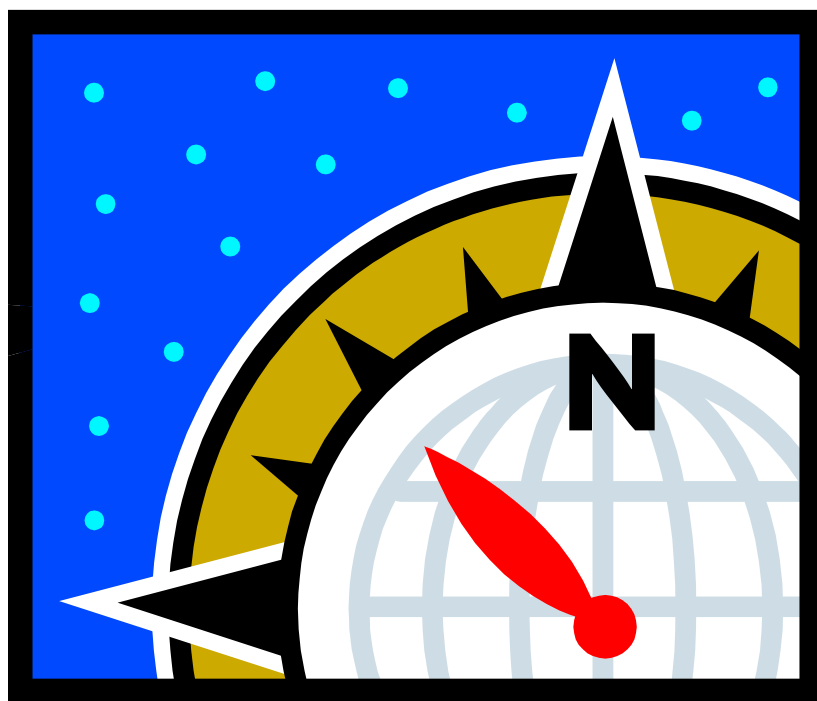


Northwest Kildare

Pathways

Tracking and Mentoring



Annual Report

2005



TRACKING AND MENTORING ETHOS

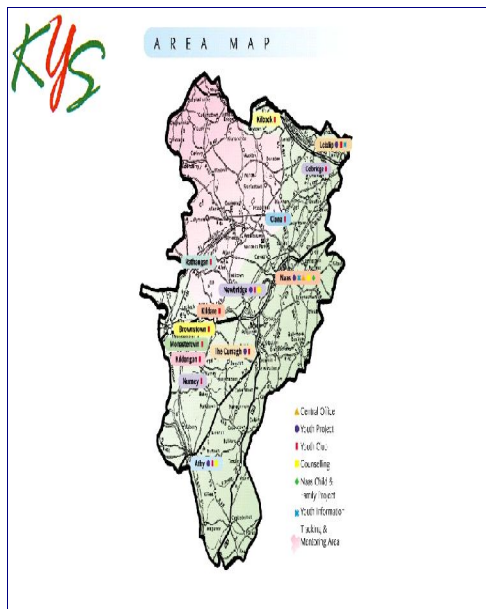
The Tracking and Mentoring Project operates from a Youth Work approach and is based in the local Youth Service. This means that the Mentor, a professionally trained Youth Worker, in their duty to the young person, is guided by respect, equality and developing a positive relationship with the young person which is of benefit to them in their progression. It sees the young person in their own right with the capability to explore and make informed choices for themselves. Most importantly an environment of education, support and encouragement is key in order for these positive informed choices to happen.

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.

What the Tracking and Mentoring Project can offer Early School Leavers, who often experience several elements of disadvantage in their lives, is Informal Social Education and a broad based holistic approach to assist them to return to school, partake in further training and or programmes or enter the workforce.

Introduction to the Tracking and Mentoring Project

The NW Kildare Tracking and Mentoring Project nationally known as Pathways, began its existence in 1996, when it was initially funded under the ESF Youthstart Initiative, which was targeted at disadvantaged young people. It is one of three sites operating in Waterford, Tralee and Northwest Kildare. For the year 2000 and 2001, FAS and the Department of Education funded the project. Pathways Kildare has managed to continue its programme in the years 2002-2005 due to funding from FAS.



