

Review of aspects to be transferred from Equal Youth to The Net-working for QA project

Equal Youth

In 2004 The Irish Youth Foundation approached the Ballymun Job Centre (BJC) requesting the development of an innovative response to the high numbers of young people not engaged in services, education & training or the labour market. The BJC through its services for the 16-24 year olds had identified that many young people had indeed dropped out of school, may have engaged in varying levels of education and training, but that there seemed to be a lack of formalised tracking of these young people and as a result many young people found it difficult to negotiate their way into sustainable career paths within the labour market.

The BJC and the Irish Youth Foundation felt that if the organisations (including statutory services, NGOs, agencies, Community & Voluntary services etc.) worked better together there would be an increased opportunity for disengaged young people to access the labour market. An application was then made under the ESF funded EQUAL Community Initiative which aims to tackle inequality in the labour market by improving access to education, training and employment.

The project was successful in accessing this funding and was then co-ordinated by the BJC from Jan 2005 to Dec 2007. During the lifetime of the project an initial development partnership (the interagency network) was developed consisting of 21 organisations, many of whom had both local and national briefs and included:

- Ballymun Adult Read and Write Scheme (Literacy services)
- Ballymun Community Training Centre (Community based training for early school leavers)
- Ballymun Educational Support Team (alternative education programme for young early school leavers)
- Ballymun Job Centre
- Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force
- Ballymun Regional Youth Resource
- Ballymun Women's Resource Centre
- Ballymun Youthreach (Community based education for early school leavers)
- City of Dublin Youth Services Board
- Department of Social Protection
- Exchange House (Services for the travelling community)
- FÁS (National Employment & Training Authority)
- Health Service
- PACE (Community education and training for adult male offenders leaving custody and offenders on Probation Service supervision)
- Probation Services
- School Completion Programme
- Ballymun Rapid Programme
- Youth Action Project (Community education and counselling for young people recovering from addiction)

- Fast Track to IT (Training to fast track the unemployed into ICT related entry level jobs)
- Ballark Community Training Centre
- Trinity Comprehensive School (Local second level school)
- An Garda Síochána (Police service)

Of the initial 21 organisations, 15 remain involved today and value the interagency/ networking opportunity that EQUAL Youth facilitates.

The interagency network developed a series of interagency tools which underpin its current structure and quality based approach. They include:

- Web based Profiling & Tracking System
- Interagency protocol document
- Confidentiality Policy
- Training for practitioners
- Monthly practitioner meetings to share information and plan on behalf of young people (sharing best practice, capacity building for staff and organisations)
- Thematic intervention:
 - o Cannabis Initiative(monthly meetings identified this as a need)
 - o Ballyrunners: High support, Interagency approach, raising self esteem/self efficacy

Key to the success of Equal Youth is its client centred approach, confidentiality, profiling and monthly meetings. The interagency network continues to demonstrate how the interagency approach and the underlying client centred ethos of the initiative has enabled positive outcomes for young people.

Transfer of EQUAL Youth to Net-working for QA

Partners of the NQA project were presented with the Equal Youth initiative at the 1st transnational meeting in Belfast, where key staff of the initiative outlined the process, the ethos and the interagency tools which support the initiative. Partners discussed in detail the Equal Youth initiative and the key elements which could be transferred to build interagency in the VET sector.

Partners were then invited to participate in two workshops:

Day 1: **Working in a Collaborative way (see appendix one)**

Day 2: **Understanding the ‘Quality’ Concept within Interagency Collaborative & Partnerships (see appendix two)**

Both workshops aimed to assist participants gain a greater understanding of what Interagency working means for them as practitioners, for their organisation and for the clients they work with. The process also aimed to assist partners in identifying what elements of Equal YOUTH were important to transfer into the NQA project and those which could be adapted or underpin the NQA model.

****These workshops could be useful for other areas wishing to introduce the NQA model as a way of working – the workshops can be delivered in two 2 hour sessions and their structure/content is outlined in appendix one and two.***

Decisions on elements to transfer

Partners were invited to comment at the meeting or to review after the meeting and inform the coordinator.

In Turku, the Finnish partner introduced the materials to the guidance services for young people in City of Turku -network. The key members evaluated material and gave their comments and ideas. They agreed to transfer all materials to the following networks and guidance services:

- guiding services for young people in City of Turku -network will be tried during Spring 2013 (in this network the partners are from social sector, education sector, youth work and employment office)
- the new models in apprenticeship training will start operations during Spring 2013 and guiding material / models material of Equal Youth will be part of that new model: the idea is to pilot how Equal Youth Profile & Planning Statement will work when profiling young people to apprenticeship training

The Spanish partner after reviewing the materials outlined that they need to be as general as possible so that they can be adapted to partners' confidentiality national legislation (as, in the case of Spain, the Organic Law for Data Protection: LOPD). In principle they agreed with the transfer of the Equal Youth Model and sensed it would have impact in a Spanish context.

