Identifying good practice in relation to the support needs of students in centres for education and training, with reference also to the needs of staff and support service practitioners

A report of a consultative process with stakeholders of Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training and Community Training Centres

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Contents

Section 1   Background and context

1.1 Consultation process with stakeholders

A survey of the guidance, counselling and psychological services being provided in Youthreach Centres, Community Training Centres and Senior Traveller Training Centres was undertaken by Further Education in 2003, with stakeholders being asked both to describe and to evaluate current provision[1].   The survey was followed up by a series of consultative regional meetings in 2005 to look at the needs of students in the three programmes, to consider the practices and resources that were working well in centres to support these students and to identify what others would be helpful. In consideration of these last factors, the needs of staff and of support service practitioners were also identified.

Through the survey and the regional consultative process the stakeholders identified the structural systems underpinning good support service practice generally and a number of effective methodologies for responding to particular student needs. The report describes these findings and outlines a set of guidelines for good quality practice in the future.

1.2 Characteristics of the student populations in Youthreach centres, Community Training Centres and Senior Traveller Training Centres

The recruitment guidelines for Youthreach apply to those who have Priority Group 1 status, are unemployed, aged between 15 and 20 years of age and have no or incomplete qualifications from Junior Cycle i.e. less than 5 grade Ds at Ordinary Level in the Junior Certificate or otherwise. These criteria may be extended in certain circumstances for Priority Group 2 (e.g. lone parents, drug court participants, young persons released from detention). Normal channels of recruitment to Youthreach include referral from schools, Health Service Executive, youth services, Gárda Siochána and others. Since the establishment of the NEWB, EWOs are becoming increasingly involved in placements. In summary, the target group for the Youthreach programme is those who are alienated from the formal system, economically disadvantaged, socially vulnerable and at risk of long-term unemployment.

In addition, research findings in a limited number of centres, supported by widespread anecdotal evidence, suggest that a significant number of learners in Youthreach centres have disabilities, as defined under the provisions of the EPSEN Act (2004). This means that the majority of learners would qualify for additional resource support from the National Council for Special Education, under the terms of Circulars PPT 01/05, NCSE 02/05 and 02/06, if they were attending mainstream post-primary schools.

Travellers are considered one of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups in Irish society. A report by the Economic and Social Research Institute, quoted in O Connell

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[1] See Gordon (2004). *Survey of Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Service Provision in Youthreach, Community and Senior Traveller Training Centres for Education Report*. Further Education Section, Department of Education and Science.

(1997, p. 2)[2] describes Irish Travellers as: " . . . A uniquely disadvantaged group: impoverished, under-educated, often despised and ostracised, they live on the margins of Irish society." A survey by the Inspectorate in 2004[3] found low educational participation and achievement levels by Travellers relative to those in the settled population and the Department of Education and Science has committed to improvements in the educational outcomes of Travellers based on many of the recommendations in the Report and Recommendations for a New Traveller Education Strategy[4]. The STTC programme was set up in the 1970s as a response to the poor access and participation of Travellers in the educational system.

1.3 Objectives of support provision in the context of the overall objectives of the Youthreach, CTC and STTC programmes

However, it would be a mistake to describe the learners attending centres in terms of difficulties and needs alone and to employ an exclusively problematic discourse about them. Much of the success of the work of these programmes lies in the emphasis that they place on the learners as resilient and resourceful people. The philosophy is one of empowerment, of helping learners to support themselves in recognition that they are active agents in their own learning and lifestyle decisions. They are attending centres for education and training by choice and not because there is something wrong with them.

Support services – like mentoring, advocacy, guidance, counselling and psychological interventions – are not separate from the educational and vocational services being provided by the centres, but an integral part. Good quality support fits into the overall quality frameworks being used by centres (in Youthreach and STTCs[5] and in CTCs[6]). The starting point is the adoption of a learner-centred approach and a commitment to best professional practice. This requires a holistic and inclusive focus, recognising that personal development is as much a core of the programmes as the acquisition of vocational skills and qualifications. Barriers to progression and participation in society need to be identified and addressed. It is not unusual for learners to be reticent about seeking help from a support service provider but be willing to talk to a trainer that they are familiar and comfortable with[7]. This requires staff adopting a mentoring role as well as a teaching role and engaging in inter-agency networking and collaborative actions with locally-based services in cases where learners need these supports and make up the client groups for their services.

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[2] O Connell, J. (1997). *Travellers in Ireland: An Examination of Discrimination and Racism.* A Report from the National Co-ordinating Committee for the European Year against Racism
[3] Department of Education and Science (2005). *Survey of Traveller Education Provision Report.* (www.education.ie)
[4] Department of Education and Science (2006). *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy.* (www.education.ie)
[5] Shivaun O'Brien (2005). *Quality Framework Inititive.* Co Louth VEC.
[6] FÁS (2004). *Community Training Centres Working for Change.*
[7] See Friel and Coulter (2004). *Evaluation of Support and Counselling Services in Youthreach Centres and the Senior Traveller Training Centre in County Donegal.* Co Donegal VEC

Section 2   Identifying students' needs and problems

2.1 Introduction

The needs of the students were identified both in terms of the *problems* they were considered to have and the *responses* to these problems that the stakeholders considered were necessary.

Three broad levels of problems or needs were distinguished:
- Those affecting all the students, bearing in mind that they are all early school leavers. There is a strong perception that the schools the students attended had not succeeded in meeting their needs when they were there.
- Those affecting a significant proportion of students, i.e. the relatively common difficulties found amongst them.
- The more severe problems affecting a relatively small number of students. The needs arising from these problems pose the greatest challenge to the programmes.

The three groups described above are not discrete but can be considered to lie at different sections of the same continuum. As well as differences in level or degree of need, some of the problems could be considered to apply in a particular way to a specific group of students. Examples of specific groups would be students under 16 years, young mothers, older Traveller women, Traveller men, foreign nationals, students with disabilities, etc. Yet even here, there is frequently considerable overlap between the needs of these groups, as well as considerable differences between individuals within each group.

A number of specific difficulties were identified by stakeholders as applying to members of the Traveller Community because of their distinctive culture, traditions and ways of life. However, many of the features of these difficulties, such as cultural difference, marginalisation and discrimination, can also be experienced by settled people living in disadvantaged communities and by foreign nationals. As a result problems listed as applying to STTC students below can be experienced by Youthreach and CTC students as well. Perhaps a bigger difference between participants in Youthreach and Community Training centres and Travellers attending STTCs relates to age and the fact that the majority of STTC participants are adults in their 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's while those in the other centres tend to be under 20 years. While adults have issues in common with young mothers in Youthreach, they have many distinctive needs deriving from their family and community roles.

2.2 Needs

In addressing the needs of students Maslow's taxonomy is helpful to use here. Abraham Maslow was an American humanistic psychologist who developed a hierarchical system for looking at human needs, which has been widely accepted and used. The lowest, and most pressing, need is for *survival* and this involves the meeting of various physiological needs, such as oxygen, food, heat, rest, exercise, avoidance of pain. *Safety* and security needs then come into play, and are concerned with finding safe circumstances, stability and

protection from harm. When survival and safety needs are by and large taken care of, love and *belonging* needs become apparent. These usually show in a desire for affectionate relationships with family members, friends and romantic or sexual partners and also in a sense of community. The *esteem* needs include both external and internal aspects. A wish for respect, status, recognition, attention and dignity, including some measure of authority and control, in one's dealings with others are the externally-based aspects, while the internal ones include a desire for self-respect, confidence and a sense of competence, achievement and independence. The highest need for Maslow was the need for *self-actualisation*, which he believed could only be pursued if the lower needs were largely met. During the regional consultation meetings the stakeholders identified the range of learners' needs and these have been organised below according to Maslow's framework:

Survival Needs

The main issues discussed under these most basic of needs were access to services, healthy lifestyle and resilience factors. The services identified included transport, childcare, housing, health, finance and banking. Relating to lifestyle were positive habits and regularity, good diets, physical health and exercise, the development of leisure and sports skills, and home-making skills. The resilience objectives were seen as being achieved through the learners acquiring a toolbox of lifeskills, which would help them to cope and to have the necessary flexibility and information to manage their lives.

Safety Needs

These are met through providing learners with the absence of threat and a sense of being cared about. This is achieved in centres largely through the creation of an ordered ethos and through the credibility and competence of the programmes. The centre is experienced as a safe environment, even as a haven, where the learners can trust others and progress at their own pace. The learners understand how the programme is structured and operates, the regulations that apply and what is expected of them. Routine, consistency and continuity are applied within a flexible framework and boundaries are clear. Key policies are in place and are implemented, e.g. in relation to bullying, racism, drugs, and behaviour. Teachers are accountable, as well as students, and know what they are doing. The environment is physically safe and suitable and a culture of respect is in place.