The Issue of Early School Leaving in Northwest Kildare presents its own particular challenges. Up to 2004 the project had identified issues such as rural isolation, poor transport systems, limited access to further education and training options and poor social skills as being major barriers to a young person's progression. While these issues are most certainly still evident and continue to be immense barriers to progression, in 2005 the project has found a new range of issues have become more prevalent for the many young people involved in the project.

What is becoming more evident is that a deliberate and planned **multi-agency** response is needed, to assist the Early School Leaver. Serious issues such as drug misuse, pregnancy, suicidal tendencies and juvenile crime are now dominating the focus of mentoring these young people. Families are struggling to cope with the seriousness of the issues their sons, daughters and young people in their care are presenting and are at their wits end to find a path through these times.

Early School Leaving is a vivid example of the structural faults in our society, which have created poverty and exclusion. Young people are socially excluded when they are prevented from gaining access, or have significant difficulty maintaining themselves in mainstream education and training. When a young person is out of school, they are more likely to be 'outside' the mainstream in other ways. Exclusion from school often accelerates a young person's fateful journey toward crime, lone parenting, homelessness, unemployment or drug misuse.

Social exclusion and poverty among young people threatens our communities, challenges our schools, care and criminal justice system, and weakens our economy. The Pathways model clearly acknowledges that a direct approach to

address the needs of Early School Leavers is regarded as most effective locally, particularly working in partnership with the young person's family.

Early School Leaving is one indicator of Child Poverty and an initiative such as the Tracking and Mentoring Project can have tangible benefits.



Why does it work?

What makes the Tracking and Mentoring Project unique in its approach? The key element to this is the nature of the relationship between the young people and the youth worker who works with them. Firstly and most importantly the young people themselves have made a voluntary commitment to engage with the project. This relationship is based on trust, respect and an understanding of where the young person is at this point in their lives.

The youth worker has the advantage that they are not working within a formal & authoritative structure and may be, at the time, the only adult the young person is not in a power struggle or conflict with. By having a fun, real approach to meeting the young people and by actively asking them for their opinions and listening to their needs, an environment is created where the young person begins to feel they are entitled to be the creators in their own lives.

Group work and group activities (Gateway programmes mostly) are a key method used to enhance this relationship and create space for the young people to relax, be themselves and be accepted for who they are. In most cases, the Gateway programmes provide the only situation that many of the participants have to be in a group with their peers. This acts as an organic environment for the group to gain peer support, often without realising it, through interaction and participation in a non-threatening environment with a significant adult and most importantly have fun! Outdoor activities are a tried and proven method to get young people moving, raise energy levels and stimulate sometimes forgotten about 'feel-good' hormones!

The Pathways Model of the Tracking & Mentoring Project

Using a Youth Work approach (Informal Social Education) - which values the young person, their strengths, their past achievements, their positive behaviours and the stage of life and situation they're in the time of reaching the project - the mentor works with the young person in three ways:

Tracking

This encompasses all elements of finding the Early School Leaver 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 NW Kildare.

A number of agencies and organisations make referrals to the Tracking and Mentoring Project including:

- Schools – Principals and Home School Community Liaison Teachers
- Gardaí – Junior Liaison Officers
- FÁS Community & Employment Services
- Probation and Welfare/Service
- Education Welfare Officer
- OAK Partnership
- Youthreach Centres
- Parents/Carers/Guardians
- Community members
- Diocesan Youth Worker
- Local residents committees
- Kildare Community and Education Partnership
- Community Youth Workers
- County Council Community Worker
- KYS Counselling Service
- Kildare Traveller Network

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. This can take the form of informal conversation, a meeting to supply required information right up to an intensive piece of work with young person spanning over many months, even years in some cases, and

involves assisting the young person to source further services they require for e.g., literacy training or perhaps counselling. Progression goals, targets and timelines are set at the relationship with the young person develops

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.

What is becoming more evident is that a deliberate and planned **multi-agency** response is needed, to assist the Early School Leaver in their progression. Serious issues such as drug misuse, pregnancy, suicidal tendencies and juvenile crime are now dominating the focus of mentoring these young people. Families are struggling to cope with the seriousness of the issues their sons, daughters and young people in their care are presenting and are often at their wits end to find a path through these times.

