



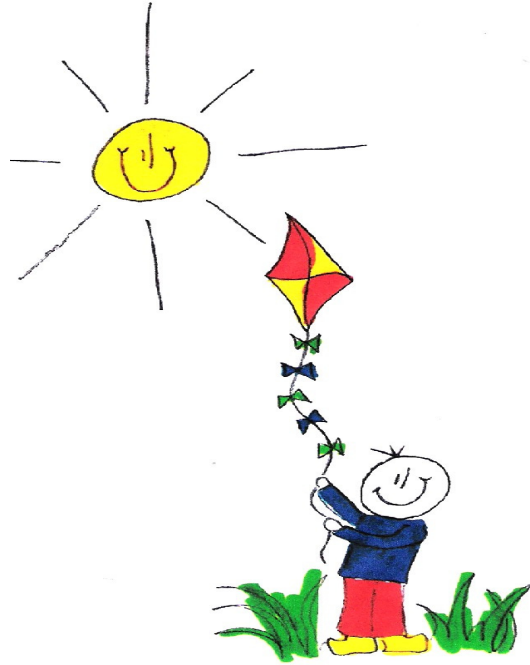
Our Strategy for

Working with Young

People

in Ballymun

March 2006



Contents

Introduction

Section 1 Our vision of youth welfare and development

Section 2 Our youth work approach to youth welfare and development

Section 3 BRYR in the community

Section 4 Our work programmes

Section 5 Organising our work

Introduction

All of BRYR's efforts should strive towards a vision of young people who are physically and emotionally healthy, people who are happy and well in themselves and who are both personally and socially active citizens.

BRYR has prepared a code of ethics entitled *Do the Right Thing*. This code clarifies our core beliefs and values and specifies guidelines for our behaviour. It is the most fundamental reference for us. The current document defines our strategic plan to work towards our vision according to these beliefs and values.

Section 1 places the emphasis immediately on young people. It paints a vision of youth welfare and development. This vision is not just a pious aspiration. We define our vision of youth welfare and development in a detailed and structured way. This vision directs our work and gives us markers to measure our effectiveness in terms of impact on young peoples' lives.

Young people are the focus of BRYR's work. Their welfare and development is our primary goal. We must strive to ensure that this is to the fore when considering our actions by always posing the question:

"how does this action help achieve BRYR's vision for young people?"

There are many approaches to attaining this vision of youth development. BRYR's approach is a youth work approach. In section 2 we clarify our youth work approach. We note the historical reasons why our organisation has grown this way. We refer to the core beliefs that underpin youth work. We draw attention to the essential relationship with young people and the need for a set of ethical and other guidelines to underpin our efforts to put our beliefs and values into practice on a daily basis.

In section 3 we focus on the wider community task. The community task is one that endeavours to offer relevant people in the community the possibility of a sense of solidarity, significance and security with BRYR. The community task, while not the primary goal of BRYR, is critical to the success of the overall mission. This section separates the community into two key types of people, namely parents or guardians and other individuals or organisations that affect youth development. This section looks at ways of achieving the community task so that the operational task of BRYR is enhanced.

In section 4 we outline our work strategy of our seven work programmes:

- Outreach youth work
- Youth groups
- Developmental arts
- Information and communications
- Development and support
- Advocacy
- Youth facilities

Each sub-section explains the key strategic considerations in terms of the intended impact on youth welfare and development. Each section contains an overview of key actions.

Section 5 looks at how we organise ourselves internally so as to achieve our strategic goals. BRYR has grown substantially since its inception in 1999. We now have the equivalent of over 20 full-time paid staff, over a thousand young people per annum affected by our programmes and a wide range of relations with many people and organisations. BRYR, like any growing organisation, faces the normal challenges of being an efficient and effective entity. In addition, we are trying to create an organisation which is underpinned by certain values including a strong focus on the community task. It is our core belief that by creating an internal sense of community that encourages solidarity, security, and significance within efficient structures and procedures, we can both serve the legitimate interests of staff¹ and enhance the work towards our vision for young people.

Finally, in reading this document it may be helpful to refer to two key complementary documents; *Do the Right Thing*, *BRYR's Ethical Guidelines*, and the latest *BRYR Term Report and Revisions to Annual Plan*, which contains more details concerning our actions.

¹ The word “staff” is used to include volunteers except where specified.

Section 1 Our vision of youth development

“All of BRYR’s efforts should strive towards a vision of young people who are physically and emotionally healthy, people who are happy and well in themselves and who are both personally and socially active citizens”

A detailed vision

To make our vision more than just a general aspiration it needs to be expressed in detail. And in a way that allows connections between our actions and the impact of our work on outcomes for young people. This is why we break it down into ten components. These components are based on contemporary social theory and are reflected in a number of key policy and strategy documents such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (art. 23), the Costello Report and “Children First”.²

- **Health.** By this we envisage young people as being physically and mentally well. Where a young person is unwell or has a disability, our vision includes coping as well as possible with this challenge.
- **Education.** We define education as meaning cognitive development or knowledge acquisition and the capacity to apply or use knowledge.
- **Identity.** We see young people having a sense of self as a separate and valuable human being. It implies a process of recognising, understanding and affirming oneself.
- **Family and Social Relations.** We see young people as having the ability to make friends and get on with people.
- **Social Presentation.** This means understanding the way in which one’s appearance and behaviour are perceived by the outside world and being able to present oneself truthfully.
- **Emotional and Behavioural Development.** In particular we are concerned with the appropriateness of responses, feelings and actions.
- **Self-Care Skills.** This refers to practical and emotional competencies, such as good nutritional habits, healthy sexual activity, coping with stress, dental care etc.
- **Spiritual and Moral Wellbeing.** Here we do not impose spiritual beliefs, but aspire to helping young people have the capacity and opportunity to develop personal values, including spiritual or moral values.
- **Active Citizenship.** We see young people having a critical involvement in their community’s life.
- **Being well, having fun.** Life is not all a “process”; happiness can also be here and now. Having convivial and enjoyable experiences is a good thing in itself.³

² For a more detailed explanation and analysis of the first 7 criteria see “The Developmental Needs of Children” by Harriet Ward in “The Child’s World – Assessing Children in Need” edited by Jan Horwath, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 2001.

³ “Fun” is also an important tool of youth work. However, it is important to remain purposeful when having fun.

Youth welfare: basic needs as a precondition for youth development

In order for a young person to develop they must have their basic needs assured. By this we mean essential safety, shelter and nutrition. Young people cannot part-take in education if they are deeply fearful for their own safety or are profoundly malnourished. It is difficult to be an active citizen if you are homeless. Most fundamentally, it is the basic right of all young people to have their essential welfare secured by the community and BRYR must play its part.

Our work, especially our outreach youth work, brings us close to many young people who are not having their basic needs met. In these situations it is imperative that BRYR works, generally in co-operation with others, to ensure the welfare of the young person.

Which young people?

BRYR works for all 10-21 year-olds⁴ from Ballymun because all 10-21 year-olds can be better resourced to meet their welfare and development goals.

However, we cannot undertake substantial work with all 4,000 young people at the same time; choices have to be made about which young people and which issues to concentrate on!

In deciding how to allocate our resources, we draw on our core belief in the right of all young people to strive towards the vision *of young people who are physically and emotionally healthy, people who are happy and well in themselves and who are both personally and socially active citizens.*

However, some young people are further than others from realising this vision. This means that in our strategy and detailed planning we must emphasise resourcing young people who either have unmet basic needs or are making less progress than average in meeting their development goals⁵.

Here are the values that guide our choice of who to work with.

- Inclusion. BRYR is a resource for *all* 10 to 21 year olds in Ballymun.
- Need. BRYR target's its resources towards those whose welfare and development is most challenged due to the environment in which they live.
- Strategy. BRYR chooses who to work with in line with its strategy for developing youth work in Ballymun.

