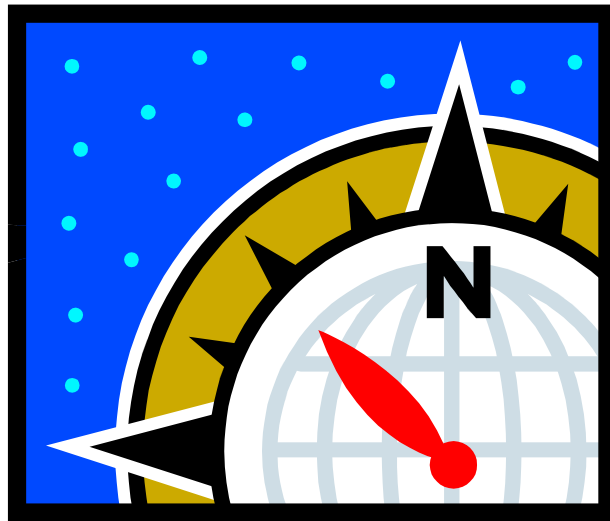


Northwest Kildare

Pathways



Tracking and Mentoring Project Annual Report 2008

The *Pathways* project would not have been possible in 2008 without the help of:



And our 2008 advisory group:

Karina Kurley, OAK Partnership
Bernie Hurst, Northwest Kildare CDP
Larry Harney, Kildare Education Welfare Officer
Caroline Cooke, Canal Clusters Schools Completion Programme
Kathleen Kramer, Fás CTW Newbridge
Joan Piggott, Dept. of Social and Family Affairs
Aine Byrne, Kildare Community Partnership

Section 1: Executive Summary for 2008

Background to Date

The NW Kildare Tracking and Mentoring Project nationally known as *Pathways*, began its existence in 1996, when it was initially funded under the ESF Youth start Initiative, which was targeted at disadvantaged young people. It is one of four sites operating in Waterford, Tralee, Athy and Northwest Kildare. For the year 2000 and 2001, FAS and the Department of Education funded the project. *Pathways* Kildare managed to continue its programme in the years 2002-2006 due to funding from FAS. Since 2006 the funding was taken up by a multi-agency initiative led by Kildare Youth Services and OAK Partnership. The agencies involved in 2008 are listed on the previous page.

Community Context:

Northwest Kildare is characterised by its flat and boggy landscape. Settlement in the area has few points of concentration, Rathangan and Clane notably, which means the population is dispersed over a wide geographical area making outreach and provision of services challenging. This coupled rural isolation, poor transport, poor opportunities for training and employment and poor amenities has led to the population experiencing many forms of disadvantage.

The 1990s saw the closure of the ESB Turf-burning PowerStation in Allenwood and Bord na Mona, key employers in the area, which caused widespread unemployment. The community efforts to bring about community development and employment led to the foundation of the Offaly and Kildare Partnership in 2000 and the Community Development Project in Allenwood in 2006 which introduced Local Development and Social Inclusion programmes to the area. A multi-agency report *Early School Leaving in County Kildare* (2003) recognised the value of the work of the project and recommended that the model be used countywide.

Issues arising for Young people:

In 2000, KYS recognised that the disadvantage in the area was impacting the youth population particularly in the area of Early School Leaving and established the *Pathways*, Tracking and Mentoring project. A multi-agency report *Early School Leaving in County Kildare* (2003) recognised the value of the work and the *Pathways* model and recommended that the scheme be extended countywide.

Four young people in the area there are no facilities, no youth clubs outside of Clane and Rathangan, no swimming pool, no cinema and no where to hang out. Young people frequently tell us they have nothing to do and no where to go. The young people that are referred to the *Pathways* Project come from extremely difficult backgrounds; some of these families have drug and alcohol problems. Some young people live in violent home situations and they themselves are turning to drugs and alcohol because they see their peers/parents doing it. All these issues/problems add to young people at risk of early school leaving or, in a lot of cases, non attendance in not attend school. The young people being mentored by the project mostly have little belief in themselves and cannot see any way out of the situation their living in.