Gateway Programmes

The Gateway Programme offers the young person support on several levels. Firstly, it provides a new, peer support 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. For example Hair and Beauty Therapists, Jockeys Construction Workers, Child Care Workers, etc.

The Gateway Programme also has a strong career progression element including workshops from a trained careers counsellor. The groups get the opportunity to visit their further training options such as:

- Fás Youth Training and Development Centre in Newbridge,
- Youthreach in Leixlip, Athy and Naas
- RACE in Kildare Town. (Two courses)
- FAS Newbridge School of Childcare

The project has also successfully accessed FETAC Training Courses for the young people to complete as part of their Gateway Programme which is documented further on in this report.

[For full details of the Gateway Programmes for 2005, See Appendix 1](#)

Issues Arising from the Gateway Programmes

- Low literacy skills
- Poor social skills
- Challenging behaviour often as a result of low communication skills
- Low motivation
- Low self confidence
- Lack of support from other adults in their lives
- Lack of support from other services
- Family related issues
- Poverty
- Long gaps between leaving school and when they are identified making progress even more difficult.
- Lack of transport
- Few further training opportunities locally
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Social and institutional discrimination
- Stereotyping of the young people by adults and services in their local community
- Mental health related issues
- Low awareness of health/ hygiene related issues
- Teenage pregnancy

Please note that these are a collection of issues arising for young people engaged with the Tracking and Mentoring project in 2005. They do not represent what every young person is facing individually

OTHER INITIATIVES

Relationship with the EWO

In September 2005 the National Education and Welfare Board appointed an Education and Welfare officer for Kildare County- Larry Harney.

- The EWO expressed his support for the project as a provision for early school leavers.
- He has agreed to work in partnership with us in northwest Kildare.
- The Tracking and Mentoring Project, and Kildare Youth Services as an organisation are delighted to have this new opportunity to work in partnership with the EWO to refer young people engaged with the Project to him that fall under his remit (Less than 3 years of secondary school completed).
- The EWO has agreed a framework of referral to the project for the 15+ age group

The Multi-Agency Expansion Strategy for the Project

During 2005 and as part of our objectives for 2006, we have engaged in a strategy to expand the project by convening a multi-agency partnership to match the Fás funding that we have been receiving in order to employ a second mentor on a full or part-time basis to focus on the Clane/Prosperous area where 71% of the referrals during 2004 came from. This would allow the other mentor to focus in other areas of Northwest Kildare, increase our coverage and engage more young people in an effective way.

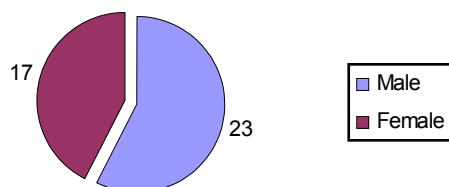
The agencies, other than Fás, that were involved were the Kildare County Council, Kildare VEC, HSE (SWAHB), KELT, OAK partnership, NEWB, DSFA and DOES. Also included in the meetings were the Kildare Community and Education Partnership (Education Officer), the Garda Juvenile Liaison and the local Home School Liaison officer (within the areas the Tracking and Mentoring Project covers)

A funding proposal went out in September. The support in principle from all agencies has been favourable and we expect to convene the first meeting of the new multi-agency Tracking and Mentoring Steering Committee during the first Quarter of 2006.

STATISTICS 2005

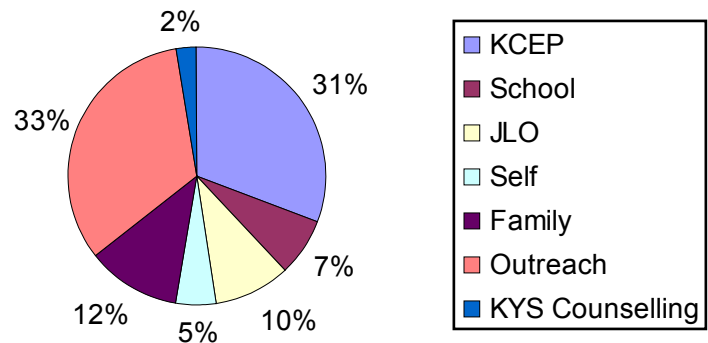
Total referrals for 2005: 40

Gender breakdown:



Referral Agents:

Agency	No.
KCEP	11
School	3
JLO	4
Self	2
Family	5
Outreach	14
KYS Counselling	1
Total	40



Agency referral %

7 of these young people are at particular high risk of multiple marginalisations as they include members of the Travelling Community, young people engaged in crime and anti- social behaviour, and living away from their own home. One of these young people is currently on a waiting list for an Adolescent Drug and Rehabilitation Centre in Co Kilkenny as the recourses required are not available in Co Kildare.

