the youth work sector of this type of vocational programme.
9. Awarding bodies should take cognisance of the comments of the Community Leadership Programme participants about the 'jargonised' language within the current review of the NVQ Level 3 in Youth Work.
10. The North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS) in extending its remit to validate pre professional training should recognise the Community Leadership Programme.
11. The Northern Ireland Executive should consider the Community Leadership Programme as a means of delivery for cross border co-operation in education.
12. The SEUPB should explore the Community Leadership Programme as an effective model for delivery Peace 3 Objectives.



# Appendix One

## **The NVQ level 3 in Youth Work – Programme of Units.**

### **Unit B.1 Enable young people to explore and develop their values and self-respect**

B1.1 Enable young people to explore the values by which they live

B1.2 Enable young people to build their self-respect and self-esteem

### **Unit B.3 Enable young people to work effectively in groups**

B3.1 Create a climate conducive to learning in groups

B3.2 Facilitate the work of young people in groups

B3.3 Enable young people to deal with negative feelings constructively

### **Unit B.4 Enable young people to use their learning to enhance their future development**

B4.1 Reflect with young people on their development and learning

B4.2 Help young people transfer their learning to other parts of their lives

### **Unit C.1 Work with young people to design and develop sessions**

C1.1 Identify outcomes and choose between options for sessions with young people

C1.2 Design sessions

C1.3 Select, design and adapt resources

### **Unit C.3 Review progress and evaluate opportunities with young people**

C3.1 Agree criteria and methods for the evaluation of youth work

C3.2 Evaluate opportunities and identify successes and improvements

## **Unit D.3**

### **Manage your work and create effective work relationships**

D3.1 Work in line with organisational strategies, policies and procedures

D3.2 Fulfill your responsibilities to colleagues and teams

D3.3 maintain effective relationships with managers and decision-makers

## **Unit E.1**

### **Investigate needs and provisions for young people and promote youth work opportunities**

E1.1 Gather record and interpret information on young people's needs and interests, aspirations and issues

E1.2 Interpret and present results on young people's needs and interests, aspirations and issues

E1.3 Promote new youth work opportunities

## **Unit E.2**

### **Identify relationships with other organisations and individuals**

E2.1 Identify organisations and agencies that can contribute to the learning and development of young people and the achievement of their aspirations

E2.2 Identify key groups of educational and other individuals in the communities in which young people live

# Appendix Two

## Level 3 Technical Certificate in Supporting Youth Work (mandatory units)

## Relationship of Technical Certificate Units to NVQ Level 3

010: Design and development of sessions with young people	C1: Work with young people to design and develop sessions
012: Evaluation of youth work activities	C3: Review progress and evaluate opportunities with young people
013: Values, ethics and self esteem in youth work	B1: Enable young people to explore and develop their values and self-respect
014: Group work and young people	B3: Enable young people to work effectively in groups
015: Learning and development in youth work	B4: Enable young people to use their learning to enhance their future development
016: Maintaining effective work relationships in a youth work setting	D3: Manage your work and create effective work relationships
017: Researching needs and provisions for young people.	E1: Investigate needs and provisions for young people and promote youth work opportunities
018: Key organisations, agencies and individuals that support young people	E2: Identify relationships with other organisations and individuals



# Appendix Three

## Level 3 Apprenticeship Framework

### Youth Work

The content of this framework has been agreed between the Department for Employment and Learning and Lifelong Learning UK. This is the only NVQ Level 3 training in this skill acceptable for the receipt of Training for Success funding.

#### 1.0 GENERAL

This framework specifies the standards and the criteria for the delivery of a Level 3 Apprenticeship training provision to achieve qualified status within the **Youth work sector**. Successful completion of the provision will lead to the award of an NVQ Level 3 qualification and recognition as a qualified person within the sector.

#### 2.0 PROVISION CONTENT

QUALIFICATION TITLE	LEVEL	UNITS REQUIRED	RELATED KNOWLEDGE (minimum)
Youth Work	2	All units as required by the chosen route	There is a requirement for a Technical Certificate (see para 3.0).  Employment Rights & Responsibilities by to be covered as part of induction and subsequent phases for participant, as appropriate.
Youth Work	3	All units as required the chosen route	

#### • Additional Requirements :-

- ENTO health and safety unit A: - Ensure your own actions reduce risks to Health and Safety.
- A First Aid Qualification

#### 3.0 TECHNICAL CERTIFICATE

City & Guilds Certificate in Supporting Youth Work - Level 3  
ABC Certificate in Youth Work - Level 3

#### 4.0 MANDATORY ESSENTIAL AND KEY SKILLS

**Essential Skills:** Application of Number – Level 2 Communication – Level 2

**Key Skills:** Problem Solving - Level 2 Working with Others - Level 2

Improving Own Learning and Performance - Level 2

Information Technology – Level 1

#### 5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the supplier to ensure that the requirements of this framework are delivered in accordance with the Training for Success Operational Guidelines.

**The Participant must be employed from day one**

Further information may be obtained from either organisation

**Framework No.**

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