Belonging Needs

Belonging needs are met through the careful creation of an accepting environment, where students experience a sense of belonging and where they receive individual and responsive attention. Centres tend to be small, catering for fewer students than schools, and the students learn in small groups and have a more interactive relationship with teachers. Key worker or mentoring approaches are frequently used by staff and programmes tailored on an individual and flexible basis. Respectful relationships are modelled and social skills may be taught formally. Learners are encouraged to have a sense of belonging and to feel welcomed, accepted and cared about. Opportunities for interaction and for forming relationships with peers are provided. The learner also has the experience of being given personal attention and of having their individual circumstances recognised and taken into account. They are given the chance to talk and be listened to and to develop their own identity.

Esteem needs
The esteem needs are addressed through valuing the learners as individuals, through valuing their culture or community and through valuing them as students. The learners are encouraged to feel respected and accepted as individuals, to believe in themselves, to be trusted and to have experiences of success. The centres show respect for the culture of the students by understanding it, valuing it and encouraging pride and confidence in it. The centre may have a role in community support and development. Support for the learners as students is shown by the provision of positive affirmation, student feedback mechanisms and other evaluative practices, opportunities for achievement, certification and the marking of success. Good physical environments, equipment and facilities express value for the learning processes engaged in by the centres.

Self-actualisation needs
Self-actualisation is furthered in the first instance by the development of concrete goals. The programme outcomes, in terms of both vocational and personal development, then contribute to the meeting of these goals.   The encouragement of motivation and hope for the future and the development, and ongoing refinement of personal goals are crucial activities if a student's promise is to be fulfilled.   Vocational and educational outcomes include literacy, vocational skills, certification, progression to employment or further training and also an understanding of the purpose and lifelong nature of learning. There are many possible personal development outcomes which have a broad range of applications in a person's life. Among those identified were leadership skills, identity and ownership of one's destiny, cognitive development (thinking or reflecting about what has happened, planning something in the future, etc), ability to interact in the community, to express one's thoughts, feelings and sexuality, to be able to trust and be viewed as trustworthy and to be empowered to make choices and decisions.

2.3 Problems

The problems experienced by students will be examined under the general headings of educational development, personal development and practical factors. Each general heading is subdivided into a number of factor areas – there is a total of 16 factors in all[8].

Educational development
Attendance and participation, along with the achievement of basic, life and other skills are considered here. Problems that impact on *attendance* include a personal (and sometimes a family) history of chronic absenteeism from school and difficulty adapting to structures or organisational demands, e.g. getting up on time in the morning. There are also practical difficulties for some in relation to transport. The ability to *participate* in education can be adversely affected by being out of school for a long time and by failing to transfer from primary to post-primary school, a not uncommon occurrence with male Travellers. Difficulties with focusing and maintaining attention, having little interest in vocational or academic learning and practical considerations such as the loss of benefits to a family if a married woman's allowance exceeds €88 (leading to part-time attendance) can also impact negatively on participation by students attending centres.

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[8] This categorisation system is based on the factors in the Profiling Web (see Appendix)

Low *achievements*, and particularly in the *basic skill* areas of literacy and numeracy, are not uncommon. In some cases the reason for the low achievements is a learning disability, most usually a mild general learning disability, dyslexia or a deficit in the area of attentional focus. Learning difficulties can lead in some cases to a lack of *life skills*, to a degree of "helplessness" or an inability to take responsibility for oneself. Low achievement may also be simply the result of a lack of opportunity to learn.

Personal development
These problems will be considered under *aspirations and motivation, identity, physical health, emotional well-being* and *social skills*. For communities with a history of dependence on social welfare and an experience of discrimination and lack of progression options, there may be little *motivation* to acquire vocational or academic skills. Low expectations, whether originating in the home or internalised personally, are a significant feature of many students entering centres. These students lack goals or targets for themselves and tend to have little hope for their future, particularly in relation to employment. Experiences of racism, social abuse, isolation and marginalisation affect students' *identity* and their ability to see themselves as successful – they may even fear success as they don't have any vision of what that would be like. Investment in a victim identity impedes personal development and empowerment.

Physical health issues are significant for many of the learners. A number have poor general health and suffer from chronic illnesses or have problems with eyesight, dental health, hygiene or nutrition. A poor diet can lead to hunger (and an attendant inability to concentrate), lack of strength or stamina and obesity.   Dependence on legal and prescription drugs is a problem for some, particularly adult, learners. There may be a lack of awareness in relation to sexual health, leading to crisis pregnancy and contraction of STD/Is. Sexual abuse, or its consequences, is an issue for some learners. Engagement in a range of recreational risk taking behaviours, including joy-riding, drug and alcohol abuse and risky sexual activity, may lead to injury.

For a significant number of learners *emotional well-being* is not present. This may be expressed in mental health conditions such as eating disorders, irrational fears or depression. Linked to depression is attempted suicide or suicidal ideation. A poor level of emotional well-being is also associated with the stress and worries arising from life experiences, including a myriad of practical problems and a higher than normal incidence of bereavement and loss. For some Traveller learners the prospect of harm coming to their children, especially of their sons committing suicide, is a constant fear. Past experiences of emotional, physical or sexual abuse will frequently have long term emotional consequences even if the learner is now safe. Low self-esteem, lack of resilience, absence of hope in the future and engagement in self-harming activities or disempowering social relationships are some of the effects of poor emotional well-being.

Difficulties with social interaction are not uncommon, affecting a learner's *relationship with the centre*, in the first instance, and their *relationship with the staff and other students* there. These can manifest themselves in a range of ways, including acting out and aggressive behaviours, bullying, poor anger management and trouble with boundaries. For others the difficulties may be expressed in chronic shyness, isolation, anxiety about not fitting in and lack of assertiveness. Sometimes the poor social skills derive not from any lack of social ability but simply from a lack of knowledge of social codes in certain contexts.

Practical factors

Practical difficulties associated with the student's life outside the centre may be such as to act as a barrier to their being able to participate fully in the programme and to benefit from their time spent in the centre. These practical matters include home and community factors, problems with housing or income and issues associated with substance misuse or criminal offending.

Home factors which can be said to cause difficulties for particular students include abusive or unsupportive parents, parents who want them to bring in an income, families where children have spent time in care, domestic violence, chaotic families, families with substance abuse or mental health difficulties, families engaged in feuding or with negative reputations in their communities and those where the learner has an inappropriate degree of responsibility for care of other family members.

Community factors can include those that are associated with the learner's culture, which may only be construed as problematic insofar as they run counter to the values and objectives of the programmes. Examples of these are traditional attitudes towards formal education which see it as irrelevant or unnecessary, a prioritisation of family commitments (such as childcare, extended funeral and wedding celebrations, early marriage) and a lack of expectation of engaging in paid employment. Some of the factors can be thought of as deriving from community marginalisation and unsatisfactory educational experiences in the past due to prejudice, discrimination or racism.

Homelessness or the threat of homelessness by being put out of the family home, evicted from rental accommodation or, in the case of Travellers, moved on is a serious problem for some learners. Insufficient *income* and worries about money affect a number of students. In relation to *substance use* it is necessary to distinguish between a normal use of alcohol and drugs and a degree of use and dependence which is causing problems, although there may be different perceptions about where the dividing lines fall on this. Addictions may be to cigarettes, legal and illegal drugs, alcohol, gambling or computer games. A severe addiction will override most other areas of a learner's life and may lead to criminal activity. Community tolerance for *offending behaviours*, and therefore the extent to which they are viewed as problematic, will vary depending on the culture of the community and the nature of the offences.

Section 3   Responding to students' needs and problems

3.1 How centres are currently responding

The regional consultation sessions explored effective responses in relation to a wide range of student needs and problems. The stakeholders considered what centres were doing already, who in the centre was engaged in this work and what agencies or services outside the centre could help with it. In this way centres shared their own good practice with each other and drew on the expertise that had been developed over the years. The suggestions that were made are described below under the same headings as were used in the previous section and represent examples of current good practice in these areas. Actions in relation to specific interventions are contained in boxed text.

3.2 Educational development

Attendance and participation
Good attendance is supported through the identification of practical solutions to transport and childcare problems and through the provision of allowances and of meals. Absenteeism is challenged by the staff in discussion with the learners and appropriate sanctions are applied. Participation is best achieved by the provision of a programme that meets the needs of the learner, so that they choose to come voluntarily and to invest time and effort in the programme. The nature of the cultural ethos of the centre will act either to encourage or discourage participation.

Achievements
Students are supported in achieving academically and vocationally by each having an individual programme put in place that is tailored to what is relevant to them and suits their way of learning. This helps improve concentration and focus and the development of a range of intelligences. Achieving accreditation gives them self-esteem and confidence because the qualifications have a recognised currency value.   The learners need to experience success through being given opportunities to succeed, at whatever level is appropriate.