The Northern Irish partner, the Italian partner and the Romanian partner all agreed that the elements of Equal Youth be transferred and adapted to meet the new needs of Interagency working in QA in VET. The recommendations from partners focused mainly on how these materials could be adapted to meet new needs. They advised that the interagency groups would first have to be established, be clear about their purpose and then start to adapt to meet their own needs. This then becomes a task of the interagency groups working at local levels in each partner country.

Appendix one

Day 1

Working in a collaborative way

Task 1

Participants are divided into small groups to work on the following case study.

Small Group Work ... Meet your client ... MARY who is:

- Female / Early School Leaver – *with basic formal educational/vocational qualifications*
- Some Literacy / Numeracy Issues
- Now Long – Term Unemployed - *last worked in 2003 in a low-paying unskilled job in a local factory*
- Living on Social Welfare Payments ... In a highly populated Urban Area of Socio/Economic Disadvantage
- Single Parent ... *with 3 children aged 4, 6 and 10 years old respectively*
- There are some health (*drug addiction*) related issues and She is '*known to the police*'....

Projected Employment Aspiration: *She wants a job in an office - using computers.*

Small Group Work:

- Review MARY's employment aspirations. What can be done to practically assist her to achieve her objectives? ... Remembering also MARY's social, economic and familial challenging responsibilities.

(15 minutes)

Outcome of Task 1:

- Draft a four-point 'Quality-based' Interagency Collaborative Plan to assist MARY achieve her work-related objectives.

(15 minutes)

Feedback to the overall group and discuss

Task 2: Some comments from the facilitator as below and discuss in light of the outcomes of Task 1 above.

Partnership remains a loosely defined, if fashionable, theory with flexible boundaries. It is often hailed as the remedy for all social ills....

Partnership takes on a diversity of shapes and labels...

(Mezzana 2002, Larner & Craig 2002, Duggan 1999)

- *Trust & Confidence*
- *Shared Accountability*
- *Respect for Specialist Expertise*
- *Joint Working & Teamwork*
- *Members share Same Vested Interests*
- *Appropriate Governance Structures*
- *Common Goals*
- *Transparent Lines of Communication*
- *Agreement about Objectives*
- *Reciprocity – Relationship-based... involving mutual exchange*
- *Empathy*
- *Blurring of professional boundaries*
- *Conceptual confusion*
- *Loosely defined concept*
- *Expressed through multiple terminologies.*

Task 3

Aims & Aspirations:

The business and social concept of working in *collaboration & partnership* is a 20th Century-dated phenomenon...

Discuss:

What needs to be changed or updated to activate real *collaboration & partnership* suitable for the needs of the 21st Century?

Day 1 - Conclusion

- Partnerships build local networks and create a critical layer of connective tissue (Considine, 2005)
- A key factor in promoting positive relationships between organisations in a partnership is maintaining respect both for each other and the varied stakeholders involved (*Good Practice Guide: Effective ACE and VET Partnerships* (Gelade, Stetlik & Willis for Australian Government. 2006)
- One of the first rules of human relations is to seek common ground with others. (Maxwell, 2003)
- To build and sustain social connections, you have to be able to trust others and others have to trust you. (Kouzes & Posner, 2002)
- Leadership is not an affair of the head; leadership is an affair of the heart. (Kouzes & Posner, 2002)

Discuss

Appendix two

Day 2

Understanding the 'Quality' Concept within Interagency Collaborative & Partnerships

Session 2 focus

- Appreciating Interagency Collaborative & Partnership
- Understanding the 'Quality' Concept within Interagency Collaborative & Partnerships

Task 1: Appreciating Interagency Collaboration & Partnership

NQA Aims & Aspirations:

- Transparency & Common Approach ... (*Bruges, 2010*)
- Improve the Quality and Volume of Cooperation... (*BJC/NQA Project Application, 2012*)
- Build up Mutual Trust... (*Bruges, 2010*)
- Demonstrates approach that enables Improved Cooperation, Commitment & Enthusiasm... (*BJC/Equal Youth, 2007*)
- Promote systemic exchange... to further cross-fertilisation... (*QALLL Recommendations, 2012*)

Discuss the Realities:

- Successful interagency partnerships are highly dependent on ...
- Key factors of interagency partnership's success are ...

Outcome of This Task:

- Name 3 interagency collaborative elements of the NQA Partnership that could be Unique ...

Task 2: NQA: Understanding the Concept of 'Quality' within Interagency Collaboration & Partnership

Discuss the Realities of:

'Quality' has been applied as a way to improve business, and in the running of various institutes ...

What constitutes a 'Quality' journey...?

Efficiency & Efficacy of 'Quality' ...

TASK 2a:

Share what professional experiences you have had where you were aware that 'Quality' prevailed?

TASK 2b:

In your opinion how can 'Quality' be used as a means of improving Interagency Collaboration within the NQA Project?