A vision against which to measure impact

To ensure we are on the right path it is critical to appraise our effectiveness. The ten components of our vision of youth development as well as the basic needs criteria give us a template against which to measure the impact of our work.

⁴ The focus on this age range started with the original funding under Young Peoples' Facilities and Services Fund, which specified this group.

⁵ From the deficit perspective of youth development, such young people are often referred to as "at risk", "disadvantaged", "socially excluded" or "marginalised".

Successful outreach referrals, where the young person makes good use of a service such as vocational training are positive outputs from our work as are high participation rates in our clubs. However, while it is important to document and evaluate our work outputs, the most critical dimension is the impact on young people's lives. Impact can be assessed in relation to basic needs and any of the 10 criteria of development. Thus, for example changes in the physical or mental health of young people can be measured, so too can a young person's nutrition, cognitive skills, self presentation, self-care skills etc.

To be sure that we are moving towards our ultimate goal we must build a learning and self-critical organisation which tries to relate the impact of its work to evidence of outcomes in the lives of young people. This impact assessment must be based on proper documentation, an effective internal system of planning, reporting and evaluation, and the use of external assistance in structured impact assessment processes. It must engage young people, parents and other relevant elements of the community in such processes.

Actions

- 1. Complete this strategy document and disseminate its messages to staff and relevant external audiences.*
- 2. Develop quality documentation, planning and reporting systems to support evaluation of effectiveness in achieving our vision. See section 5.*
- 3. Prepare an Annual Participant Analysis that gives basic details of young people involved in our programmes.*
- 4. Develop a policy on impact assessment. An internal working group to be set up in 2006 to initiate this process.*
- 5. Immediately select a relevant project for formal impact assessment. The Outfit Project (see section 4.1) is currently undergoing impact assessment.*

Section 2 Our youth work approach to youth development

In this section we firstly give a brief history of how BRYR came to have a youth work approach. Then, because relationships with and between young people are at the heart of youth work, and because youth work actions are highly responsive in nature, we clarify the core beliefs and values that underpin all our work.

A little bit of history

The initial impetus behind BRYR was the Government's Young Peoples' Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF). In creating this fund the motivation was to seek more services and facilities for 10-21 year-olds "at risk" in drugs task force areas so as to divert them from abusing drugs. Beyond this broad objective and the desire for more "services" and "facilities" no strategy was specified. The YPFSF did not try to define the best approach to achieving its objectives nor did it make any statement on the nature of youth development.

However, the directive on the make-up of Youth Development Groups was highly influential in determining the approach. CDYSB has been especially important in bringing about the stress on youth work.

In addition, the process for preparing the local Youth Development Plans implied a significant influence by local youth workers and groups.

The Ballymun plan envisaged the development of a key organisation that would be both a regional youth service and the deliverer of significant youth services and facilities.⁶

BRYR's youth work has grown substantially from this beginning. We have worked hard to develop our programmes and have been able to attract substantial additional resources. Not only has the amount of work but the type of work expanded. This operational growth and our emerging capacity to substantially influence youth development in Ballymun are behind our efforts to strengthen the clarity of our core beliefs and develop this strategic plan.

Core beliefs behind our work with young people⁷

The core of youth work is in relationships with and between young people. To be consistent and effective in the choices we make in our increasingly complex youth work it is important to be clear about the core beliefs that underpin these relations. These core beliefs define the way we see the world. We believe that:

- All young people have the potential for and the right to positive lives
- The environment of young people deeply shapes young peoples' welfare and development, and we can help shape this environment

⁶ The Ballymun Youth Development Plan also envisaged the creation and growth of a wider strategy group around youth welfare and development. This group would achieve the wider community task of giving all concerned individuals and organisations a forum for effective representation. This has not yet been achieved, but section 3 regarding the proposed "Youth Development Forum" addresses this.

⁷ For more details about our youth work approach see pp 11-33 in *Do the Right Thing*

- Constructive relationships with young people are at the heart of youth well-being and development
- Young people can be agents of development.
- The most effective way to assist young people is to *resource* them in their development

Core Values for our work with young people

Values are at the very heart of our work. We value:

- The basic welfare of young people, which must at all times be protected or enhanced
- The development of young people (as defined in Section 1)
- Youth work as an effective means to youth welfare and development
- Professionalism (competence, confidence and commitment) in our work with young people
- Integrity in our work – being role models in the way we behave to young people and ourselves.
- A positive attitude towards young people, a positive vision

The experience of young people when they are in contact with BRYR

We want young people to experience a sense of significance, solidarity and security in their interactions with BRYR

These are our core beliefs and values and our ambitions for how young people will experience interacting with us. When you think about these core values for our youth work, it explains why we choose to do what we do with young people and our youth workers in BRYR. Because we value *relationship* and *development*, we have programmes like outreach, the arts and clubs. Because we value *professionalism*, we have staff induction and supervision. Because we value integrity, we have ethics guidelines.

Relationships with young people

Building relationships with young people is central to our work to help them grow positively. In fact, relationships with young people are the key to BRYR's work.

Here is what we value in our relationships with young people.

- Conviviality. This means that relationships are a positive experience, based on people actually respecting each other and feeling comfortable in each others' company.
- Freedom. Young people choose freely to have a relationship with BRYR staff.
- Informality. Relationships are informal, where people are relaxed and can be themselves. Young people are not required, for example to dress a certain way or call BRYR staff by formal names, as in a school setting.
- Supportiveness. Relationships are supportive and encouraging of young people. When in a relationship with BRYR staff, the young person is often praised and their confidence enhanced.

- Mentoring. The BRYR person relates to the young person as a mentor. They are being a good role model and giving good advice and encouragement.
- Challenge. The BRYR person is clear about what behaviour is and is not acceptable.
- Fairness. The BRYR person treats young people with fairness. They are honest in their dealings with them, and do not exercise favouritism.
- Boundaries. Relationships are kept within strict youth work boundaries.

Interactions with young people

While building relationships with young people is very important in BRYR, there is a purpose to these relationships. We work at building relationships so that we can ensure a young person's welfare and resource their development. Interaction means what we actually do with young people. Our work includes outreach, arts, youth club activities, trips, mentoring, giving advice, referring to other services and much more.

In all of this we are making choices. We choose to do one set of activities rather than another. These choices are guided by our values, by what is important to us in our youth work. We take a certain approach to these activities too. There are many ways to go about organising a youth club or a trip abroad with young people. The way we do it should reflect what we value in youth work.

Below are the values which guide our interactions with young people.

- Intention. What we do, we do for a reason. That reason is about the welfare and development of young people. We should be able to explain why we are doing any activity, no matter how small, with young people, by how we expect it to resource the welfare or development of young people.
- Responsiveness and flexibility. We should have the capacity to respond to the needs and appropriate wishes of young people. Our plans and modus operandi should incorporate the capacity to be flexible in response to the needs and participation of young people.
- Excellence. What we do, we do to a high standard. We expect our interactions with young people to be models of best practice. We are committed to improvement through reflection on our work, accessing training and learning from our mistakes.
- Education and information. We value interactions that are educational and informative for young people. Interactions can be educational in terms of the transfer of new skills or pieces of information to a young person, or in facilitating their growth in awareness of themselves and the world they are part of.
- Facilitation. We value an approach to activities that is facilitative. This means we provide opportunities for young people to grow and develop and invite them to participate. We are not forcing them to follow any prescribed path, but working to enable them to choose for themselves their own way of development.
- Health and safety. All of our activities are organised so as to ensure the health and safety of all concerned, young people and our own staff and volunteers.
- Child protection. All our interactions are carried out in full awareness of the need for child protection.