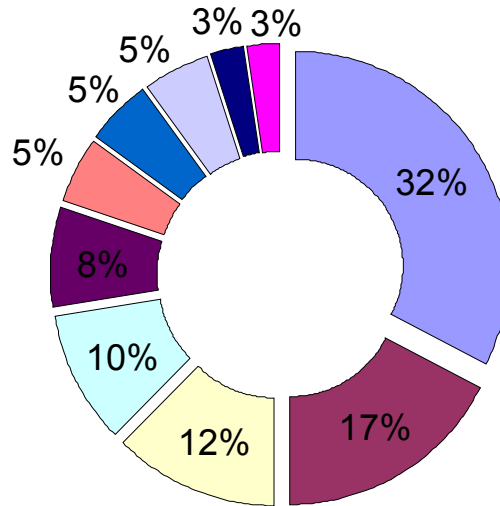
Engagement*:

Engaged in one to one Mentoring	34
Engaged in Gateway	33
Engaged in FETAC Training	9

**numbers reflect that some young people engaged in both mentoring/Gateway/FETAC training.*

Progression:

SCHOOL*	13
GATEWAY**	7
WAITING LIST FOR APPRENTICESHIP/FAS	5
YOUTHREACH	4
JOB	3
TRAINING COURSES	2
RACE	2
APPRENTICESHIP	2
PARENTING IN THE HOME	1
OTHER	1



■ SCHOOL
■ GATEWAY
■ WAITING LIST FOR APPRENTICESHIP /FAS COURSE
■ YOUTHREACH
■ JOB
■ TRAINING COURSES
■ RACE
■ APPRENTICESHIP
■ PARENTING IN THE HOME
■ OTHER

* 6 of these young people are at serious risk of leaving school completely and are regularly suspended from school. The schools are in regular contact with the project concerning these students. Three of these young people are currently in exam years and have been supported by the project to remain on to take their exams.

**Have attended the Gateway programme but have not engaged in a specific progression path yet.

HIGHLIGHTING SUCCESS

Awards Night

In 2005 the Kildare Progression Programme members had the opportunity to not only have meaningful, and consistent access to group work they also were praised and recognised for this with their Achievements Night in the Kildare Education Centre. Although the group received certificates for their achievement in completing the 8 modules of the Progression Programme, the real achievement came to fruition when they played a lead role in the organisation of their night. Successes included:

- Planning the night
- Preparing the venue
- Displaying their Art and Craft work
- Group members making speeches
- One young person doing MC for the night
- Members of the group doing a meet and greet for their attending guests, which included parents, school teachers and principals, friends, KYS staff, local agency representatives, Kildare Sports Partnership, Kildare Community and Education Partnership, local residents committee members and priests.

The event came as a pleasant surprise for many of the adults who attended on the night. The main motive behind this was to demonstrate that young people have the potential to lead and have their opinions heard but many, especially young Early School Leavers, require consistent support in order to do this. The result is that the young person is left feeling they have succeeded - in front of their peers, their parents and in front of adults they may not have had a positive history with.

Comhairle na nÓg

The Comhairle na nÓg is a yearly meeting of young people in each county around issues affecting young peoples lives, which ultimately feeds into government policy. A number of delegates from this event go on to represent young people in their county at the Dáil na nÓg.



This was a great opportunity for members of the Tracking and Mentoring Project to have the chance to express their opinions on two themes for 2005 - lack of facilities and amenities in their own area, and drug and alcohol misuse. The young people really enjoyed the experience of been listened to by total strangers and their views been noted. What was surprising was how vocal and opinionated they were when they were giving the chance to

speak up. The interaction and participation was immense from everyone who attended. As well as discussion and group work, other innovative youth-friendly methods such as a vox-box, were used to provide a space for participants to air their views on the process and the issues.