Need for opportunities to succeed

What centres are doing / how students' needs are being met at present
o   Give responsibility to students
o   Allocation of small tasks
o   Acknowledge achievements e.g. trips away, in-house certifications
o   Awards night
o   Display work
o   Good PR – local newspapers, radio
o   Celebrate birthdays etc.
Who in the centre is involved in this work
o   All staff
o   Students themselves
o   Staff acting as key workers
o   Centre counsellor

> **Who outside the centre is involved in this work / how centres are linking with other agencies**
> o Home
> o Local employers
> o FETAC
> o DES
> o FÁS Advocate Service

Basic skills

The basic skill areas of communication, including oral language, literacy and numeracy, are central to the work of the programmes. Many of the learners have low achievements in these skills. The reasons may be due to extended periods of school absenteeism, lack of motivation or interest or learning difficulties, including dyslexia. Skilled assessment and teaching using an integrated approach are needed to improve the basic skills.

Support for literacy or numeracy

> **What centres are doing / how students' needs are being met at present**
> o Assessment that identifies what the student can do already
> o Assessment of what the student wants to learn
> o IEP that outlines plan for learning
> o Regular review of IEP
> o Not letting literacy difficulties get in the way of learning in other areas
> o Integrating literacy and numeracy into all subject areas and activities
> o Staff training
> o Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations (RACE)
> o Psychological assessment
> **Who in the centre is involved in this work**
> o Literacy tutors
> o English teachers
> o All staff
> **Who outside the centre is involved in this work / how centres are linking with other agencies**
> o Adult Literacy Organisation (NALA)
> o Tutor (extra hours)
> o Educational psychologist

Life skills

Life skills are the skills that people need to function in society and to cope with their circumstances. For learners with poor life skills this needs to be a priority focus of work for the programmes. Staff need to be helping learners to gain information and practical knowledge, to develop coping mechanisms (such as anger management and solution-focused thinking), to acquire the social behaviours appropriate to different situations, to develop confidence, to become less fearful of the unfamiliar or unknown, to learn self-protection skills, to become more assertive and self-reliant and to develop habits of forward planning, reliability and responsibility. Social, personal and health education (SPHE) is concerned with holistic personal development and thus has a broader remit than vocational training. It should be seen as part of the core work of the centres.

Social Personal Health Education (SPHE)

What centres are doing / how students' needs are being met at present o Formal curricular programmes are run (e.g. SPHE, LCA social education programme, FETAC personal development programme) o Specific programmes focusing on an aspect of SPHE (e.g. sexual health, anger management, assertiveness, Copping On) o Informal work is also carried out around developing healthy, respectful relationships, with good student-student and student-staff relations promoted (e.g. through dining together at lunchtime, partaking in extra-curricular activities, etc.) o Work is done to establish clear boundaries for staff and students in terms of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. **Who in the centre is involved in this work** o Key workers o Counsellors o All staff **Who outside the centre is involved in this work / how centres are linking with other agencies** o Training for staff through DES Health Promoting School Programme o National Youth Council of Ireland o Crisis Pregnancy Agency o University College Galway (accrediting body for Health Promoting Centre programme)

3.3 Personal development

Aspirations and motivation

The programmes offer the learners the opportunity to make a fresh start at education. This in itself can lead to the development of educational aspirations and motivation. The relevance of the learning is obtained by the development, in association with the learner, of an individual action, educational or learning plan. Mentoring work may still be necessary to encourage hope in the learner and the motivation to engage positively in the programme.

Identity and self-image

Key to the creation of a positive identity and self-image is being treated with respect. Respect needs to be shown both to the culture and community of the learners and to them as individuals. Respect is given by the staff in the centre, by the strategic organisations funding the programmes (DES, VEC, FÁS), by local schools and agencies and by the students to each other. The cultural ethos of the centre sets the form of the interaction that is engaged in. Staff encourage the building of self-esteem and a positive self-image in the way they give attention and feedback to students but also, when their relationship with them has developed, in the way they challenge them. Advocates have a role in advocating for the students with employers and centre directors / managers and key workers have a role in liaising with local schools and agencies.

Need for respect

What centres are doing / how students' needs are being met at present o Co-ordinator as role model – how he/she treats staff in centre o Clear policies are developed with regards to how staff should behave towards students in the centre – staff code of conduct o Fostering of close staff team

> - o Staff supervision /support is in place
> - o Discipline in centre is consistent – staff have common idea of what is acceptable/unacceptable. Consistent punishment for same behaviours (with reasonable accommodation for individual students going through difficulties – this agreed upon by staff before hand).
> - o Clear boundaries are established
> - o Mission statement, aims and objectives inform all aspects of centre life
> - o The students have a voice – e.g. through a student council
>
> **Who in the centre is involved in this work**
>
> All staff, including
> - o teaching
> - o administration and
> - o caretaking
>
> **Who outside the centre is involved in this work / how centres are linking with other agencies**
> - o Funding agencies – VEC, DES and FAS – treat the programmes with respect and are proud of their achievements
> - o Good PR is done by the strategic agencies VEC, DES, FAS etc.
> - o Respect for the programme shown by local schools

Physical health

The promotion of physical health and well-being involves both proactive and reactive elements. The proactive development of fitness, exercise and engagement in sport is a feature of many centres through extra-curricular activities (e.g. horse riding, canoeing, hill-walking), involvement in team sport competitions or friendly matches, attendance at gyms or swimming pools, organisation of yoga classes etc. Good health and hygiene practices make up part of personal development modules, with a focus on accurate medical information and the promotion of self-care through safe sex, healthy diet, avoidance of harmful situations, etc. Centre staff can also react to support students who have particular health problems or are engaging in risky behaviours so that they engage with the relevant agencies (public health nurse, GP, addiction services, STI clinics, AIDS services, well-woman clinics, etc). The gárdaí, social services or refuges may need to be approached if there is a threat to a student's physical health through violence or abuse.

> ### Peer support networks for Traveller women
>
> **What centres are doing / how students' needs are being met at present**
> - o Establishment of a peer support network
> - o Provision of accredited training for peer support workers
> - o Development of primary health care programme
>
> **Who in the centre is involved in this work**
> - o Teaching staff
> - o Support practitioner (counsellor)
>
> **Who outside the centre is involved in this work / how centres are linking with other agencies**
> - o HSE
> - o Community Health Care workers
> - o Local Traveller community organisations

Emotional well-being

Emotional well-being and psychological support are the province of the centre in the first instance, rather than the responsibility of specialist services. Even in times of crisis or tragedy the best people to offer support are usually those who are closest to the person who

is grieving or suffering. Emotional well-being is largely learned through the experience of being part of a caring social environment, and the establishment of such an ethos in the centre is the best general way to promote it. Combined with an accepting and supportive ethos, students benefit from having a mentoring system whereby they have ready access to a member of staff that they trust and feel comfortable with. The mentoring relationship allows the student to raise and discuss problems they are having and to receive guidance and moral support. For the majority of students frontline guidance of this kind is sufficient.

Peer support networks – either formally constituted or facilitated by staff on a more casual, informal basis – can provide very concrete support to individual learners and can also impact positively on community development. This form of support has the capacity to be independent of the centre and therefore more long-term.

A small number of students have significant mental health or psychiatric problems and need the help of psychiatric or clinical services. Because such students are frequently the people least inclined to ask for help they may need to be identified by the staff as particularly vulnerable. Using their own good relationship with the student, a key worker or fellow learner should work to encourage them to pursue the specialist help they need, if necessary acting as their mediator or advocate with that specialist service.

Many aspects of emotional well-being are dealt with in various personal development modules or programmes and are usefully addressed in SPHE or group counselling sessions. For some students individual counselling offers a welcome chance to explore something that is troubling them. These students usually have acquired a degree of insight into their problems and feel ready to work on them. They are prepared to make changes in their lives and are looking for support while they do this. In these cases the specialist skills of a qualified counsellor or psychotherapist can be particularly beneficial. Younger students will usually not be ready to work with a counsellor in this way but may seek such support later in their lives. However, in some cases the problem is so compelling and serious that the student urgently needs to address it. In these cases the key worker will encourage them to seek immediate support from a relevant counselling agency (e.g. one dealing with addiction, violence, sexual abuse, etc).

Relationships with and within the centre
The areas of social difficulty identified as requiring attention included help in relation to violent outbursts / anger management, the need for more assertiveness, the need for greater integration (of Travellers) and the need for social skills generally.