Actions

All of the above beliefs and values are not easy to live by; in many respects they are aspirations. To help us strive towards attaining these aspirations we need to do two things. Firstly we need to allocate significant time and resources to the elaboration of guidelines and policies; to make sure they are clear and well understood. This we do by developing a set of policies and guidelines and ensuring they are understood by staff. The second requirement is to resource the staff and organise our work efficiently to give effect to these aspirations. In Sections 3, 4 and 5 we address the second requirement. Here we look at 8 specific actions to help us elaborate our working policies and guidelines.

1. Complete and disseminate: *Do the Right Thing*.

BRYR's code of ethics is now completed and initial dissemination has been by encouraging each work team to read and examine it as a team. The Programme Manager and members of the management team are leading a series of workshops/discussions on the content of the document. Each year in January, during planning sessions there will be a reflection on the code of ethics.

2. Complete and implement *BRYR's Child Protection Guidelines*.

We have now completed a draft of this document and it is intended to be signed off by the management committee in the near future. Meanwhile, actual implementation of the guidelines has moved ahead. All preventative measures are in place and issues arising from allegations or suspicions now have a clear procedure. Confidence in this system is growing.

3. Implement *BRYR's Health & Safety Manual*.

BRYR is a recognised health promoting organisation. During the 2-year process to acquire this status we developed a detailed Health & Safety Manual. To ensure continued good practice we have developed a Health & Safety Team with the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the policies in this manual.

4. Prepare and implement BRYR's guidelines on club and group work.

The groups' team has set up a working group to advance this work. By mid-2006 their work will be enhanced by involvement of the management team and members of the management committee in a special working group.

5. Publish and implement *BRYR's Outreach Youth Work Guidelines*.

There are two documents. The first and main reference document is completed but needs editing and layout work to be published. The second, which attempts to inform young people about outreach work, had explanatory cartoons added to a highly edited version and has been printed and distributed in leaflet form.

6. Prepare and implement *BRYR's guidelines on alcohol and drugs in group work settings*.

A draft has been prepared and will shortly be presented to the management committee for consideration. Guidelines for coping with issues of alcohol and drug use in outreach work are incorporated in the Outreach Guidelines.

7. Prepare and implement *Nurture & Protect*”, *BRYR’s Guidelines on Support to Individual Young People*.

This set of guidelines reflects the increasing role that BRYR staff have in supporting individual young people. This support can take place either bilaterally or can involve collaborative work with other organisations. These guidelines will incorporate conscious youth work ranging from casual encounters to structured inter-agency support to young people with substantial needs. The first draft has been prepared with the assistance of an external consultant. This will be circulated to staff and management committee in the near future.

8. Continue to develop a range of policies and guidelines on relevant issues.

While the above list of guidelines and policies represents a substantial proportion of work, there will be other issues needing careful attention. BRYR must retain the capacity and willingness to continuously address these challenges over time.

A few remaining points about guidelines and policies. They:

- should be disseminated and inculcated into work practice through appropriate workshops and training,
- should be reviewed on a regular basis,
- should be made available to all interested parties (published in paper form and on www.BRYR.ie,
- should be part of our Development & Support Work Programme

Section 3 BRYR in the community⁸

BRYR is a people organisation. Our reason for existing is to support people, specifically young people, in our community.

BRYR is also a *community-style* organisation. That means that we think about our organisation not just as a bunch of people doing a job, but also as sort of community in itself and as part of a wider community. Organisations like ours should be places where people within the organisation and people in the wider community with a concern for young people feel a real sense of significance, a real sense of security and a real sense of solidarity.

However, the **purpose** of BRYR is not to provide a community for ourselves or to be a wonderful community organisation, but to resource young people!

These are the two tasks people-style organisations have to balance; the *community task* and the *operational task*.⁹

The *community task* is the job of creating a sense of *solidarity*, *security* and *significance* among all involved.

The *operational task* is the job the organisation exists to do. For us, this task is to resource young people in Ballymun in their welfare and development to the best of our ability.

At the end of the day, the *operational task* is the primary one. The *community task* is important only in so far as it serves the operational one.

If we neglect our community task, it damages our operational one. In a people organisation, the two tasks are related.

The community task endeavours to offer the key people in the community the possibility of a strong sense of solidarity, significance and security with BRYR's mission.

BRYR's core belief then is that we should keep our focus on the operational task, while managing the development of the sense of solidarity, security and significance internally and in the community *in so far as* that serves the operational task.

Later, section 5 will address the issue of the community task with respect to internal organisation. This section focuses on BRYR's strategy in working with others external to BRYR who can affect youth welfare and development. To this end it is helpful to separate the community into two key types of people, namely parents or guardians and other individuals or organisations that affect youth development.

⁸ See Sections 3&4 of *Do the Right Thing* for

⁹ See "Clark David, *Schools as Learning Communities*. Birmingham University, 1992" for more on this.

3.1 Parents and Guardians

Core beliefs

BRYR recognises the unique and important role that parents or guardians play in the lives of young people. Though many factors influence the development of young people, the influence of parents or guardians usually far outweighs all others. BRYR fully recognises the rights that parents and guardians have in relation to their role with their children.

We recognise that the parenting of young people is complex. Some young people are parented by those who are not birth parents for example. A young person may be adopted, in care or under the care of a grandparent, a sibling, or another relation.

However, for all young people there is a primary guardian, a fact which BRYR must take into account in its work with that young person.

To make it easier to read, from here on we use the word “parent” in a manner that incorporates the role of a guardian

It is important that BRYR and its staff keep boundaries in our youth work. Boundaries should be kept between the professional role of a staff member and their personal life. Boundaries should also be kept between the role of staff member as youth worker and that of other professional roles, such as a counsellor or social worker.

However, a boundary that is most important, and often challenging to keep, is that between the youth worker and the parent. This is because the role of youth worker, which BRYR describes as resourcing the welfare and development of a young person, could also be used to describe the role of parent. A social worker, a garda, a counsellor, a teacher, all focus on specific aspects of a young person’s development, as determined by their job, whereas both a parent and a youth worker are concerned with general welfare and developmental needs.

But the roles are different. The key difference is that good parenting is taking responsibility for overseeing the totality of development of a child from dependence to independence. They, of necessity take an interest in their schooling, their relationships with other family members, their behaviour, their hobbies and interests, their health, their intimate relationships, their spiritual development and so on. A youth work organisation takes responsibility for resourcing specific aspects of a young person’s welfare and development as the young person seeks it. Youth workers don’t impose themselves on aspects of welfare or development the young person does not invite them to be involved with. They have no responsibility to and so no business to.

Youth work is based on a contract of willing engagement, formal or informal, between a young person and youth workers.

Parenting is based on a relationship of responsibility of the parent for the young person.

Core values

When it comes to parents, BRYR values:

- The primacy of the well-being of the young person.
- Respect for the role and rights of parents.
- Boundaries. Staff are never substitute parents.
- Parental engagement.

The experience of parents and guardians when they are in contact with BRYR

We want parents and guardians to have a sense of significance, solidarity and security with BRYR.

Relationships with parents and guardians

BRYR has relationships with many parents through its youth work. In choosing the nature of these relationships we value:

- Acknowledgement.
- Courtesy.
- Tolerance.
- Focus on the young person.
- Young person's consent and comfort regarding parental engagement.
- The confidence of parents in our organisation and our work.

Interactions with parents

BRYR interacts with parents. Many are neighbours and friends to our staff. Some are volunteers in our organisation. Given the different but complementary roles between youth worker and parent we have to choose carefully the sort of activities with which we will engage with parents. Values guiding this choice are:

- Focus on the welfare of the young people.
- Complementarity. BRYR's work complements good parenting.
- Input into policy development of BRYR.
- Teamwork. Interactions by staff with parents should always be in the context of teamwork.

Which parents and guardians do we work with?