One of the young people from the Kildare Progression Programme (Gateway) went forward as a candidate for Dáil na nÓg during the event.



Sports day

The Tracking and Mentoring Project also had the opportunity to access the skills of the Kildare Sports Partnership. Sports facilitator came and worked with 15 participants in the Newbridge Sports centre for a day of fun and team- building activities. The Tracking and Mentoring Project looks forward to working with KSP in the months ahead!



Outdoor activity day

The group also got to enjoy a well deserved day out at Blessington Adventure Centre where they had fun horse riding, canoeing, on the 'slippery slope' and on the climbing wall.



CURRENT S.W.O.T ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT

Strengths

- Dedicated Local Staff
- Part of an existing county and national Youth Project Organisation
- Strong support from parents, local community and organisations established
- Support from Local, County and National Agencies
- Large numbers of young people already identified
- Established contacts and expertise

Opportunities

- Introduction of a Literacy Programme element
- Expansion of the project to add a Stronger Transitional Youth Work element.
- More intensive 1:1 work with young people
- Existing requests from local schools for workshops and programmes with young people at risk of ESL
- Multi-agency funding and partnership

Weaknesses

- Insecure Funding
- One worker for a large geographical area
- Lack of premises and space in areas being worked
- Young people require more intensive 1:1 support work before engaging in group activity or moving into a more formal training circumstance.

Threats

- Discontinuation of the project
- Abandonment of support for ESLs
- Vital links severed with parents and the community which would take time to re-establish
- Break in the three region Pathways partnership.

CONCLUSION

The NW Kildare Tracking and Mentoring 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. 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The key to the success of the Pathway's programme in the future lies in a number of factors which have been incorporated into our 2006 plan:

1. The maintenance of the current Tracking, Mentoring and Gateway programme
2. The expansion of the partnership supporting the programme both in the short term and the long term. This key strategy is in line with *all* current research and recommendations at both local and national level.
3. The need has arisen to intensify the 1:1 one work needed before engaging at group level. This could be achieved in 2006 and beyond by focussing the mentoring/gateway piece for a longer period in one area of the county, e.g. Clane/Prosperous, while continuing to track across North Kildare. Both these activities could take place with the addition of a second Mentor.
4. To introduce the element of transitional youth work using the gateway model to tackle the obstacles that may be standing in the way of progressing to more structured training or employment. e.g. anger management, health issues or referral to literacy programmes.
5. To expand and consolidate the Kildare Pathways database and other databases, hopefully with a more accurate and centralised source information in the light of the Education and Welfare act, and with the support of the new Kildare EWO.
6. Continue to work in partnership with other advocates for early school leaving in the county in terms young people who come to our attention who are not within the target area of NW Kildare.
7. Overall, to uphold the rights of young people to appropriate support, particularly in situations of disadvantage and to assist those at risk of early school leaving to return to school, partake in further training, enter the workforce or provide an environment of informal education to meet the wide range of needs that arise.

Objectives for 2006

Objective	Actions	Owner	Partners	Outputs
Continue to Track the remaining 40 young people on the list from 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source contact information where applicable • Carry out door to door contact • Track progress or engage in suitable mentoring or pathways options 	T&M Co-ordinator	Community leaders; Schools; Parents; Fás	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current status of 40 Young People confirmed • Progression options to Mentoring/Gateway
Target 60 new referrals in 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to update the existing database with added assistance from EWO • To seek and receive returns & referrals from other partners • Follow up the referrals • To provide analysis 	T&M Co-ordinator	Community leaders; Schools; Parents; Fás; JLOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status of new referrals documented. • Progression to Mentoring/Gateway • Statistics and trends identified
To engage 25 Young people in a Mentoring Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain Parental Permission • Set up 1to1s where appropriate • Set plans and goals for engagement and progression. • Document Meetings • Draw out common threads • Referral to group work where appropriate • Referral to Fás • Meetings with Parents/School/Fás • Monitor and review progress • 	T&M Co-ordinator	Community leaders; Schools; Parents; Fás;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth project to engage young people in regular meetings • Awareness and clarity of options • Further training/ school / employment