The *Pathways* Project and the youth worker play an effective and important part in the life of these young people. The youth worker can work with the young person in

a unique, flexible and needs based manner. The service that *Pathways* provides supports young people to look at or towards making better choices in their lives. It also helps young people to make informed choices about their future progression. A Strong element of the Project is its ability to remain independent and young people focused, whilst working within a local youth service setting. In addition *Pathways* has built up very positive links with other service providers and has being able to refer parents and young people to other support services

Highlights for the year

2008 was a unique year for the programme as for the first time since 2006 we were able to commit employing a full-time mentor for the year. This was made possible by the commitment of the Steering Group to raise the additional funds and resources needed for the year and the KYS board underwriting the costs for the year on the basis of that commitment.

Olive Spain was recruited to the role of mentor from January to July when, for family work reasons, she moved to Australia. Anne Hodgson was seconded within KYS to the project from Naas Youth Project and worked in the mentoring role for the remainder of the year.

Other highlights included:

- 40 Young people referred to the programme
- Strong partnership with the Advisory Group in securing referrals, funding, and premises
- Strong support from parents, families, local community and organisations
- Acquisition of an office in Allenwood Enterprise Centre
- A summer programme for the *Pathways* participants in Roberstown and Choill Dubh
- Outreach work in Rathangan including a community clean up event organised by *Pathways* for the young people and families in St. Patrick's Park estate
- Working in partnership with Kildare County Council in delivering after school programmes in Derrinturn and Rathangan for at-risk young people
- An after-schools programme in November for *Pathways* participants
- Securing programme funds from KCP for 2009

The Challenges of the *Pathways* Project:

- For many years *Pathways* been funded on a year to year basis, making its future always uncertain
- The programmes discontinuation would lead to a severing of relationships and trust with young people their families and communities
- There is only one worker for a large geographical area
- While the premise in Allenwood has been a welcome development for *Pathways*, there are a shortage of premises and space in outreach areas.
- Young people require more intensive 1:1 support work.
- Young people require more group work for their personal and social development.
- Increased numbers of child welfare and protection issues coming to the attention of the project

- Increased need emerging for young people and their families in current economic climate

Section 2: Aims and objectives

2.1 Overall Aims and objectives of Kildare Youth Services

Pathways is a programme of Kildare Youth Services (KYS).

KYS's vision describes the ideal future it wants and promotes for children and young people.

The KYS vision is:

An inclusive and fair world where children and young people are valued in their own right and actively engaged and supported by their families, communities and wider society, to reach their full potential.

The KYS Mission Statement describes the overall aim and purpose of the organisation.

The KYS mission is as follows:

KYS is a voluntary organisation. It provides a range of development and learning opportunities and services throughout County Kildare. These are provided for and with children, young people, their families and communities to be responsive to their changing needs.

During the Period 2007 – 2012 KYS has the following Strategic objectives:

1. Support the personal and social development of children and young people in County Kildare
2. Strengthen equality and social inclusion of children, young people, their families and communities
3. Support children and young people to positively promote their rights
4. At local, regional and national levels, advocate for social change in favour of children, young people, their families and communities
5. Strengthen KYS' organisational management and development to ensure effective delivery of this Plan.

2.2 The Development of the KYS Strategic Plan

The approach underlying the development of the KYS Strategic Plan 2007-2012 was to focus on long-term high-level objectives that apply to KYS as whole, which would then influence the specific aims and objective of it's projects and services. The consultation process was facilitated by an independent consultant and involved a number of stages

Phase 1 was an extensive consultation process and policy review which sought to identify the successes, benefits and challenges experienced during the outgoing Strategic Plan 2002-2007. This process included 62 young people, Statutory and

community agencies with which KYS has worked Volunteers, Staff and Board Members. This provided an important context for future planning.

Phase 2 of the development of the Strategic Plan focussed on working with the Board, staff and young people of KYS to finalise the direction of the organisation to 2012

The consultation process was guided by a KYS Strategic Plan Working Group comprised of Board members, Director, staff and young people of KYS.