BRYR is open to working with everyone who is in the parenting role with their young people. However, there are some considerations which influence the level of contact we will choose to have with parents. These are:

- Effectiveness for young people.
- Child protection.
- Staff protection.

These core beliefs and values are built in to much of BRYR's on-going work. However, in our strategic review we have identified the fact that there is limited actual involvement both by parents in their individual child's link to our work and more generally a poor link between parents and BRYR as an organisation, and parents role collectively in influencing youth welfare and development in Ballymun.

We are short of specific measures that encourage and support parents to better engage in the youth development process. Therefore, it is proposed that BRYR develop a plan starting with a working group and consultation with staff and management to reflect on experiences and make proposals for engagement and support of parents.

Action:

1. *Workshop with staff/MC on parental involvement leading to specific actions and perhaps guidelines.*

3.2 Organisations and other individuals who can affect the welfare and development of young people

While BRYR is the largest youth work organisation in Ballymun, there are many others who are concerned with and who affect the welfare and development of 10 to 21 year olds in Ballymun. These range from local volunteer leaders and youth organisations to large statutory bodies and state departments. Some of these are directly and exclusively concerned with the needs of young Ballymunners. Others have a wider brief such as Dublin City Council, but they have the capacity to influence the environment in which young people grow up, and so influence the welfare and development of those young people. Because all of these people and organisations can influence youth welfare and development, BRYR has a responsibility to work with them.

Core beliefs regarding working with others

Because we believe that the environment in which young people grow up is a key influence and determinant of their welfare and development, we believe it is incumbent on us to engage with those who shape that environment. Consequently, we believe that we must engage with those who:

- Consciously share our concern to enhance the welfare and development of young people
- Affect, by their action or inaction, the factors influencing the welfare and development of young people

In the midst of the myriad of individuals, groups and organisations that play a part in the world of young people, we believe in the distinctiveness of youth work as an approach to youth welfare and development.

The distinctiveness of youth work

BRYR is a youth work organisation. The following principles mark the distinctiveness or fundamental beliefs of youth work.

- *Seeking the young person's agenda.* Most non-youth work agencies, political parties, sports organisations, faith organisations work to an agenda which is formed by others; not the young person. School teachers, for example, have a national curriculum to implement. Gardaí work to implement the law. Youth workers' agenda is the welfare and developmental needs of the young person as

defined by the young person. Youth work is responsive; it is person, not programme centred.

- *Voluntary participation of the young person.* A youth work organisation only offers to resource young people's welfare and development when they freely choose to have us in their lives. Others, teachers, social workers, Gardaí and even parents are in their lives notwithstanding their own choice. The essence of voluntarism is the belief in individual freedom and choice. We also believe that it also has the major practical benefit of being a more effective way of energising and resourcing young people to tackle their own challenges and to be stronger individuals in the long run.
- *A spirit of volunteerism from adults.* Voluntary youth work activity is a concrete expression of care, concern and interest by a community towards its young people. Volunteerism embraces the essence of youth work. We believe in volunteerism, not simply as doing youth work without pay, but as the important gift of one's concern for and interest in young people. True volunteerism is not seeking personal fulfilment alone, or seeking public recognition, or meeting personal needs through working with young people. BRYR does not seek volunteers simply to have extra bodies to do its work. It facilitates volunteerism in order to facilitate the expression of properly motivated interest in the welfare and development of young people by the community.
- *Informality.* This is the predominant style of youth work. While others may adopt this style from time to time, most relationships have a degree of formality that flows from the power relationships between them and the young person.

We believe that these principles of youth work must be represented in any work undertaken by us when we engage with others for the welfare and development of young people.

Core values guiding our working with others

Here are the core values that govern how we choose and develop such relationships:

- The welfare and developmental interests of young people are paramount.
- We value our rootedness in the community of Ballymun. The community of Ballymun should have a sense of us being their resource to young people.
- We value young people's place in the community. We should support young people's representation and positive engagement with others who can affect youth welfare and development.
- We value leadership and integrity. As the largest youth work organisation in Ballymun BRYR has a particular responsibility to model good practice as a youth work organisation.

The experience of other individuals and organisations when they are in contact with BRYR

We want other individuals and organisations to have a sense of significance, solidarity and security with BRYR.

While the overall aim is to create these sorts of positive relations with other individuals and organisations, there are situations where we feel that individuals or organisations and their policies or actions may be detrimental to youth welfare or development. In this context, BRYR strives towards respectfully and legally challenging these policies or actions. This is undertaken mainly through our advocacy work (see section 4.6).

Relationships between BRYR and others affecting youth welfare and development

The nature of the relationships that BRYR seeks to establish with others should be characterised by the following:

- Professionalism.
- Respectfulness.
- Equality.
- Willingness.

Interactions with other organisations or groups

The following are our guidelines for our interactions with other organisations and concerned individuals:

- Effectiveness.
- Responsive to real needs of young people.
- Collaboration.
- Building infrastructure.
- Resourcing (not “servicing”).
- Leadership.
- Facilitating volunteerism.

Actions to further the community task

In trying to achieve the community task with respect to other organisations and individuals that affect youth welfare and development BRYR will undertake the following 5 strategic actions:

1. Develop BRYR’s Community Base

- Information & communications. Good information, delivered intelligently will help build confidence and trust in our work and will encourage people and organisations to consider involvement or collaboration with us.
- Effective representation on BRYR’s management committee. This is the key decision-making body in BRYR. Effective representation implies that the individuals have a proper mandate from their respective bases, have the capacity to communicate well with those bases and the committee itself operated efficiently. The management committee will contain the following representation:
 - Three statutory agencies from the BYDG (CDYSB, BLDTF, DCC)
 - Four community representatives elected from the Youth Development Forum (see below). These would replace the existing representatives originally nominated by the Wider Youth Strategy Group.
 - BCON (1)
 - BRISK (1)
 - Seconded people (2)

2. Facilitating Advocacy

- BRYR's community task is enhanced in two ways: by ensuring that the advocacy work we do is supported by a strong representative base and secondly by facilitating others to advocate for young people. Part 4.6 specifies the details of this work.
- Youth Development Forum. The Ballymun Youth Development Group will shortly host a major conference with two aims: reflection on the achievements of the YPFSF to date, and; planning future actions including the creation of a Ballymun Youth Development Forum. This Forum will invite all organisations and adults concerned with youth welfare and development to membership. BRYR will offer administrative support. The BYDF will exchange information, encourage collaboration and hopefully become a key agent for advocacy in the area. As noted above it will have the capacity to nominate/elect four representatives to the management committee of BRYR.

3. Collaborative working

Collaborative working ranges from communication and co-ordinated action concerning the needs of an individual young person, through jointly run activities, to high levels of inter-agency co-operation which can affect the way we do our work. BRYR will continue to be committed to collaborative working at all these levels. Such work has significant implications for how we organise ourselves, from participation in relevant networks to specific efforts to communicate with other agencies to a generally flexible gearing of our work practices. All such work should be underpinned by clear evidence of benefit to young people and by no diminution of our core beliefs and values.

4. Resourcing other organisations

Much of our work either implicitly or explicitly works to resource other organisations. The strategic objective is to support other organisations to enhance the welfare and development of young people. In particular we stress the effectiveness of the youth work approach in achieving these goals. Two of our work programmes: Development & Support (4.5) our Facilities (4.7) are specifically designed to resource other organisations (as well as aspects of BRYR itself). They help raise standards, offer training and provide practical resources such as access to finance, equipment and youth facilities. See the sections 4.5 and 4.7 for details.

5. Resourcing individual workers

As well as resources to organisations, we offer specific support to individuals concerned with youth welfare and development. These are mostly included in our training, information and volunteer support packages. Details are included in part 4.5.