Boundaries

What centres are doing / how students' needs are being met at present
o   Flexible group contract
o   Reminders of appropriate behaviours on walls, etc.
o   Code of behaviour devised and agreed by students and staff
Who in the centre is involved in this work
o   Co-ordinator / Manager
o   Tutors
o   Trainees
Who outside the centre is involved in this work / how centres are linking with other agencies
o   Parents
o   JLO / Probation Service

o Member of the community (e.g. employers, ex-participants, local well-known sports people) willing to act as positive role models
o Youth service programmes in anger management

3.4 Practical factors

Home factors
The home-based factors identified as acting as a barrier to a student's participation in the centre included taking care of parents or siblings, parents who are over-powering or over-protective, abusive family members, childcare worries and marital difficulties. The need for home centre liaison was considered to be important.

Family-based difficulties

What centres are doing / how students' needs are being met at present
o Providing mentoring support to the trainee
o Communication with parents on a one-to-one basis or during open days
o Observing child protection guidelines
o Referral to social worker
o Providing assertiveness training to the trainee
Who in the centre is involved in this work
o Co-ordinator / Manager
o Key worker
o Counsellor
Who outside the centre is involved in this work / how centres are linking with other agencies
o Parents
o Childcare workers
o Social services / HSE
o Family support workers
o Locally-based parenting course providers
o Locally-based pre-marriage course providers
o Marriage counselling
o Barnardos
o Family conferencing

Community factors
Community factors are considered to be of particular importance for Travellers and foreign national students, with marginalisation or isolation being experienced by some. For foreign nationals there may be a need for support in relation to language and cultural factors. Some centres view themselves as having a community development role or aspect to their work. Engagement in a public relations campaign in the local community on behalf of the students in the centre was seen as necessary, particularly by students. Participation in community activities was seen as being a valuable way for giving learners the experience of being accepted members of their local communities.

Community involvement

What centres are doing / how students' needs are being met at present
o Work experience
o Participation in local initiatives and events
o PR by centre in local community

o Engagement in charity events
o Mediation with local community on behalf of trainees
o Providing assertiveness training to the trainee
Who in the centre is involved in this work
o Co-ordinator / Manager
o Staff
Who outside the centre is involved in this work / how centres are linking with other agencies
o Citizenship programmes
o Work placement
o Local voluntary bodies / charities
o Positive role models (e.g. employers, ex-participants, local well-known sports people)
o Social workers
o JLO / Probation Services
o Youth services / clubs
o Outreach workers
o Citizen's Advice Centres (information on rights and entitlements)
o Addiction counsellors
o Pobal projects and initiatives

Housing

Where accommodation is an issue the student should be referred to the local Council and/or to the HSE social services. In extreme cases refuges or voluntary bodies such as the Simon Community may be able to help.

Income

All students over 15 years attending a centre for training or education receive training allowances. Centres have a role in teaching about money management. An organisation like MABS can support a student in managing their money and bringing their debts under control and credit unions can also play a useful role.

Substance use issues

Addressing substance misuse will usually require both that the learner recognises that there is a problem and that they have the motivation to address it. Being challenged by peers or key worker may be helpful.

Drug or alcohol misuse

What centres are doing / how students' needs are being met at present
o Providing an alternative pathway through vocational and educational training
o Maintaining a drug / alcohol free zone
o Discussing choices in personal development modules
o Challenging students about their choices
o Providing mentoring support in relation to problems
o Providing assertiveness training
Who in the centre is involved in this work
o Co-ordinator / Manager / Director
o Staff
o Advocate
o Counsellor
o Other learners
Who outside the centre is involved in this work / how centres are linking with other agencies
o VEC (have a policy in place)

> - Parents / guardians
> - Community addiction services
> - Alateen
> - AA
> - Gardaí
> - Free Legal Aid
> - Local drugs projects (e.g. Trinity Court, Crinian, Talbot Centre)
> - Drugs Task Force
> - Local drug awareness committees
> - Youth services
> - Social workers
> - JLO
> - Drugs court (sometimes refer to courses instead of prison)
> - HSE

Risk of offending

Some learners engage in petty crime while others are vulnerable to becoming involved in more serious offences. The relationship a centre has with local gárdaí, including community guards and JLOs, and with the probationary services can be important.

Criminal behaviours

> **What centres are doing / how students' needs are being met at present**
> - Providing an alternative pathway through vocational and educational training
> - Discussing choices in personal development modules
> - Challenging students about their choices
> - Providing mentoring support in relation to problems
> - Providing assertiveness training
> - Running Copping On crime awareness programme
> - Establishing a good relationship with local JLO and community gardaí
> - Providing information on the legal system
> - Accompany student through legal process
>
> **Who in the centre is involved in this work**
> - Co-ordinator / Manager / Director
> - Staff
> - Advocate
> - Counsellor
> - Other learners
>
> **Who outside the centre is involved in this work / how centres are linking with other agencies**
> - VEC (have a policy in place)
> - Parents / guardians
> - Free Legal Aid
> - Youth services
> - Social workers
> - JLO / Probation Service / Community Guards
> - Local solicitors

Section 4   Supporting staff to support students

4.1 Introduction

The regional consultation sessions also considered the needs of staff members in relation to their work, the supports and practices currently existing in centres to meet these needs and the forms of additional support that stakeholders believe would help staff support their students more effectively.

4.2 Staff needs

Status of the programmes
An overarching theme that was evident concerned the perceived status of the programmes being provided in the centres. It was stated repeatedly that there should be an appropriate recognition of the important and valuable job being done by centres. Stakeholders wanted them to be recognised as fully professional and as a valid alternative to Secondary School education. It was felt that a PR job needed to be done to represent the programmes positively in the media and to change public opinion so that centres were not seen as "a dumping ground".

Structural issues
Related to this were a number of structural issues pertaining to how the programmes are defined, managed and resourced. The nature of the programmes needed to be clearly defined to avoid a situation where staff resistant to taking on student issues can claim "I'm only being paid to teach". Resource staff expressed a desire for a clearer role definition and part-time staff to feel more integrated into the service. Team building was considered important to build cohesiveness at centre level, requiring that part time staff be paid to attend meetings and continuing professional development (CPD) training with the full-time staff. Part-time staff should also to able to engage in non-teaching work and to be paid for this. Coordinators said they wanted to have a combination of different skills among their staff to draw upon. The isolation of some centres was an issue, with a desire being expressed for a centralised resource so that information about issues relating to the running of the centre does not always have to be sourced locally or found out by chance. Good communication between schools and centres was valued, and closer involvement between centres and VECs.

Budgets
There are clear budgetary implications for the needs identified which relate to the physical environment of the centres and the facilities available in them. Among those mentioned were better physical resources and more space, cleaning and administrative staff, and classroom materials.

Staff support
The insufficient nature of current staff support mechanisms and procedures was strongly emphasised. This was said to have led to lack of motivation, absenteeism, poor morale and

burn out in some cases. There is a perception that staff are unprotected and left to deal with crises on their own. A desire was repeatedly expressed for both internal and external supervision / support systems. Coordinators and directors looked for more full-time staff, claiming that their workload was too great and desired specific professional support for themselves to support their role. The lack of special needs assistants for students who need them was also criticised.

Professional standards
A concern about the need for high professional standards was expressed. Specifically mentioned was the lack of awareness by some staff of the importance of boundaries in relation to such matters as the student / teacher relationship and confidentiality. Staff sometimes mirrored their students in behaviour and in their sense of being marginalised and under-valued. Communication practices in some centres were also described as poor.

Continuing professional development (CPD)
There was considerable focus on the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) for staff as a way of achieving and maintaining high professional standards. Training was needed particularly in relation to the culture and ethos of Youthreach / CTC / STTC centres and in how to deal with specific problems e.g. suicide, addiction, crime and disclosure of abuse. Anxiety was expressed about knowing what to do in crisis situations and "learning not to panic". Some staff worried about the issues that might come up in a one-to-one session with a student. Training was seen as relating to "the ability to cope". Training was also desired to help with knowing how to recognise and respond to diagnose specific learning difficulties. Staff wanted to learn about how to make appropriate referrals. Directors and managers sought specific guidelines and training in relation to leadership and management.

Industrial relations issues
Some industrial relations (IR) issues were also identified, particularly in relation to job security and the differences in staff salaries both within and across strands.

4.3 Supports and practices currently existing in centres to meet staff needs

The following are descriptions of supports and practices that are working well at the moment for staff in centres. However, it should be noted that because of local differences and the relative autonomy of VECs and centres (including FÁS centres which are stand alone companies), there is considerable variation between areas, and even between centres in the same areas, in terms of their policies and practices, the training opportunities offered to staff and the resources made available at centre level. What follows does not apply in every centre but in those centres where they have been achieved they are considered to be very helpful.