Objective	Actions	Owner	Partners	Outputs
Optimise the use of Gateway towards the progression of the Early School Leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene groups of 3 or more, appropriate to age, sex, needs and culture. • Identify individual and group developmental needs that may be an obstacle to progression. • Use gateway format to introduce pre-development elements, where needed, e.g. Anger management, literacy training, personal development etc. • Mark completion of programmes, where appropriate, with some significant event (e.g. display, presentation of certs. of completion etc.) • Maintain group identity afterwards to allow peer support towards progression. 	T&M Co-ordinator and facilitators	Others services within KYS e.g information, counselling, youth projects; training providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming the obstacles that may be standing in the way of progressing to more structured training or employment • Improved Social Skills and self-esteem • Demonstrate ability to maintain time-keeping and conduct in a group setting. • More awareness of choices • Progression. • To leverage the cost effectiveness of group work
To expand the partnership for funding and support for the Pathways programme in North Kildare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To Leverage current partnerships and forge new ones • Continue to source additional funding to expand the scope and staffing of the project • Re-convene an inter-agency meetings to maintain commitment to the ESL in the form of an integrated youth initiative 	KYS Regional & Programme Manager. T&M Co-ordinator	OAK, VEC, DSFA, Dormant accounts, ASK, KCEP, Fás; SIM; KCC and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring of an additional FT or PT staff member for the programme • Work closely with the new KYS project in Kildare town.

Objective	Actions	Owner	Partners	Outputs
To Focus Mentoring and Gateway elements in one area for 6 month periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish more effective 1:1 and group work in one Geographical area of north Kildare e.g. Clane/Prosperous Establish project base in Clane/Prosperous. 	T&M Co-ordinator	Community leaders; Schools; Parents; Fás; JLOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More intensive work 1:1 with ESLs Stronger relationships and progression in the area due to less transience.
Expand partnership with Home, Schools and Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor has already been requested to host talks in schools presenting the options and risks to young people who are considering leaving school early To offer advice and support from the programme to parents, professionals, volunteers and Schools to be able to support ESLs and those at risk. 	T&M Co-ordinator.	Schools; Parents; JLOs; Youth leaders; Health Professionals; Social Workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling partners to provide support to ESLs. Broader effectiveness of the programme. Explore providing presentations/training to Fás Staff*

Appendix 1

GATEWAY PROGRAMMES

There were 5 Gateway Programmes completed in 2005.

NAME OF PROGRAMME	PARTICIPANTS
KPP 1	15
KPP 2	8
AV Project/Fetac Cert.	9
Magee Barracks	3
Clane	3

KPP 1- Kildare Town

Aims and Objectives:

- To engage a group of 15 young people referred to the project by the 3 local post primary schools and the KCEP Education Officer. This was the first initiative between the Tracking and Mentoring Project and the Kildare Community and Education Partnership to work together to tackle the issue of early School Leaving.
- To create positive links with local schools as an additional support in accessing local Early School Leavers and young people at high risk of leaving.
- As an additional function of advocate for young people with the school who were supported to continue with their education or return to it.
- To work with the group to complete 8 youth work modules based on issues such as self-esteem, decision making and choices, personal development, further training options, arts and crafts and activities.

The group met weekly for ten weeks in the local parish centre. Attendance was voluntary and consistently high throughout the 10 week programme.

KPP 2 Kildare Town

Aims and Objectives:

- To continue engagement and support with the group as a result of issues arising out of KPP 1
- To provide additional support for the young people who had entered into a mentoring contract as a result of their involvement in KPP 1
- To use issue based drama as a method of exploring issues.
- To use this learning to create a story board and script for their upcoming Audio- Visual Project.

A youth worker with a background in drama facilitation was engaged by the project as a means to carry this out. KPP 2 ran for 6 weeks.

Audio Visual / FETAC Programme- Kildare Town

Aims and Objectives:

- To engage the group members in a full completed project beginning to end.
- To achieve a meaningful result for this participation- FETAC Certificate.
- To provide an opportunity for the group to explore their skills, talents and abilities in a non classroom environment.
- To explore issues which affect their lives using a creative and innovative medium.