Section 4 Our work programmes

Having spelt out our vision for young people and defined our youth work approach and community task it is now time to look in more detail at how we organise our work. We have seven work programmes. They are all underpinned by BRYR's core beliefs and values and represent different strategies for enhancing youth welfare and development. Sometimes they are defined by needs and capacities of targeted young people. They are:

1. Outreach youth work
2. Youth groups
3. Developmental arts
4. Information and communications
5. Development and support
6. Advocacy
7. Youth facilities

In this section we shall look at our strategy for each of these work programmes, but, first, Some General Work Programmes:

BRYR's Summer Programme 2006

BRYR staff are currently planning this year's summer programme, which will stress a combination of Reco-centred programmes and a large programme of street-based activities.

Review of Support to the Formal Education and Vocational Training Sector

The review of support to education and training is a process designed to better define BRYR's strategy for working with schools and training centres. We are hoping to give a more strategic focus to this work. We hope that Trinity Comprehensive and the other secondary level training institutions (Youthreach, CTCs etc.) working in the broader context of an area-based education strategy (possibly influenced by the Atlantic-backed YoungBallymun initiative) will be able give us a framework within which to define our role as the largest youth work organisation in the area.

Ballymun's Teen Health Promotion Partnership

The teen health initiative derives from three sources: the HSE's Northern Area "Strategy for Teen Health Promotion in Out-of-School Settings"; the development of a Primary Health Care Team and Strategy for Ballymun, and; the need for teen health promotion identified by BRYR staff.

The proposal for a Teen Health Promotion Partnership is in being developed through collaboration of these three agents. BRYR staff will shortly produce a discussion document for its staff and Management Committee and for the Primary Health Care Team to consider. The core of the proposed partnership is to focus on the delivery of appropriate information to key target groups and the provision of effective referral to appropriate health services.

4.1 Outreach youth work

When a young person is not achieving reasonable developmental progress, it can be characterised by a process of alienation from mainstream society. This can involve a distancing from key supports and relationships. Young people can have unsupportive or even abusive family relations, they can find a distance between themselves and community and state supports. They don't engage well in sports and recreation; they might leave formal education and may be unemployed. Sometimes this is a very obvious separation, but sometimes it is a question of spirit; young people feel disengaged. Such young people may be going to school, but without wanting to or being able to engage well. Some find support in peer groups or even gangs, while many do not even have these.

This alienation can cause destructive behaviour. It can be directed at society or parts of it, for example through crime, vandalism, or aggression. It is more frequently directed at themselves through unhealthy lifestyles, drug abuse, and depression and self-harm, even suicide.

Outreach youth work is a response to this. It is a particular part of youth work that makes a special effort to reach out to where young people are. Outreach tries to build trusting connections with young people. The premise of outreach youth work is that on a careful platform of regained trust young people can be assisted to constructively engage society in a way that is appropriate to their needs.

There are four key elements to this:

- By creating friendly and informal yet professional relations, the outreach worker can directly support and challenge a young person. In other words, simply by the presence of a caring and consistent adult in their lives, young people will benefit.
- Outreach youth work facilitates quality information exchange. Young people can fall out of important information loops. This information could be about social and recreational opportunities or about important services. It can also concern essential life skills such as information about sexual health.
- Outreach youth work can help young people access important services and activities. Supported referrals are made to a wide range of things from youth clubs to health and employment services. Often because of the alienation process, it requires dedicated work to make lasting connections. Certain referrals, such as for homeless young people, can take a lot of work due to the complexity of the challenges. Outreach youth work is geared to be highly responsive to the needs of young people, because these needs can be complex and can vary substantially.
- Outreach youth work enhances the representation and participation of young people in the community. Alienation is a two-way process. Not only do such young people feel distanced, but mainstream society can enter the dangerous terrain of misunderstanding that can lead to aggression and inappropriate responses to these young people. Because the outreach youth workers have a connection with these young people they can be an excellent source of

information. This information fuels much of BRYR's advocacy work. We can transfer this information and understanding to important bodies and networks such as the Drugs Task Force, the Partnership or BCON. Sometimes this can be done by facilitating direct representation by young people themselves. Direct contact with decision-making adults, representative bodies or various focus groups as well as involvement in surveys and research can help to express their perspective.

The work of the outreach team is organised around the following components:

Street work

Street work is the foundation of the outreach work programme. For the last 6 years street work has entailed teams of at least two outreach youth workers walking the streets and blocks and meeting with any young people they find, at least three evenings per week. From September 05 BRYR has undertaken 4 evenings of street work (Monday to Thursday). It is our policy that we do not conduct outreach work on Fridays and Saturdays because of increased levels of drunkenness or people being drugged and the combination of the increased risk this poses to our staff and the limited capacity to achieve much with people in such a state. The amount and timing of this work will remain in constant review and occasional special outreach will be undertaken to respond to certain issues such as reported increases in anti-social or high risk behaviour in certain areas. Consistency of presence and the quality of the contact are vital to its on-going success. BRYR has put a lot of energy into how we conduct professional outreach. This has now reached a matured stage of development. This is reflected in *BRYR's Guidelines on Outreach Youth Work*, which will be published shortly, encapsulates this learning.

Referrals to outreach

Because of the increased recognition of the capacity of the outreach team to make and build contacts with young people the team is receiving an increasing number of individual referrals from other staff in BRYR or outside BRYR. These are situations where there is some special concern about an individual young person. The outreach team seeks them out, usually in an apparently informal way, and contact is deliberately built. Referrals to outreach are increasingly significant as BRYR becomes more involved in collaborative working both bilaterally and in multi-agency initiatives such as EQUAL Youth and the Inter-Agency Project for High Risk Young People, now called the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People – see later.

Contact-Building Group Work

Contact-building group work is a programme of recreational or social activities run by the outreach team with targeted groups in short programmes. The idea is to be able to spend more time, in a more relaxed space, so as to build trust and familiarity with targeted young people. Upon review of the early experience of this work it was felt that we should move away from once-off group activities and move towards more structured contact-building programmes. To this end there are now three sub-programmes:

- **“6-week groups”** where a particular group has a series of 6 consecutive outings with the team;

- **the “Summer Buzz”**,¹⁰ now an exclusively Outreach project for a smaller number of highly targeted young people, and;
- **“Football”**, where targeted groups are engaged in regular park football.

Street education

Street education means planned educational campaigns delivered on the streets. They are tailored programmes, mostly concerning health issues that can bring important information (and subsequent referrals) to young people often alienated from mainstream education and information flows. Street education will become increasingly significant for the Outreach Team, and could be a major component of the “Teen Health Promotion Partnership” that will shortly be proposed for Ballymun.

Street art and community events

During the summer period, when the evenings are bright, the outreach team together with our Arts Workers leads Street Art or Street Events (games, performances etc.) in local areas. Inviting perhaps 50 young people in selected areas these events can have a very positive community impact as they tend to encourage wider community involvement. This is especially true of the new housing areas where neighbours are not yet familiar with each other. This year it is planned to expand this work by undertaking more of them, including games and involving volunteers in a bigger scale.

Referrals

Referral to services, activities, projects etc is one of the most important outputs of outreach youth work. Based on a trusting relationship, the outreach youth worker can at one level recruit and assist young people to join recreational activities and at another level can help them avail of important services. BRYR records all substantial referrals to services in a specially-created data base and last year over 300 such referrals were made (to schools, justice issues, health issues etc.). Given the increasing organisation of the outreach team and the rising levels of interagency collaboration we are targeting over 400 such referrals this year (2005-2006).

Outreach youth clubs

Outreach youth clubs are formed with groups of young people who are deemed to be particularly high risk and involved in anti-social behaviour. These groups of young people are not yet “clubbable” in the sense that their behaviour might be dangerous or otherwise inappropriate in a regular club environment. The outreach team tries to prepare the group so as to become a club in which longer term development programmes (led by the youth groups’ team) can take place. This model normally suits 13-15 year-olds who may be acting like a “gang” in certain areas and are drawing substantial attention because of their behaviour. At present there are two such groups. One of these groups is making a lot of progress and will be transferred to the groups’ team in the near future. The other group is making progress but will require more time as an outreach club.