Structural issues
In VECs where a regional co-ordinator is employed who can source information relevant to all centres this was found to be of assistance. In some VECs clear guidelines and procedures are in place in relation to issues such as child protection, crisis pregnancy, codes of behaviour and substance misuse and centres find this supportive. The distribution of the

inservice budget directly to VECs was considered to be an improvement and the facilitation of part-time staff to attend meetings and training sessions through payment and changing about times and days to be helpful. The augmentation by the VEC of the counselling service to a centre (over the level paid for by the Department) was also valued.

Staff support
Many centres have succeeded in creating a stable environment, where staff know what is expected of them and in turn what supports they can expect to receive from other staff in their work. In some VECs staff support and supervision are provided on a regular basis.

Professional standards
The culture in many centres is friendly and trusting, allowing healthy relationships to be built between adults and students in the centre. Many centres already have good policies and procedures in place e.g. induction programmes, mentoring programmes. Good policies have been developed in relation to such matters as drugs, bullying and discipline. Good partnerships have been developed by many centres e.g. with JLO's, health board and local schools. Many centres have created good opportunities for meetings and dialogue, with regular timetabled staff meetings (maybe weekly / monthly) and part-time staff facilitated to attend. In some VECs guidelines and clear procedures are in place around such issues as child protection and substance misuse. In one region (the Mid-West) a Crisis Response Plan has been developed and piloted.   In some VECs the practice has developed of using a staff book (or day book) to record attendance and incidents to aid communication between members of staff. In some centres evaluation sheets are filled in at the end of every session to monitor and evaluate practice.

CPD
A number of examples of training initiatives were mentioned, including training in front line counselling and guidance. In the Mid-West staff received crisis response training, while some did a course in UCC in relation to suicide. Multiple intelligences was another topic that was cited.

4.4 Forms of additional support that stakeholders believe would help staff to support their students more effectively

The stakeholders identified a number of staff support initiatives which they believed would improve the capacity of centre staff teams to respond to the needs of their students.

Structural issues
VEC CEOs, EOs and AEOs need to have a clearer view of what the Youthreach, STTC and CTC programmes are about. Caring, adaptable, humanistic staff are considered to be what is needed and for adult education to be seen as an integrated service by the VECs. There is a need for there to be greater communication between agencies so as to avoid duplication and improve services. Many called for greater clarity about the roles of staff and of support service practitioners such as guidance providers, counsellors, psychotherapists and psychologists. Some perceived a need for more specialised practitioners to work in centres and for a variety of skilled interventions e.g. reading recovery programme. Clearer boundaries were needed as to what staff teams take on as their role, with teachers needing

to feel that they don't have to solve all problems. Students needed to have access to regular counselling / guidance / psychological support.

Staff support
All staff need to receive professional supervision / support. Staff team building days were also recommended.

CPD
The importance of staff understanding the culture of their learners was emphasised and to be able to work with their learners without judging them. Staff needed to be upskilled in recognised counselling skills and to attend regular refresher courses. There was also a need for training in various methodological areas.

Inter-centre communication
While periodicals such as the Youthreach Newsletter, published by the NAYC, and the Irish Traveller, published by the NATTCE, provide an opportunity for centres to communicate with each other and share ideas, the use of more electronic media – such as email notice-board systems and the Youthreach and STTC websites – might also be explored further for this purpose.

IR
It is important to attract suitable people to work in centres and attention must therefore be paid to the pay and conditions of employment of staff.

Section 5: Identifying and responding to support practitioner needs

5.1 Practitioner issues

Support practitioners provide assistance to students in the forms of guidance, counselling and psychological services. They are most frequently employed by VECs on a part-time, temporary contract basis. Usually self-employed with their own private practice, they may only work in centres for a few hours per week. Others work in a number of centres and are occupied exclusively in providing services to this client group. Some support practitioners, however, are full-time employees of a VEC, with permanent status and a line management structure (e.g. City and County Dublin VEC psychological services) or are funded by FÁS with full-time permanent status, although deployed locally (e.g. Advocate Service).

At the regional sessions support practitioners were also asked to identify their own needs and what they considered to be the relevant factors in relation to their capacity to be effective in their work.

Professional standards
The support service practitioners identified professional boundaries as a key issue, both for themselves and for the teaching staff in centres. Good practice means knowing what it is appropriate for a centre to take on, in the light of the qualifications and expertise available in it and also in the light of existing resources. The importance of support practitioners having appropriate qualifications and receiving regular professional supervision was strongly emphasised. Good record keeping and accountability were also mentioned. For the other stakeholders it was considered essential that the support practitioners would have a good understanding of the client groups attending the centres and have the professional expertise and flexibility to work effectively with these groups.

Structural issues
The nature of the support service being provided, including how it fits within the overall service being provided by the centre, requires clarity. This determines how the service is introduced to the students, or their families, and the type of collaboration and co-operation that the practitioner develops with the other members of staff. How students access the support service, whether the practitioner links with staff in relation to individual students or keeps separate, whether they work with groups or individuals, whether they also provide advice or support to staff, what information they pass on and whether they are located within or outside the centre will all relate to how the support service is perceived and defined. A number of practitioners made the point that to be effective with the client group involved, they need to be aware of the ethos of the centre and to understand where the students are coming from. In some cases they may need to examine their own attitudes and prejudices. Continuity of the service is important – much of the work is relationship-based and it takes time for students to build up trusting interactions with practitioners.

Staff support and CPD
Practitioners expressed a need to be encouraged and welcomed in centres and to be more integrated into staff development and centre planning initiatives. External supervision is a crucial form of professional support for them. Many said they would welcome the opportunity to attend training sessions with staff and also to build up their own expertise in

relation to particular areas of need, e.g. crisis response, intercultural issues. To be able to attend CPD sessions they would need to be paid for their time.

Resources
A number of the issues identified come back to a question of resources. In most cases it was felt that the amount of practitioner support time was both inadequate and inflexible, particularly at times of crisis. There was frequently a lack of suitable spaces for working in and for keeping records and there was usually no budget to buy materials.

IR
Many practitioners identified the lack of job security as a problematic issue for them.

Section 6   Conclusions – An outline of good practice for centres

Following the outcomes of the survey[9] and of the consultative process described above, it is now possible to distinguish practices that can contribute significantly to effective provision for learners and to appropriate support for staff. As well as identifying good practice, the consultation process has been important in influencing policy and had a significant bearing on the introduction of the SEN pilot initiative in 2007.

The practices outlined below can be separated into actions in relation i) to students, ii) to teaching staff and iii) to support practitioners and many can be implemented by centres without any additional resources. There will always be resource constraints and centres will always need to prioritise so that they can do the best with what they have. With flexibility, creativity and responsiveness to the circumstances of each individual learner, the consultations have shown that the best can be very good indeed.

6.1 In relation to students

Culture and ethos
A cultural ethos characterised by warmth, respect and order is at the core of all the support provision offered learners. The good centre meets the student's needs for basic survival in terms of food, heat and an allowance, and for security through the provision of a safe, stable environment where people are treated with affection and protected from physical and psychological harm. Crucially the centre is also a site for the meeting of belonging needs through its sense of community and the opportunity it provides for the establishment of friendships. Esteem needs are met through the respect, recognition and attention that are available from staff and fellow students, allowing for the development of self-confidence and a sense of competence, achievement and independence. The possibility for self-actualisation is realised through the personal development curriculum and the vocational learning opportunities provided by the centre's educational programme.

Induction
Learners are introduced to the ethos and organisation of the centre in a structured way through an induction programme. This gives them a clear understanding of the way the centre works, what is provided and what is expected of them. Each student is assigned a member of staff to act as their key worker when they arrive, although the pairing of tutor and learner can be reviewed if it is not working out. The emphasis at the induction stage is primarily on relationship-building and the creation of a sense of security and welcome for the learner.

Mentoring
The key worker meets regularly with their student and acts as their first line of support and point of contact. The key worker has coordination responsibility for the student's assessment and for developing an individual plan with them. The key worker mediates between the student and other members of staff and acts as liaison with the home and with other agencies and services as necessary.

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[9] Gordon (2004) ibid.

Individual assessment

Each student engages in an assessment process, such as the Profiling Web (see Appendix), which identifies their particular circumstances, learning to date and interests. The student plays a central role in evaluating their own strengths and weaknesses and in identifying their own goals. Any barriers to participation and learning are explored, with a view to finding practical solutions. Additional forms of assessment can also be used, for example to focus on specific aspects of a subject area (e.g. literacy, numeracy) in order to guide teaching or for setting a benchmark in relation to a social or life skill area and allowing progress to be measured. The assessment tools or processes that will be used need to be agreed with the student. The key worker should be responsible for coordinating the assessments of their learners but not necessarily for carrying out all aspects of the assessment themselves.