The group's work was show-cased later in the year at an event in Goffs, Co. Kildare for all young people in the county who had been part of the Audio Visual projects. As the KPP's DVD was issue- based, which distinguished the groups' efforts in particular, it was selected by the Performing Arts Centre staff to go forward to be entered in Youth Section of the Cannes Film Festival in 2006.



Magee Barracks- Kildare Town

Aims and Objectives:



- To engage a small group of young women who are members of the Traveller Community.
 - To provide a new group environment based on discussion and recreation
 - To address inequality issues and access to services effecting the group members.
 - To identify other issues emerging.
 - To learn new skills.
- To gain information on further training options.

Each young person on this programme was individually mentored. This group ran weekly for 8 weeks, including day trips.

Clane

Aims and Objectives:

- To work with a group of young men who were unengaged from any form of formal education for several months/ years.
- To identify issues and challenges arising at this time for them
- To explore these issues through youth work
- To work on a one to one basis with a career guidance councillor, to identify further training options.
- To provide positive new social experiences for the young men.
- To link in with the new Youthreach in Naas.

This group met weekly for 6 weeks. There was full participation each week.

Appendix 2

CASE STUDIES

Below are three brief outlines of some of the young people the project has worked with throughout the year. They are given as a method of illustrating the issues arising for young people out of school and the various factors which influence their lives. Identifying details have been left out in order to protect the young people involved.

CASE STUDY 1

This case study is based on a young woman age 17. This young woman was difficult to engage as she had been out of formal education for so long. She had left school at the end of first year and had spent vast amounts of time at home with little interaction with her peers. When she first came into contact with the project she was shy and withdrawn and her motivation and hope were quite low. After working intensively with the mentor it was identified that she would love to become a Beautician. As she is an Early School Leaver, we had to find a suitable course, which would give her a professional qualification.

FAS run a full-time Beautician course, but each applicant had to have a good level Biology as part of the entry requirements. The young woman had only studied Biology up to first year. After the mentor contacted FAS, it was agreed that if this young girl bring her level of knowledge of Biology up to the course standard, that a place would be considered for her.

With this in mind the mentor set about getting her grinds. Her parents could afford to pay for one hourly session per week but we agreed she needed more, so, the project provided an extra session per week. She was delighted with this and was helped prepare for her interview for the course.

All applicants on this course must also show that they have secured a work placement within a beauty salon, the Tracking & Mentoring project is in the process of finding a suitable salon for this young girl to get a placement with. This is a particular challenge as many salons prefer to only take on young people when they are already on a course.

At the time of writing the course has not yet commenced but she is continuing to attend her grinds. The project is in regular contact with the course co-coordinator in order to fully support her transition into it.

CASE STUDY 2

This Case study is based on a 19 year old Male, who has been involved in the Tracking & Mentoring project for some time.

This young man was encouraged and supported by the project to remain in school, which he did, achieving great results in his Leaving Cert. He was then finding it hard to get work and he told the mentor that wanted to get a trade as a carpenter. In order to work on any building site you must have a Safe Pass course done and neither he nor his family could afford the cost so the project supported him attending the course. It made sense to help this young man to get his desired job considering he had been engaged successfully with the project for almost two years.

It also came to our attention that he had not signed on to Social Welfare was not aware of his right to do so. The project helped him to get all the documents he needed and went with him while he registered. At this point, we also advised him register with FAS, in the hope that a training course would come up that he could then access.

Coming toward the end of this year he has identified a business that may have a vacancy to take him on to do an apprenticeship and has applied for same.

CASE STUDY 3

This Case study is based on a 14 year old young man who received all the normal support and mentoring in the starting months of his engagement with the project. Additional support was also required as a result of circumstances which arose in his life. During this time the Tracking and Mentoring project was the only service he was engaged with.

This young man had been living out of home for some time as a result of a family conflict which had arisen. During one of our visits to mentor him, we found him to be living in unsuitable and unsafe conditions:

- He had no change of clothes
- His hygiene was poor
- His health was poor
- He had no money at all.
- He was visibly down in himself
- He had disengaged from school
- He was not in contact with his peers

After talking to this young man about his current circumstances and his unhappiness with them, it was decided that action had to be taken.