¹⁰ The original Summer Buzz dominated BRYR’s summer work. Like a summer project for somewhat older young people it was a very big programme of activities on a first-come-first-served basis.

Special Projects

Outfit

Outfit is a special programme for high risk 17-21 year-olds many of whom are involved in serious anti-social behaviour. This project is now in its third phase and has undergone substantial development. Outfit Three has a structured personal development programme based on mentoring, individual plans and developmental group activities. It is the focus of a pioneering impact assessment with the assistance of external expertise.

Open Friday

This is a new BRYR initiative that will try to use The Reco as an informal base for older young people (16+) to grow their involvement in youth development and the community. Essentially, there are now many young people who have gained a lot of trust and confidence through their link to BRYR and they are seeking constructive outlets for their energy. Open Friday will invite them to gather in The Reco and create their own space and initiatives. It will be supported by a combination of outreach workers, the Volunteer Support Worker and other staff.

Publications

BRYR's 5 years of experience in outreach work has permitted the preparation of a soon to be published *BRYR's Guidelines on Outreach Youth Work*. This is being complemented by an edited and cartoon-supported version for young people, which is already released.

Collaborative working

Our outreach team is involved in substantial collaborative work with other organisations and concerned individuals including parents or guardians. Most of this concerns responding to an individual young person's needs.

In recent years the growth and development of the state and community support structures in Ballymun has brought about the possibility of major collaboration among those interested in youth welfare and development; BRYR is involved in many such collaborations.

Our outreach team is particularly well placed to play a critical role in some of these. The team's capacity to make contact with certain young people and build trust with them means that it can contribute substantially to at least the following three initiatives:

- **EQUAL Youth** is an EU project, locally led by the Ballymun Job Centre, which seeks high levels of inter-agency co-operation concerning vulnerable young people in respect to their efforts to find employment.
- The Drugs Task Force-led "**Inter Agency Project for High Risk Young People**", now the Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People", is a similar initiative. At least eleven key agencies are collaborating to develop and implement a protocol concerning collaborative working to support exceptionally vulnerable 12-18 year-olds in Ballymun.

- **BRISK** is dedicated to supporting “at risk” young people to engage in sports. The outreach team plays a key role in both recruiting young people for activities and in leading some activities.

BRYR is currently in discussion with the Gardaí and the Probation & Welfare Services concerning the possibility of two new collaborative initiatives. ACE will hopefully involve collaboration with BEST and the Gardaí around work with young people who have been referred to the Juvenile Liaison Officer. The discussion with P&WS is focused on young people who have received custodial sentences and is at an early stage of development.

The challenges of collaborative work

Undertaking collaborative work is essential to ensure that young people receive the best support possible from their community. It helps avoid young people “falling through the net” and can force collaborating partners to enhance the quality of their work. BRYR is increasingly recognised and trusted in its capacity of BRYR to bring a youth work approach to collaborative services for young. However, as in all cases of collaborative work, we face the dual challenge of professionalism versus informality and of guarding the boundaries of youth work. These challenges need to be constantly addressed by the leadership of BRYR

Actions:

1. *Continue street work*
2. *Contact building work to continue*
3. *Develop street education programme in collaboration with other key agents*
4. *Recorded referrals to reach target of 400 per annum*
5. *Continue to work with two/three new outreach youth clubs per annum*
6. *Complete the impact assessment of Outfit*
7. *Consider ways to sustain the Outfit programme*
8. *Initiate Open Friday*
9. *Continue collaborative work with EQUAL, BNACYP, BRISK, ACE and P&WS*
10. *Publish “BRYR’s Guidelines on Outreach Work”*

4.2 Youth Groups

Youth clubs

The essential principles of youth work are often embodied in the idea of the youth club. The “club” is a place where young people voluntarily come together to freely associate. Through helping to create a convivial space for a participative club of young people the youth workers build an environment of positivity, trust and confidence in which elements of personal development, active citizenship and fun can be experienced.

From the young person’s view point the motivation for coming together is largely to be in a club, to be with friends etc. To this extent they come to the club willingly or voluntarily. BRYR is involved in several youth clubs for which we take the lead role. We also work collaboratively with clubs that have been brought together by other organisations.

Special interest groups (non-arts)

Special interests such as drama or a sport commonly draw young people together.¹¹ These groups can be excellent vehicles for youth work. However, it is critical that these groups incorporate the essential youth club ethos and objective of youth welfare and development. This implies that the welfare and developmental goals noted in our vision are the *primary* focus of the group or at least BRYR’s role in the group. Thus, the thrust of a “youth bank” group is not exclusively or even primarily on “banking”, but on creating a positive developmental atmosphere and experience for the young people in the group and for the beneficiaries of the grants. Happily the achievement of banking goals can often be contributory to the developmental atmosphere, but it is a challenge in all special interest groups, especially for leaders who are not youth workers but specialists in certain fields, to prioritise developmental goals.

Groups linked to formal education or training

Similarly, when working with a group of young people primarily brought together in school or for formal training our objective is to bring the youth club characteristics to that group. Our strategy is aimed at creating a more positive group experience, one which can encourage higher levels and quality engagement, (improved attendance might only be a by-product of this work!).

We separate group activities that fall under our youth groups programme into four types

- BRYR-led youth clubs
- Collaborative youth clubs -where we assist another lead organisation.
- Special interest groups
- Education/training groups

¹¹ Arts groups are special interest groups. Because they have special developmental potential it is treated as a separate work programme in BRYR – section 4.3 of this document looks at the developmental art work programme.

BRYR-led youth clubs

Last year there were 13 of these clubs, with an average of nine members. The average age is 15 and about 70% of the members are boys from all parts of Ballymun.

Our approach to clubs has evolved over the last six years. There is now less emphasis on quantity of young people in a club and more on quality. Average club size is now lower because our experience shows that older young people prefer more intimate groups and workers find that the quality of engagement and developmental work can be significantly better in smaller groups.

We have become more deliberate about targeting particular young people to join clubs. There is now a higher average age and a strong focus on young people with identified developmental needs. There is also increased responsiveness to the community's requests to work with certain young people – generally those who are felt to be more in need. As noted above we recently introduced “outreach youth clubs”. These are groups of young people who are often involved in high risk activity and anti-social behaviour. The outreach team works with them to the point where they are “clubbable” and the youth groups' team takes over and works with them as a regular club. The experience of 2006 shows that we can have two or three of these clubs moving to the groups' team each year.

This raises the question of what happens to the clubs that must be ended. The answer partially lies in the reality that some clubs naturally dissolve as participants get older etc. But more importantly, BRYR is addressing this in terms of other initiatives such as Open Friday (see below), our new Youth Leadership Programme (see Section 4.5) and options for young volunteers. We are also offering more structured supports to individual young people to make individual progressions.

The quality of our groups work has improved through improved organisation, including team working, the new staff supervision system, better documentation and evaluation as well as staff development including the development of the different BRYR guidelines; ethics, child protection, health & safety etc.

There are now two thrusts in the work of the groups' team which are designed to build the quality of work for better outcomes for young people: *BRYR's Guidelines on Group and Club Work and Nurture and Protect*, *BRYR's Guidelines on Support to Individual Young People*.

Collaboration with non-BRYR youth clubs

These are youth clubs where there is either another lead organisation or some form of joint leadership. It often reflects the need for youth workers from BRYR to resource the other organisation(s). Sometimes this is short term work where the other organisation is going through a temporary staffing or resource problem.