Individual planning

The curriculum offered to the student is tailored as far as possible to the student's needs, interests and career path plan. Individual plans are developed in liaison with the students themselves. The plan is informed by the data obtained from the assessment and any other information collated by the key worker. It is based on the student's expressed personal, educational and vocational goals and identifies the interventions that will take place, including subject choices, methods, work experience, sporting and other activities. The plan identifies the supports to be provided to the learner in the centre and any local services that will be contacted and worked with, if this is needed and agreed to by the student. It is reviewed and, if desirable, revised on a regular basis. The plan should follow naturally from the assessment and be straightforward and realistic in style.

Peer support

Opportunities for peer support are encouraged through engagement in group-based personal development work and through both formal and non-formal peer mentoring programmes.

Specialist guidance

Students have access to guidance support in relation to careers information and advice, the development and review of career path plans, the organisation of work experience along with its preparation and review, progression preparation and transition. Guidance support may require a degree of advocacy on behalf of the student with members of the local community.

Specialist counselling / psychotherapy

Students who wish for support in order to deal with personal difficulties have access to a qualified counsellor / psychotherapist.

Interagency work

If the degree of specialist support needed is beyond the capacity of the centre to provide, however, it will need to be accessed from statutory agencies and voluntary bodies based in the community. Linking in with local services is therefore essential. Students with significant practical or personal difficulties need the assistance of health, social, justice or other services. They are supported by their key worker in making contact with these services and in receiving the appropriate help. Where appropriate, agreed collaborative actions involving the centre and the relevant agencies working together are initiated and developed.

6.2 In relation to staff

Culture and ethos
A warm, respectful and ordered cultural ethos in the centre is also beneficial for staff, creating a good working environment and supportive social context for them. In addition, it sets the tone and form for all other relationships in the centre. Having good operational procedures for dealing with the problems that arise both makes those problems more manageable and has the effect of modelling a problem-solving approach to the students.

Induction
Because the form and ethos of centres differ in particular ways from those found in mainstream schools, it is important that new staff be inducted when they start. The induction programme may be delivered informally but needs to include clear information about the centre's policies and practices, the culture of the students attending it and the individual plan being pursued with each student.

CPD
Because student circumstances and needs are continually changing, the staff team requires opportunities to review the operation of their centre from time to time[10]. Such reviews may pinpoint what the staff see as gaps in their skills, and thereby identify training needs that they have. Staff teams need skills in a wide variety of areas, including assessment, individual programme planning and review, mentoring and frontline guidance, group facilitation, conflict management, emotional and social learning and interagency working, as well as the pedagogical skills required for the various educational and vocational subject areas.

In some cases the training will be general, involving all members of staff, because it will lead to changes in centre policy or practice. In other cases, one or two members of staff will engage in some specialised training, relating to their specific roles in the centre. Where the training is general, it is important that part-time staff also attend and they will need to be paid for this.

Case supervision
If staff with no specific training in counselling or psychotherapy are to engage in frontline guidance / mentoring work with students (many of whom have serious problems), they need access to case supervision. The functions of case supervision are both to provide a protection for students and to create an opportunity for the centre team to develop professional understanding and expertise. For these reasons, it is recommended that the supervision be done as group work with the whole staff team. Supervision sessions should occur regularly, on a monthly basis at least.

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[10] This occurs naturally as part of internal centre evaluation

It is essential that supervision be provided by suitably qualified personnel. They need to have engaged in a minimum of three years supervised clinical practice themselves, to have experience of supervising others, to have a relevant third level qualification in health, education or social care e.g. psychology, social studies, youth work, teaching and knowledge and understanding of the youth and community sector. In addition, they need to have a recognised qualification in a branch of psychology or psychotherapy and to be a member of an appropriate professional body (e.g. the Psychological Society of Ireland or British Psychological Society, the Irish Council for Psychotherapy, the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, the Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy).

Staff support
The cultural ethos of centres and the non-formal nature of the education provided in them mean that staff must engage at a personal level with their students. Mentoring, in particular, involves the staff member in establishing good relationships with their students and providing care to them. When, as is frequently the case, the students are vulnerable and dealing with very difficult problems, the key worker is unlikely to remain emotionally aloof and unaffected. Staff support is necessary to take account of the emotional toll on tutors of working in this way. It is also in recognition that events in the centre may trigger unresolved issues for staff from their own past or that are still operating in their present situations. The main function of this kind of professional support is to establish clear boundaries around what is – and what is not – the responsibility of the staff team.

Staff support requires the same degree of professional expertise as case supervision and can be provided at the same time by the same practitioner. It is recommended that case supervision and professional staff support be done together in group sessions.

Director / Manager / Coordinator support
Centre directors have responsibility for managing and leading the work in their centres and would benefit from support in relation to these specific roles. The learning involved here is organisational rather than therapeutic. In social organisations good management practices are essential for developing a culture of learning, where the focus is on finding solutions to problems, retrieving situations and learning from mistakes rather than on the anxious avoidance of failure. Suitable personnel for providing this form of professional support include those in managerial or supervisory roles, management consultants and peers. It is recommended that centre directors / managers / coordinators have the opportunity to obtain regular organisational supervision.

6.3 In relation to support practitioners

Culture and ethos
The support service practitioner should complement the work being done in the centre and act as another layer of support, rather than be defined as separate from the main business and unconnected to the staff team. The aim should be for the practitioner's work to have a systemic impact on the centre's culture and ethos, so that the knowledge and skills they bring have as wide an influence as possible. Contributing to centre policy, advising and

supporting team members in relation to curriculum (e.g. personal development, SPHE), behaviour initiatives (e.g. bullying, conflict management, intercultural issues) and individual students, engaging in liaison with families or with local services and working with groups of students both formally and informally are all as valid as, and may be more useful than, counselling individual students. The work done by the practitioner should be explored, discussed and agreed by the manager and practitioner together.

CPD
Practitioners need to update their professional skills on a regular basis. Some practitioners may find that their initial training did not prepare them for the type of work that is actually required in centres and they may need to find courses in particular aspects of their role. In addition, practitioners would frequently benefit from inclusion in general staff CPD, both because of the contribution they can make to this and because their work should be an integrated part of a centre's policy and practice.

The extent of the responsibility of the employing VEC or other body for funding or otherwise supporting CPD on the part of the practitioner is a matter for the individual to negotiate with their employer, and may be influenced by the amount of time per week they work in centres. VECs are reminded that a good practitioner is a very valuable asset to a centre's work and to the overall objectives of the Youthreach, CTC and STTC programmes.

Professional supervision
It is essential that practitioners attend professional supervision on a very regular basis. Practitioners should ensure that their supervisor has the necessary expertise to take account of the particular nature of the work they are doing in centres.

Contact with other practitioners
It is intended to set up an informal network for advocates, guidance service providers, counsellors / psychotherapists and psychologists working in Youthreach, Community Training and Senior Traveller Training centres. Practitioners will be invited to register with Mary Gordon in Further Education Section and will be linked through an email newsletter, with the aim of sharing and disseminating the skills and experience that have been built up over the years by those working in the field. Those living close by to each other may decide to meet up on a local basis from time to time.

Appendix   Profiling Web Assessment Process

Key features of the theoretical approach:

- The involvement of the student in their own assessment, educational plan and review is central.
- A holistic approach is taken to the gathering of information in the assessment process (i.e. educational learning, personal / social development, practical factors which might be acting as barriers to participation or success in the programme are all addressed).
- The use of a key worker system leading to the development of a good relationship between the student and a member of staff is a crucial factor in helping the student become more resilient and effective.
- Inter-agency work with other services is promoted as a way of addressing factors which act as practical barriers to learning and progression.

Key features of assessment using the Web:

- The assessment itself is an intervention, rather than a precursor to intervention.
- Staff have an overview of the 16 factors that make up the Web, i.e. they bring a holistic approach to the assessment process and a curiosity about all relevant aspects of their students.
- The assessment takes the form of an interview (or series of interviews) between the key worker and the student.
- The student is invited to reflect on themselves and to identify relevant information for use by the centre in working with them.
- The student rates themselves, indicating their perception of their areas of difficulty and strength.
- The student identifies their own goals.

Key features of the individual educational / learning / action plans (IEPs) that are developed:

- The IEP is informed by the data obtained from the Web (and other information collated by the key worker).
- The IEP is based on the student's expressed personal, educational and vocational goals.
- The IEP identifies the interventions (subjects, activities, methods – e.g. FETAC modules to be studied; literacy objectives and how they will be pursued; work experience to be organised; sporting and other activities) that will take place.
- The IEP identifies the supports to be provided in the centre (e.g. key-worker, review procedures, literacy, counselling, advocate).
- The IEP identifies the services / agencies to be contacted and worked with.