Immediately, we made contact with the Duty Social Worker to check his current status for referral to a social worker to take on his case. The young man had previously been assigned a care worker by the Social Work Department.

We then contacted the Department of Social Welfare to see if we could access money for the young man in question. After a phone call to the C.W.O it was agreed that a meeting was needed immediately.

The C.W.O came out the same day to where he was living, and agreed with us that the situation was unacceptable and agreed a weekly payment for him to survive on. In the meantime, while waiting for payment, he was hungry and sick, so we took him to a restaurant for dinner and then to do some personal shopping which was covered by the Tracking & Mentoring project budget. We also brought him to a chemist to get him the medicine he needed at that time and made an appointment with his GP for the following day.

The young man had previously been assigned a care worker by the Social Work Department and we made contact with the Duty Social Worker to check his status for referral to a social worker to take on his case.

Along with these elements, intensive support was given over the following weeks and months to this young man and the referrals made regarding his case to other relevant agencies and services. Contact was also made with his home and school.

The Tracking and Mentoring Project recognises that it was the only link this young man had to accessing the help and support he urgently required for his safety and welfare.

A MOTHERS TESTIMONIAL

“I am the mother of a troubled and troublesome teenage girl now aged 16 years. I have spent the last year trying to get help both for her and for me. I wanted help for her because her behaviour was deteriorating and I wanted help for me because I was afraid that I might say or do things that would make a bad situation worse and push my daughter farther down the destructive path she had apparently chosen.

For a variety of reasons, short of actual arrest, she had been involved with the Gardaí and although I asked if there were any organisations that I could go to for help I was never referred on..... Her behaviour and attendance at school had become poor and once again I had looked for help but the only response was counselling which she did not wish to take up. When my daughter eventually refused to return to school, I contacted the National Education Welfare Board as she was only 15 and had not completed the Junior Certificate. I was desperate to get advice on what to do now that she had dropped out of the system..... Inevitably the situation deteriorated and I again asked about any agencies or individuals that might be able to offer help.

However,

Teen Counselling was mentioned and that proved to be my saviour. Through calling them I was told that Kildare had a Youth Project that they felt would be able to provide the help I needed but were not sure of the exact name. I did a Google search and found the Youth Information Centre within Kildare Youth Services whom I contacted by e-mail. Within 48hours I had a reply from the co-ordinator who gave me several names and numbers to contact. Amongst them was the Tracking and Mentoring Project. Since I had never heard of such a project and had no idea what service they provided I once again e-mailed the Information Office coordinator who forwarded my details to the Tracking and Mentoring mentor. Shortly after this I met with her and I knew very quickly that she and the ‘T&M’ were exactly what I had been looking for and had needed for over a year.

The need for a project such as Tracking and Mentoring is crucial to families who find themselves in difficulties like mine. I feel the project should be expanded throughout the country and the finance made available to fund it. Working in the Health Service I know that funding has major implications. I would argue that looking at the bigger picture, if this project was extended Early School Leavers would be less likely to become early offenders and so save money in many other sectors.

I cannot stress enough that the Tracking and Mentoring project has been a really positive experience for both me and my family. The whole initial contact to first meeting took place in a matter of days which is exactly what a troubled person needs. Almost instant help not waiting lists. This contact has been maintained unflinching to date. We have received tremendous support, advice and

encouragement. Not least my daughter is co-operating which is a huge step forward and is due to the way the project works and the approach of its implementation.

The mentor has been a tower of strength to me. She can see solutions for everything, partly because she knows her job and partly because she has such a positive outlook herself. Support is never more than a text message away from my daughter or me. As a family we now deal with issues differently. All of us have had to change some of our ideas and that hasn't been easy. The awful dread of another day of conflict is gone, not just because there are fewer conflicts but because we are better equipped to handle the issues that lead to full blown conflicts. I am not naïve enough to think it will be plain sailing from now on, I know there will be highs and lows but I know now that we have back-up if the going gets really tough.

At last my daughter has help and encouragement from a project which is positive about her future that until now looked very bleak indeed. The mentor once said about my daughter 'she's not all bad just lost'. Many young people need many, many more youth focused mentors to help them find themselves"

An eternally grateful mother.