In all such collaboration we try to negotiate a similar style of working to that of the BRYR clubs, and a significant objective is the strengthening of the organisations we are working with. For example, the Young Adult Initiative, which operates out of a Shangan Basement, is led by BRL and uses BRYR youth workers. It is hoped to be a prototype for other similar groups around Ballymun.

It is hoped that through initiatives such as the East Ballymun Youth Work Plan (see below), we can enter into more such arrangements with other organisations in the area.

Special Interest Groups (non-arts)

There are currently three of these groups, which are directly managed by BRYR¹²: a golf academy, the Ballymun Youth Bank, and a young mums group, and the. The golf initiative is the result of a particular opportunity offered by BRISK and the Christy O Connor Golf Club. BRYR responded by engaging a group of young people who had an interest in golf but who might not otherwise have been able to engage due to either lack of resources or confidence. Through our input and the above resources this has become a strong youth group with a positive club dynamic. It is a good example of taking advantage of opportunities to bring a youth work dynamic to a set of otherwise excluded young people.

The Youth Bank was also stimulated by an external initiative from the Irish Youth Foundation. Again we responded by creating a youth work dynamic, wherein the participants have substantial control and responsibility for a project that has significant secondary effects of supporting another layer of youth-led activities.

The young mums group has had a number of false starts. Despite obvious need, it has proven difficult to gain their participation. We recently decided to revisit this initiative and have invited several agencies in the area with an interest in young mothers to a brainstorming session to see how best to utilise BRYR, including The Reco.

Education/training groups

BRYR supports mainstream education and formal training in five key ways:

- supports to individuals in difficulty,
- referrals,
- usage of The Reco,
- resource workshops, and
- special group activities.

Much of this work has come about through responding to specific requests or opportunities. As noted earlier we are undertaking a review of this work with a view to better defining our strategy. Hopefully, this will emerge in the context of a wider education strategy for Ballymun. Meanwhile, we will continue with existing work.

¹² There are also several initiatives under BRISK, into which BRYR contributes in varying ways, especially be recruiting targeted young people.

The youth groups' team is currently responsible for 4 group activities: Leaving Cert Applied, "Aisling" First Year's; Reco Familiarisation and Youthreach Links. Our work with these groups is not just about tackling early school leaving – our aim is to bring a youth work dimension to them. By promoting group association, conviviality and a positive social environment BRYR aims to make the school-going experience more positive with direct developmental outcomes such as: improved social skills; healthy activity, communications skills etc. These group inputs also aim to improve relations with teachers; to help with induction and immersion in the school environment; to support more positive transfers/leaving, as well as dealing with anti-social behaviour. One of the outputs of this work is to help make the school-going experience more productive in terms of attendance and exam achievement.

In the near future "Aisling Four" will start operation in The Reco. Essentially, this will be the fourth Aisling after-school project and while it will be led by the Aisling project it will receive supports from BRYR.

The Ballymun Job Centre recently applied for funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund (through RAPID) for a modified version of the Gateway Project for 15-18 year-olds that will involve increased collaboration with BRYR.

Resource workshops

BRYR has developed a menu of over 20 specialist resource workshops which draw on the skills of our staff. Examples include: anti-bullying; Child Protection; "Copping On", RSE etc... We implement about 5-7 of these each week. The majority are for non-BRYR groups. Recent recipients include: the CTCs; Youthreach; Primary Schools; Trinity Comp.; CAFTA's Transition Programme; The Plough YC, and; Columban YC.

This element of BRYR's work has come about for two reasons: firstly we have increasing in-house expertise due to our staff development programme and the successful retention of experienced staff, and; secondly the demand for these inputs has grown, due largely to increasing emphasis on raising standards and quality of work with young people.

This area of work is likely to continue to grow. We are preparing a brochure advertising the availability of these resource workshops. We should on the one hand make even more use of in-house skills while on the other hand ensuring it does not detract from core work.

East Ballymun Youth Work Plan

In 2004, the Ballymun Youth Development Group requested BRYR to take on the responsibility of employing two Youth Workers¹³ and to lead the development of a special youth work plan for East Ballymun.¹⁴ We facilitated several planning meetings in the summer of 2004 and since then we have led the implementation of this plan. Early on it was decided that these new workers would best be treated as part of the core staff, with

¹³ BRYR actually employed one full-time Youth Worker and two half-time Activities Co-ordinators (who are both undergoing substantial professional training).

¹⁴ The funding for these workers was originally sought by St Pappin's YC and Shangan YC. Both groups did not exist when the funding was finally approved.

all the implied supports etc, and their work closely integrated into the overall youth group's work programme.

To date joint activities have been set up with about 20 clubs, groups, schools and agencies most of which have been noted above. The original strategy and a review document after one year of operation are available. This Plan has been successful in creating a collaborative environment and several good working relations. It has also helped redress the previously perceived imbalance of youth work in favour of West Ballymun. The impending development of the East Ballymun Temporary Youth Facility, which will have a wide-based management committee represents on the one hand in part the fruits of increased collaboration and on the other hand an opportunity to further youth work in the area.

Actions:

- 1. To continue to strengthen the developmental content of club and group work with reference new guidelines, planning etc*
- 2. Improve the quality of support to individual young people by implementation of the "Nurture and Protect, BRYR's Guidelines on Support to Individual Young People"*
- 3. Continue to run c. 13 BRYR Youth Clubs per annum*
- 4. Create, in collaboration with the Outreach Team, up to three new outreach youth clubs per annum*
- 5. Be prepared to help lead up to 5 collaborative youth clubs per annum*
- 6. Lead or collaborate in leading at least 3 special interest groups*
- 7. Develop a strategy for working with mainstream schools and vocational training centres, while continuing on-going and planned supports*
- 8. Develop and deliver the resource workshops menu, including the production of a brochure*

4.3 Developmental Arts

BRYR's reason for involvement in youth arts work is exactly the same as the reason for our general youth work; youth art work can create convivial group experiences that help personal growth; youth arts can bring young people into trusting relations with supportive youth workers; youth arts can contribute to active citizenship and community growth.

For young people, involvement in arts can be a powerful personal development tool. Art activities start by being effective in engaging young people and they frequently become a focus for highly convivial group association and can induce reflectiveness and skill development.

The processes involved in art, whether musical, or literary, or visual or dramatic are highly developed means for communication. In a sense, youth arts is where youth work draws on the vast capacities and experience of art processes to apply these powerful communications media to the youth development process.

In a carefully constructed convivial setting youth arts can lead to highly valuable and meaningful communication. Young people are given a powerful tool to unlock self expression and if properly managed it can be a profoundly positive experience. Young people can strengthen their self-identity and awareness, they can grow confident in communication and self-presentation and they can find friendship and trust in art groups.

The products of youth art work are also important. Magazines, performances, video films, music CDs, paintings, graffiti etc, communicate important messages to other young people and adults. These products often contain elements of information, but most importantly they are expressions of talent, confidence and self-belief that induce respect and understanding from their audiences.

“Developmental” Arts?

A strategic challenge for a youth work organisation such as BRYR is to find the correct balance between art and youth development. Many arts professions are driven by a thirst for quality art products; impressive outcomes such as paintings, poetry, theatre. Sometimes there can be conflict between this drive and that of youth development. It is possible for example, for an art instructor to push young people to produce outputs in a way that undermines group and personal self-confidence. Happily, most of the time there is no conflict between the fundamental goals of art and youth development, but BRYR must be conscious of the strategic imperative of retaining the primacy of the developmental impact when working through arts. In an effort to remind ourselves of this imperative we entitle this work programme “Developmental Arts”.