2.3 Overall Aims and objectives of *Pathways*

'The *Pathways* Project' is also referred to as the Tracking and Mentoring project.

The Aim of the *Pathways* Project is to guide, support and empower young people between the ages of 15-20 years old who are at risk of leaving school or who have already left school to:

- Regain focus and regularity in their lives
- Acquire a significant peer support and adult support network
- Explore and identify their own needs and issues
- Have those needs met in a group, one on one or training circumstance
- Explore options for their future
- Emerge from a non-formal educative circumstance with the skills, knowledge and attitudes they need to progress.
- Stay in school or return to school.
- Progress to further training, education or employment

The objectives are the project is to achieve its aims through:

- Adapting to and meeting the needs of its young participants.
- Making the young people, community and agencies in Northwest Kildare aware of the service
- Working with relevant agencies to target and refer the appropriate young people to the project
- Conduct outreach work.
- Convene and report to the Advisory Group
- Secure funding and resources for the sustainability of the project

2.4 Method and Approach

The *Pathways* programme fundamentally operates out of a youth work and informal education approach in that the development of the relationship between the worker and the young person is at the centre of the approach and success of the project. While young people may be referred to the project by a variety of agencies, in keeping with youth work practice, their involvement is voluntary and not compulsory. The work done with young people is focussed around their character building and personal development. This extends into social education when they are further engaged in youth work.

Sociologically, the 'Transitional View' of youth looks at youth from the perspective of the transitional paths they choose or follow, privately and publicly, in their journey out from childhood into adulthood. While traditionally these transitions were more predictable e.g. through school to the workplace or from parental home to marriage and one's own home-making, the pathways are now more complex and need to cater for a range of needs, options and non-sequential stages of development.

Pathways recognises the need to cater for these diverse needs, options and non-sequential stages of development by focussing first on the young person and assists them in deciding and pursuing a progression path for themselves. The programme has 3 main elements

Tracking

Tracking encompasses all elements of finding the Early School Leaver (ESL) from agency referral, self referral, school referral right down to door to door outreach and street work. While this is a highly effective way of tracking and engaging young people, the project also relies on local agencies and community members to assist in the difficult process of uncovering many of the 'hidden' Early School Leavers in Northwest Kildare.

Mentoring

Mentoring takes place as both need and the young person dictate. The key to the process is establishing a relationship of mutual respect and trust between the mentor and the young person. As time goes on the project finds that the level of advocacy required on behalf of the young person is increasing all the time with a heightened need for other agency intervention, such as Social Services, Drug and Addiction Services and the Juvenile Justice System.

Gateway Group Programmes

The Gateway group programmes offer the young person support on several levels. Firstly, it provides peer support and a group environment for the young person to be part of. Secondly it is an opportunity for the group members to begin reflecting on their experience of school and their hopes for their future life. It is also an opportunity to invite speakers to the group in response to the specific member's career choices.

Section 3: Report on the Pathway's project work in 2008

3.1 Referrals and progression.

Pathways worked with young people between the ages of 13-17 years old during 2008 who were at serious risk of leaving school or who had already left school. *Pathways* remains a key support for a cohort of young people who are unable to or are not ready to make any progress at the time of referral to the project and require assistance from mentor.

The programme worked closely with the Kildare Education and Welfare Officer this year to identify the young people to be mentored. In many cases the young people were known to a range of agencies including Schools, Social Services and the Gardai.

The Pathways project had total referrals for 2008 of 40 Young people. At the end of the year this was their status:

Still in School	11
Still engaged in Mentoring at end of 2008*	10
Referred/ Tracked but did not engage in Mentoring	10
Attended Gateway Group Programme	6
Attending Youth reach	2
Attending The Acorn Project	1

**Profile of young people were still actively engaged in Mentoring at the end of 2008:*

Gender	Age	Area	Status
Male	14	Robertstown	In-school
Male	15	Robertstown	In-school
Male	14	Robertstown	In-school
Male	16	Robertstown	In-school
Male	16	Robertstown	Left school
Male	15	Choill Dubh	Left school
Male	15	Robertstown	Left school
Male	16	Prosperous	Left school
Male	17	Curragh	Left school
Male	15	Rathangan	Left school

In addition to the young people's status in relation to school, a large range of associated issues came to light including challenging family circumstances, drug use, petty crime, personal hygiene, mental and general health issues and literacy. The programme did its best to make appropriate referrals, where needed.