	Name:	Date created:

	5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Education					
A. Attendance					
B. Participation					
C. Achievements					
D Basic skills					
E. Life skills					

	5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Personal Development					
F. Aspirations and motivation					
G. Identity and self-image					
H. Physical health					
I. Emotional well-being					
J. Relationships with/in centre					

	5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Practical Factors					
K. Home factors					
L. Community factors					
M. Housing					
N. Income					
O. Substance use issues					
P. Risk of offending					

A. ATTENDANCE

Some possible issues to explore:

Past record of educational attendance
History of temporary or permanent exclusion from school
If parenting / caring responsibilities
Reasons for non-attendance
If learning difficulty
If issues re transport
If issues re disability access

Rating:

5: Positive strengths programme	Full attendance at centre; full engagement with
4: No issue / not a problem area	Regular attendance at centre
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Occasional truanting from centre; significant level of absence from centre; difficulties with transport
2: Significant or specific issues education	Very high level of absence from centre; interrupted
1: Critical or complex issues	Dropped out or expelled from centre; disengaged from learning process

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Schools
NEWB
Social services

B. PARTICIPATION

Some possible issues to explore:

If evidence of bullying / discrimination
Suitability of school(s) attended
Behaviour in school
Relationships with other students in school(s)
Participation in school
Involvement in any aspect of school programme (e.g. non-acedemic, sports)

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Positive attitude towards participation in centre; positive progress in learning
4: No issue / not a problem area	Good educational participation in centre; no evidence of issues relating to participation
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Significantly poor level of participation in centre; uncooperative, disruptive or uninvolved when present
2: Significant or specific issues	Very poor level of participation; seriously disengaged from learning and socialising; very disruptive, uncooperative
1: Critical or complex issues	Has dropped out of centre; disengaged from learning process

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Schools
NEWB
Social services

C. ACHIEVEMENTS – from past or current learning contexts

Some possible issues to explore:

Current educational attainments
Occupational awareness
Qualifications
Current vocational attainments
If learning difficulties
Educational and vocational potential
Interests
Current attainments in other areas (e.g. sports, music, drama, art, non-academic areas)

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	High level of personal achievement; sees achievement as relevant to future prospects
4: No issue / not a problem area	Engaged in achieving in appropriate programmes / centre activities; has good occupational awareness
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Attainments fall below level of ability; lack of confidence in abilty to succeed; poor awareness of opportunities
2: Significant or specific issues	Slow progress in all areas of learning and activity; lack of interest and motivation in relation to opportunities available
1: Critical or complex issues	Low level of achievement as a result of disengagement from learning opportunities

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Schools
Local clubs

D. BASIC SKILLS – ability to attend; to speak, understand, read, write English; to use maths; to use IT; to problem-solve, etc.

Some possible issues to explore:

Reading, writing, numeracy skills (general)
If history of dyslexia
Ability to learn new things and improve performance
Reading, writing, numeracy skills (course-related)
concentrate
If impact of learning difficulty
Ability to speak and express self
accuracy
If first language other than English

Ability to understand others
Access to and comfort with IT
Ability to solve problems
Ability to attend and
Ability to work without
supervision
Ability to check quality and
Ability to work under pressure
Ability to follow instructions

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Can attend and concentrate well; has good reading, writing, numeracy skills; strong communication ability; comfortable with IT
4: No issue / not a problem area	Has functional levels of language, literacy and numeracy; can apply skills effectively for course-work
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Difficulties in some aspects of basic skills; e.g. communication skills, literacy, numeracy, oral language skills
2: Significant or specific issues	Low level of basic skills or missing altogether; likely to impact significantly on ability to pursue courses in the centre
1: Critical or complex issues	Very low level of basic skills; having an immediate and serious impact on ability to make progress

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Schools
NEPS
Speech and language therapy services
VEC Adult Literacy Service

E. LIFE SKILLS – ability to cope and plan ahead; adaptability to change; emotional and behavioural development; self-presentation

Some possible issues to explore:

Ability to initiate and adapt to change
Implications if learning difficulty
Appropriateness of behaviour in centre setting
Personal appearance and hygiene
Emotional and behavioural development
Ability to negotiate and compromise
Quality of relationships with others
Ability to plan, prioritise, cope with variation, think ahead
Ability to undertake routine tasks (e.g. travel, prepare meals, use phone)

Self-presentation skills
Parenting ability (if relevant)
Coping skills
Level of independence
Readiness to make decisions
Attendance and punctuality
Self-confidence
Social skills

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Evidence of strong ability to organise, plan, think ahead and adapt, good social skills and understanding; self-confidence
4: No issue / not a problem area	Evidence of development of a broad set of life skills
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Evidence of underdeveloped skills; inappropriate behaviour / appearance; lacks understanding of acceptable behaviour
2: Significant or specific issues	Lacks certain key skills; issues relating to emotional and behavioural development; impacts seriously on prospects
1: Critical or complex issues	Has dropped out or been expelled from centre; disengaged from learning process

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Disability Services
NEPS
NCSE

F. ASPIRATIONS and MOTIVATION – personal and professional ambitions, attitudes towards learning, goals for the short, medium and long term, what motivates and ability to pursue goals, perseverance and resilience

Some possible issues to explore:

Current educational aspirations
Personal confidence
Implications if learing difficulty
Attitude toward current situation
Impact if cultural / racial factors
Attitude towards the future
Impact if gender stereotyping
Ability to focus
Ability to self-promote
Ability to be appropriately assertive

Vocational potential
Current vocational aspirations
Attitude towards training / learning
Level of realism in aspirations
Motivating factors
Occupational awareness
Ability to plan for future
Ability to deal with rejection
Aspirations of peer group
Educational potential

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Evidence of ambitious and realisable short / long term goals; positive attitude towards learning; good occupational awareness; confidence in ability and potential; able to motivate self and deal positively with setbacks
4: No issue / not a problem area	Evidence of positive and realistic view of current situation; constructive and achievable aspirations for the future; positive attitude towards learning; demonstrates resilience and motivation
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Lack of / unrealistic ambitions for future; lack of optimism; low or inappropriate confidence; lack of awareness of opportunities; negative attitude towards learning; few motivating factors; inability to motivate self or deal with setbacks
2: Significant or specific issues	Lack of realistic ambitions for the future; lack of direction / optimism for the future; negative attitude towards current situation; few / no ambitions; unwilling to be challenged; in process of disengaging from learning
1: Critical or complex issues	Evidence of no ambition / aspirations for the future; has given up; no motivating factors; disengaged from learning

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Guidance
Work experience
FÁS

G. IDENTITY AND SELF-IMAGE

Some possible issues to explore:

Sense of self	Feelings of acceptance
Sense of self in relation to peers	Self-esteem
Evidence of and reasons for self-harm	View of own self and abilities
Sense of being an individual	Evidence of bullying / discrimination
Sense of own culture	Self-confidence
Feelings of belonging	Self-image
Sense of being valued	Anxiety / depression
Implications of race, gender, religion, sexuality	

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Evidence of positive self-image; good self-esteem / confidence; feelings of belonging and acceptance
4: No issue / not a problem area	No identified issues relating to personal development; no anxiety in relation to sense of self
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Poor self-image; low self-esteem / confidence; negative views of self / abilities; feelings of anxiety / isolation / rejection
2: Significant or specific issues	Evidence of poor self-image causing depression; evidence of past or current self-harm; evidence of detachment from other learners in centre; risk of serious impact
1: Critical or complex issues	Evidence of serious risk of harm as a result of poor self-image / identity; serious risk of impact on ability to make progress

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Counselling services

H. PHYSICAL HEALTH – current health needs, sexual health issues

Some possible issues to explore:

Current health issues
Physical exercise
If registered with GP
Developmental progress
If issues relating to a disability
Diet and hygiene
If registered with dentist
If medical or genetic condition
Relevant family medical history
Access to medical advice / services

Motor skills and coordination
Level of fitness
Strength
Immunisations and allergies
Access to optical care
Attitude to health issues
Sexual history and activity
Level of physical prowess
Health threatening behaviours
Knowledge of health services available

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Demonstrates good physical health / development; all health needs met; no high risk behaviours; positive attitude to health matters; good access to health services
4: No issue / not a problem area	Demonstrates expected levels of physical health / development; no evidence of issues relating to physical health
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Evidence of health problems / high risk behaviour(s); lack of exercise; poor diet / hygiene; sexual health issues
2: Significant or specific issues	Evidence of poor health or physical development; has existing condition which requires medical attention; some impact
1: Critical or complex issues	Serious, unaddressed problems relating to physical health / development; untreated condition(s) requiring urgent attention; problems are having a serious impact

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Health Centre
G.P.

I. EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING – current mental health needs, emotional problems, bereavement, emotional maturity

Some possible issues to explore:

Experiences of:
Bereavement
Self-harm
Emotional problems
Suicidal thoughts / acts
Behavioural difficulties
Suicidal thoughts / acts
Abuse or bullying
Attention problems
Impulsiveness
Family break-up / trauma
Negative thoughts
Feelings of vulnerability

Issues around weight / food
Evidence of withdrawal
Feelings of aggression
Mood swings
Ability to express feelings
History with mental health services
Degree of emotional maturity
Ability to demonstrate emotional warmth
Number and degree of attachment to others
Poor anger management
Feelings of uselessness / inadequacy / guilt

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Evidence of emotional strength, warmth and maturity; strong emotional ties within family / community
4: No issue / not a problem area	No evidence of current or past emotional or mental health problems; good level of personal and social functioning
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Evidence of mild / transitory emotional difficulties relating to personal / family circumstances
2: Significant or specific issues	Evidence of recurring emotional difficulties and/or meantl health issues; risk of serious impact on progress
1: Critical or complex issues	Evidence of persistent and serious emotional or mental health problems; significantly impacting on ability to progress

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Mental health / psychiatric services
Child and Adolescent / Family Clinics

J. RELATIONSHIPS WITH and WITHIN THE CENTRE

Some possible issues to explore:

Age appropriate friendships

Quality of relationships with peers

Stable and affectionate family relationships

Age inappropriate friendships

Quality of relationships with adults

Regular and appropriate socialising with peers

Responses to relationships

Difficulty in maintaining friendships

Experience of bullying / violent behaviour

Implications if learning difficulties

Parenting responsibilities (if relevant)

Caring skills

Caring responsibilities

Leisure activities

Coping skills

Experience of victimisation

Ability to show empathy

Involvement in centre community

Rating:

5: Positive strengths		Positive, stable relationships with peers / staff; positive treatment of others; ability to cope and to show warmth and empathy
4: No issue / not a problem area		No current relational issues arising with regard to peers or staff; evidence of good / appropriate relationships
3: Some general issues / difficulties		Relates to one or two peers only; relates to adults but not peers; quarrels frequently; finds it difficult to build strong or mutually satisfying relationships / friendships
2: Significant or specific issues		Lack of stable relationships inside centre; not part of centre community; evidence of bullying; lack of role models
1: Critical or complex issues		Evidence of serious social problems with peer relationships inside and outside centre; evidence of serious bullying; exclusion from peer group; serious concerns about possible progress

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Counselling

K. HOME FACTORS – availability of basic care, protection from harm or danger, emotional warmth, stimulation, guidance and boundaries; relationship with family members; changes within

Some possible issues to explore:

Nature of the family household
Educational experiences of parents
Family experience of disadvantage or poverty
Living with birth parents / fostered /other
Parents / carers have aspirations for young person
Good role models available
Guidelines and boundaries provided
Stable and emotionally supportive environment
Impact of young person's behaviour on others
Educational effort and achievement valued by home

Life and health experiences of parents
Child protection history within family
If domestic violence situation
Refugee / asylum issues
Experiences security / safety
Appropriate living conditions
Emotional needs addressed and met
Appropriate levels of hygiene / diet

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Strong and stable family/fostering unit; positive support available; needs fully met; good relationships in the home
4: No issue / not a problem area	Current developmental needs met by home environment; home not identified as a concern
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Evidence that some needs are not being met; poor diet / hygiene / living conditions; unstable / insecure environment; lack of emotional support / stimulation; poor relationships within home
2: Significant or specific issues	Evidence that a range of needs are not being met; poor relationships; evidence of domestic or other violence; concern about serious impact on ability to progress
1: Critical or complex issues	Evidence of lack of appropriate care; of risk within household; of inappropriate relationships; serious/immediate impact

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Parents
Community services
Social services

L. COMMUNITY FACTORS – young person's neighbourhood, facilities and services; integration into their social community

Some possible issues to explore:

Physical isolation within community
Safety within community
Quality of local facilities and services
Harassment within community
Leisure opportunities
Transport facilities
Refugee / asylum issues
Availability / accessibility of local facilities / services

If parenting / caring responsibilities
Neighbourhood and community context
Social integration / acceptance
Racism / discrimination within community
Evidence of local drug culture
Evidence of local criminal culture
If learning difficulty

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Safe, secure environment; positive links and engagement within community; access and use of local facilities and services; good access to transport
4: No issue / not a problem area	No current issues raised relating to community; sufficient local facilities / services; no access / transport issues
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Lack of engagement in community; evidence of problems with community; insufficient facilities / services to meet needs; lack of access / transport issues
2: Significant or specific issues	Evidence of disengagement / serious problems with community; no access to / use of local facilities; suspected of living in criminal or drug-taking community
1: Critical or complex issues	Evidence that young person is isolated from or at risk within community; immediate / serious impact

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Community services
Community development organisations

M. HOUSING – accommodation, appropriate amenities and facilities

Some possible issues to explore:

Who young person lives with
History of rough sleeping
If adaptations are required to meet needs
History of running away
Safety and quality of housing situation
If living in temporary accommodation
If housing suitable to meet parenting responsibilities

Basic amenities and facilities
If living in social / residential care
Stability / permanence of housing
Sufficient space to study
Quality of living conditions

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Good quality and stable housing situation; physical environment adequately meets needs of young person
4: No issue / not a problem area	Housing meets needs; no history of housing problems; not identified as a concern
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Lack of stable / secure housing; lack of basic amenities; overcrowded / lack of own space; not meeting current needs
2: Significant or specific issues	Unsuitable living conditions; at risk of becoming homeless or of running away; in temporary accommodation
1: Critical or complex issues	Poor / highly unsuitable living conditions; homeless / sleeping rough; high risk of running away; temporary accommodation coming to an end; serious / immediate impact

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Social services
County Council / Corporation

N. INCOME – income over a sustained period, receipt of benefit entitlements; sufficient income to meet needs, use of resources

Some possible issues to explore:

Income available over a sustained period of time
Sufficiency of income to meet needs
Level of financial difficulty / debt
Ways income is obtained
If parenting / caring responsibilities
How income is used
In receipt of all benefit entitlements (e.g. for disability, for childcare)

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	Young person fully supported financially; positive attitude towards income and expenditure
4: No issue / not a problem area	Sufficient income to meet needs; all entitlements claimed; responsible attitude; not a matter of concern
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Irregular of insufficient income to meet needs; in debt; unclaimed entitlements; lack of responsible attitude to use of use of income; raised as a matter of concern
2: Significant or specific issues	Insufficient income to meet needs; obtained by inappropriate means; spent inappropriately; increasing debts; of serious concern and having an impact
1: Critical or complex issues	Young person in receipt of no income; serious debts; immediate / serious impact

Possible agencies / services to network with:

MABS
Social services

O. SUBSTANCE USE ISSUES – drugs, volatile substances and alcohol use

Some possible issues to explore:

(History of) use of alcohol[*]   Role of parents in substance use
History of involvement with specialist services   Knowledge of risk of substance use
Role of environment in substance use   Role of peers in substance use
(History of) use of illegal drugs[*]
Attitudes towards substance use – own use and others'
Protective factors relating to substance use
(History of) use of solvents and other volatile substances[*]

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	No evidence of past or current substance use; evidence of protective factors e.g. has good understanding of risks, has supportive network of friends who do not misuse substances; positive rejection of substance misuse
4: No issue / not a problem area	No evidence of current misuse; perhaps evidence of misuse in past but not currently considered an issue for concern
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Occasional current substance misuse; evidence of peer influence; lack of commitment to stopping use
2: Significant or specific issues	Use of a range of substances; chaotic use of substances causing disruption; lives / socialises within a substance-misusing environment; unwilling to address issues of substance misuse
1: Critical or complex issues	Substance use is having an immediate and serious impact on young person

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Drug programmes
G.P.
JLO
Guards / Probation Services
Courts

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[*] how long, how often, where used, who with, how funded, reasons for use

P. RISK OF OFFENDING – offending (or re-offending) due to lifestyle, home circumstances, peer group

Some possible issues to explore:

History of offending
Evidence of living in a criminal environment
Offending behaviours
Reason for offending
Evidence of protective factors
Evidence of a pattern of criminology
Attitude towards offending history
Evidence of risk factors (e.g. exclusion, substance use)

Rating:

5: Positive strengths	No offending history; supportive personal network; evidence of protective factors; not exposed to criminal environment
4: No issue / not a problem area	No indication of offending behaviour; any previous offending behaviour already addressed
3: Some general issues / difficulties	Evidence of offending behaviour and / or exposure to criminal environment / influences; commitment to address reasons for offending / behaviour
2: Significant or specific issues	Evidence of risk of (re-)offending; association with known criminals; lack of commitment to address offending behaviour; concern of serious impact
1: Critical or complex issues	Evidence of (re-)offending; possible criminal influence on others; rejection of all attempts to address behaviour; immediate and serious impact

Possible agencies / services to network with:

Probation Services
Courts
JLO
Custodial care