3.2 Group Programmes

Group programmes make up an essential part of the *Pathways* project.

They provide a group work intervention that will address the needs and issues of these young people in a group environment with their peers. This provides a different and complimentary approach to progression along with the one to one mentoring. Secondly, it provides encouragement, support, and help and creative opportunities for young people to develop their skills, knowledge and to participate in a structured environment. The overall aims and objectives are based on the young person's personal and social development.

Three group programmes were conducted during 2008:

- A summer programme for participants from Choill Dubh and Robertstown
- A community summer clean-up programme for young people and their families in St. Patrick's Park estate in Rathangan
- An after-schools programme in Allenwood in November

Summer Programme:

The members of this programme group were from Roberstown and Choill Dubh and had been in contact with the Mentor for a number of months prior to the summer programme through the tracking and mentoring process. They were referred to the project from a number of agencies that are working in North West Kildare such as the School Completion Officers, Home School Liaison Officer and the Gardaí as they had been identified as risk of early school leaving and were also involved in petty crime and drug use. The summer programme was the first time for all these young people to come together.

There were a total of 7 participants engaged in the summer project 5 from Robertstown and surrounding areas and 2 from Choill Dubh. The participants were engaged in the programme through direct contact with the family and the young people through home visits. The young people were all very open to joining the programme as they had acknowledged that they had nothing to do and they were extremely bored.

The group showed great enthusiasm through out the week long summer project. Due to the circumstances many of the young people found themselves in, the work was focused around modules from the 'Copping-On' justice programme around alcohol use and crime. The evening was focused on recreational activities. The Programme culminated in a Go-Carting trip on the final day which the group really enjoyed. The week was very successful with the participants discussing openly issues that they were going through and issues that they felt strongly about. They asked what was happening next week and when was it going to happen again etc but unfortunately only one week was viable in the area.

The programme and the young people's response highlighted the gap in services and facilities for young people in the area. Other than football, there is little for the young people to take part in locally.

Rathangan Summer Clean-up Programme:

Pathways Project also ran a summer programme in St Patrick's Park, Rathangan, Co. Kildare. It is recognised by the residents that St Patrick's estate was run down and badly neglected and the main objective of this programme was to engage young people and their families in working together and to participate in cleaning up their estate, along with taking pride in keeping it clean.. The clean up proved to be very successful with more than 20 Children, 20 Young People, and 5 Mothers taking part in the clean up. The clean up took place over a three day period, with brushes, shovels, paint, gloves and bags for rubbish etc, provided by *Pathways* Project along with lunch and refreshments over the three days. In return this encouraged and challenged all who were involved to take pride in where they live and realise why it is important to look after their estate in which they lived. The feedback from both children and parents was tremendous. When they had finally finished cleaning up and seen how wonderful the estate looked it gave them a great boost and a great sense of pride. It also proved successful in building positive relationships between young people and adults, in building trust between neighbours and profiling the work of *Pathways* in the estate.

This programme brought to light issues and concerns that are affecting families and young people living in and around this estate. It focused on why parents/families are so concerned with young people having nothing to do and no where to go and being subjected to abuse and insults because of where they live. Parents voiced their concerns about the use of drugs and alcohol abuse on their estate and asking what can be done about it. During the three days of the clean up *Pathways* Project received over 20 plus referrals from concerned parents asking for help regarding their children and the problems facing them on a daily basis.

After-schools programme:

Pathways ran an out-of-school programme for 4 weeks in the ACDAL Enterprise Park from the 26th November to the 17th December 2008, which proved to be very successful. Between 7 and 10 young people were invited to take part of this programme, but only 4 took part. They participated well and enjoyed themselves.

The programme increased the young people's self-esteem, adding to their confidence and personal development, and helping to develop positive relationships with the mentor and their peers. This led to progression of active involvement within the programme and group cohesion. Furthermore, capacity building was important so the young people could develop the skills they needed to help them identify their own needs and issues. Finally, the out of schools programme gave the young people ownership of their group as they were encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions.

This programme was the first in a number of programmes both in-school and out of school which will extend into to 2009 following a grant from KCP (now Chill Dara ar Aidgh Teo).

3.3 Interagency work

The Main Agency funding for the programme during 2008 came from OAK Partnership with programme grants from Kildare VEC and AIB. The Northwest

Kildare CDP advocated for the project to the Allenwood enterprise centre and secured an office at a reasonable and sustainable rent.

A significant programme grant was secured from Kildare Community Partnership (now part of the county-wide partnership Chill Dara ar Aigidh Teo) at the end of 2008 for in-school and out-of-school programmes to be conducted mostly in 2009. A representative from KCP joined the referral group in the last quarter of 2008.

Along with aforementioned agencies, the other agencies on the steering group provided significant strategic and referral input into the programme:

- Canal Clusters Schools Completion Programme
- The Education Welfare officer
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Northwest Kildare CDP
- Fás, CTW, Newbridge

A few other agencies assisted in the co-delivery group programmes during the year. The Kildare County council Youthworker and the St. Patrick's Park Residents Group supported the summer clean-up programme in the estate in Rathangan. The Tracking and Mentoring Programme mentor also assisted in the delivery of an after schools programme with the County Council in Derrinturn and Rathangan.

3.4 Community Development

The Mentor during 2008 took part in a number of community groups and initiatives

The Community worker from the housing section of the Kildare County Council convenes two service provider meetings in which the project was represented: One for the St. Patrick's Park and Beechgrove estates in Rathangan; The other being the Ashgrove network meeting in Derrinturn.

3.5 PR and Advocacy

During the year the project promoted itself through an article in the KYS Magazine 'Reach' and produced a fold out brochure giving information and contact details for the project.

We also took a promotional stand at car boot event at the Allenwood enterprise centre and exhibited material about the project at an exhibition organised by the Kildare Volunteer Bureau at NUI Maynooth towards recruiting volunteer for this and other KYS projects.

In addition to displaying material at the early school leaving seminar organised by KCP and OAK in October, the project also invited a parent of one of the young people to talk during the seminar workshop about the experiences of early school leaving of both her son and her as a parent.

Section 4 – Case Study

This case study is based on a young person who was referred to the *Pathways* Project by the Educational Welfare Officer. This young person had already missed more than fifty days from school and was still a poor attendee. The young person's background is an extremely difficult one with difficult issues arising on a daily basis. The young person lives in a dysfunctional family, both parents drink a great deal of alcohol on a regular basis and they live in very poor conditions of hygiene and untidiness. As a result of the young person's personal hygiene they were being bullied on a regular basis both in and out of school; this was a significant factor to why this young person is not attending school.

The Mentoring relationship has been instrumental in assisting to make significant changes in the lifestyle of this young person. The steps taken by the Mentor were those of building a relationship and informing the young person of all the options open to them. This young person engaged quite well despite their motivation being quite low. Both Mentor and young person agreed a plan of action to identify what kind of support needed to be put in place. Mentoring contact was established through face-to-face meetings, through telephone calls and through meeting with the young person's family. A number of other agencies were engaged around the family circumstance.

Section 5 – Management Systems

5.1 Staffing Structure/Support & Development

The *Pathways* programme employed one full-time mentor for 2008. The mentor was supported in the delivery of group programmes by KYS youth work staff from other projects. Our thanks to Edel Fitzsimons & Aidan Farrelly.

The Mentor is supervised by a KYS programme manager. Supervision meetings take place on a monthly basis for the purposes of reporting, support and development and internal monthly reports are produced by the project. In addition the *Pathways* NWK Advisory group met on a quarterly basis where mentor and management reports were presented.

5.2 Staff Support and Development

- Internal: The mentor underwent KYS induction training, attended Staff Development Group meetings and all-Staff Quarterly meetings. Olive Spain attended our internal Child Protection training conducted by a qualified staff member.
- External: 'Copping on' Training and training in motivational interviewing were attended during the year. Copping on training is designed to facilitate young people to understand the consequences of engaging in risky or illegal activity. Motivational interviewing skill directly assists in the one to one mentoring work. In addition, Anne Hodgson is in her second year of an in-service diploma in Community and Youth Work

5.3 Financial Controls

- It is the policy of K.Y.S. to operate financial controls to the standards set out in the Youth Work Ireland code of practice in Local Youth Service Management. KYS is a recipient of the Youth Work Ireland Quality Standard Award.
- KYS is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status and abides by the government guidelines regarding charity status limited companies.
- In addition to this the project leader has set up a number of financial control mechanisms to ensure the most efficient and cost effective management. These include quarterly projection plans and reports, project budget breakdowns and post project evaluations.

Section 6 - Conclusion

The *Pathways* Project has continued its work in 2008, supporting young people, families and the wider community of Northwest Kildare. The purpose of the Project is to guide and empower young people between the ages of 15 – 20 who have left school early or who are at serious risk of doing so. In addition, the Project remains the key support for a minority of these young people who are unable or not ready to progress at their time of referral and require assistance at their own pace. A major element of working with the young people within the *Pathways* Project is building a good relationship between mentor/youth worker and the young person. This relationship is based on trust, respect and on an understanding of where the young person is in their lives when the mentor meets with them. Furthermore, using a Youth Work approach (Informal Social Education) which values the young person, their strengths, their past achievements, and their positive behaviour is an extremely important element within the relationship between the young person and the mentor. Their relationship is not built on struggle or conflict, it's built on a voluntary commitment to engage with the Project and because the young person wants to change and progress. An environment is created by the mentor to make the young person feel that they are important and to feel that they are not being judged, so they can relax and be themselves. A fun element comes into play by asking for the young person's opinions and by listening to their needs, and by taking it from there in terms of them moving forward.

Pathways Project success has been its ability to remain independent and young person focused, whilst working within a Local Youth Service setting. In addition, *Pathways* has built up very positive links with a number of service providers, parents and organisations that make referrals, and above all the young people themselves. This leads *Pathways* to deliver an effective and meaningful service to Early School Leavers by working together to tackle issues/problems that face them, their families and the wider community.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Northwest Kildare *Pathways* Project is showing its strength at a local level like never before. As time has gone on, the months of networking at local level are paying dividends. Slowly but surely the project is standing out as a key provision for the young person who has left school or who wishes to leave school. It is now usual to hear the project being spoken of and referred to as a reliable link for the Early School Leaver and their immediate family.

The first recommendation is that mainstream funding is immediately secured for the *Pathways* Project.

A second recommendation would be to include a second Youth Worker either full-time or part-time on the project staff, because of the wide geographical area and for proper group work coverage.

The final recommendations for the *Pathways* Project would be as follows:

- Early School Leaving is a whole community problem and cannot be effectively tackled in a progressive or uncoordinated manner; it requires a coherent response involving the Education System, Youth/Community work and family support.
- Networking and information sharing is a cost effective way to respond to some the problems of Early School Leaving, this leads to a greater need for information and publicity around services and initiatives currently existing.
- Effective and immediate interventions are possible and although Youth/Community sector plays a pivotal role in this, involving in-school and out of school initiatives could impact positively as could raise awareness of the many issues affecting young people.
- It is important that we, as service providers, examine why the system has failed to respond coherently to young people in need. Furthermore, we need to correlate the systems provisions to the needs of those at risk. Thus, we will be able to apprehend how it has failed in its obligations to all young people, including those for whom the education system does not work.
- Support and intervention provision with regard to Early School Leavers in Northwest Kildare is inadequate and in most parts it is non existent. There are many areas within the Northwest Kildare that do not have access to any services. There are many agencies working towards improving this and a co-ordinated response continues to be needed to ensure improvement.