We divide our developmental arts work into four key areas:

- BRYR arts groups
- Arts resources to youth clubs and groups
- Youth arts training and networking
- Special arts projects

BRYR arts groups

There are now five main youth arts groups under BRYR's wing: Roundabout Youth Theatre, Munch samba band, Splat youth magazine, Scratching the Surface music project and the BRYR Guitar school. There are about 165 participants in these groups. They come from all over Ballymun and the average age is about 15 with a majority of girls. They tend to have a higher educational achievement than the average participant in BRYR's work.

All of these groups are highly energised and have a positive developmental dynamic. There is a strong focus on the youth work approach and substantial personal development is evident.¹⁵

There is a particular challenge posed by the success of Roundabout, which has over 80 participants and has an exceptional internal dynamic. It is proposed to undertake an inclusive strategic review of RYT.

We are planning to add Capoeira (in collaboration with BRISK) and singing to the list of BRYR arts groups in the near future.

Arts resources to youth clubs and groups

Apart from running our own arts groups, we provide a range of arts inputs into groups, clubs and other youth initiatives that are not primarily arts focused. In this way we bring a developmental arts dimension to their work. For example, our arts worker helped design the logo for the EQUAL Youth programme. This was one way of engaging young people and enhancing their ownership of this initiative. Another example is the art input into the Outfit project. This series of workshops helped the participants explore emotions and identify and present a positive identity of themselves to the community.

Next year it is anticipated that the developmental arts team will play a substantial role in the outreach summer programme of street art and games. The developmental arts team also offers structured training programmes in areas such as video making in a youth work setting.

Many of these inputs have to be responsive in nature. We are now preparing a brochure similar to the youth group's team brochure which will outline a menu of resource inputs available from within our staff and from other art workers with a proven record of work that complements the youth work.

One of the challenges of this work is to avoid a sort of tokenism or time-filling where others use the input of arts workers in a minimalist way. Instead of just filling particular sessions for a club it is important that we stress the powerful potential of developmental arts and therefore we must ensure that such inputs fit with the strategic plan for the group.

¹⁵ In considering options for future structured impact assessment one of the arts projects may be suitable.

Youth arts networking

The developmental arts team is involved in a number of networking efforts designed to enhance both the quantity and quality of youth arts in Ballymun, including the best use of arts resources for young people.

This includes networking with axis, which is the community arts centre and Trinity Comprehensive. We have established good working relations on most levels and are looking to work together more strategically. For example, there is close co-operation with the school regarding the annual Transition Year drama and one of the proposed joint actions with axis is an annual youth arts festival, probably around Easter, which is currently being planned.

We are also developing an arts resource brochure including a list of people available to those working with young people and a complementary set of linked informal networking events.

Special arts projects

Our development arts team is currently a key partner behind the Otherworld Festival which is overseen by the Festival Steering Group. This is a major investment in a key community event for Ballymun. Several hundred young people participate, often involving substantial preparation and it is a flagship event for the community.

We have also prepared a proposal for a major bus project. This is an arts based project that aims to beautify and improve the safety and attraction of bus transport. It is hoped that the Safer Ballymun committee will consider supporting this initiative.

Actions:

- 1. Continue to stress developmental dimension of youth arts work; this includes the production of a small brochure to inform both internal and external audiences of the thrust and content of our Developmental Arts Strategy*
- 2. Continue the growth of BRYR's arts groups; this is likely to include expansion of existing initiatives and the addition of new initiatives such as Capoeira and singing*
- 3. Engage key staff, management and community interests in the strategic development of Roundabout Youth Theatre*
- 4. Continue to develop BRYR's support to the arts dimension of youth clubs and groups; this year the "World Cup Art" project will be prominent as will the extension of the "Fisheye Me" project*
- 5. Continue to promote wider youth arts development in Ballymun through networks, training and resource inputs; this will include the development of an annual youth arts festival with axis*
- 6. Pursue special projects such as Otherworld and the "bus project".*

4.4 Information and Communications

Information and communications work by BRYR is important for young people in two ways:

- It complements the key operational task of our youth work by enhancing youth welfare and development
- It enhances the community task with respect to staff, parents and other interested parties

We hope to strengthen our Information & Communications work by creating a distinct information and communications team. This team will be headed by the Youth Information Centre (YIC) Co-ordinator and supported by the Technical Support person and staff of the CITY (Communications through Information Technology for Youth) project and working in close co-operation with BRYR management and the Development and Support team. This team will serve both the operational and community tasks noted above.

Information and communications as a complement to youth work

In recent times the influence of new communications technologies especially television, the Internet, and mobile phones has dramatically affected how people relate to each other. These communications technologies and their content have dramatically changed Irish society.

As well as these new communications technologies there has been a phenomenal growth in the amount and sophistication of commercial marketing using both new technologies and conventional ones such as billboards, direct marketing etc. From the marketing strategies aimed at small children, which aim “to imprint brand consciousness and capture the market early”, to efforts directly targeted at gaining teenagers’ growing disposable income, young people today are under virtual siege from information and communications technology and content.

The increasing importance of written media means that literacy is now an even stronger determinant of one’s position and development in society. Poor literacy and communications skills are not only economic handicaps, but undermine self-confidence, cognitive skills development, personal presentation etc.

On the positive side there have been great advances in educational curricula and teaching methods. Books and other written materials aimed at teenagers (*Face Up* for example), are exceptionally high quality. There are also great opportunities on the Web and other new technologies for communications both to and from young people. Nowadays young people can access computers and desk-top publishing software so as to make their own publications.

There are both great challenges and opportunities for young people in the new era of communications. Young peoples’ development is substantially influenced by the content

of information flowing to and from them, and their capacity to mediate this information both ways, i.e. to communicate.

Our role concerning information & communications and young people is two-fold:

- to help build the *capacity* of young people to deal with information flows, both to them and from them, in other words their capacity to communicate, and
- to influence the *content* of these information flows.

Achieving these capacity-building and content-influencing tasks is done in two ways:

- Special initiatives.
- As an integral element of BRYR's work programmes

Special Initiatives

Youth information service

BRYR has applied for funding for a Youth Information Centre (YIC). The Ballymun YIC is envisaged as youth information *resource* that goes beyond a conventional idea of a library-style centre. This vision complies with the thrust of a recently completed national evaluation of YICs, which emphasises measures to effectively reach young people who are alienated from the benefits of information, which is closely associated with “disadvantage”. It also fits closely with the evolution of BRYR's overall strategy.

We believe that access to and the capacity to utilise information goes to the very heart of “disadvantage” or alienation of young people. Young people who are not achieving their welfare and developmental goals do not have the confidence and capacity (literacy) to make effective and positive use of the information available to them. While paying due respect to the needs of less alienated young people, tackling the reality of “information alienation” will be at the core of the BRYR's Youth Information Resource.

The challenge ahead is to devise means of working that are effective for our target group:

- Young people must be able to access appropriate information – this means taking care to have information for targeted young people at the right time and place
- Young people must be able to comprehend the information. The content and style of the information and how it is presented must be appropriate to the target group.
- Young people must be resourced to follow up and make good use of information. Placing an information resource within a broad-based youth work organisation makes this possible
- BRYR must work collaboratively with other information and support/resource structures in both the preparation of information and the follow-up to its dissemination.

The substance of information is also of concern to BRYR. We will support access to and utilisation of information that assists any aspect of youth welfare or development. Within this we will place particular emphasis on information that goes beyond personal welfare and development and looks a critical social education. In other words we will emphasise information that raises awareness and understanding of things that affect youth and wider community welfare and development with a view towards enhancing young people's active citizenship.

In 2006 we hope to enter dialogue with the Department of Education and Science regarding the details of this Youth Information Resource for Ballymun.

Communications through Information Technology for Youth (CITY)

We have developed the CITY project to involve over 100 young people in positive use of ICTs including training. The Reco will soon have two computer suites, one designed as a training room and the other as a creative group work and Internet Café and this offers a great opportunity for BRYR to expand the CITY project.

The strategic aims of this expansion of CITY are to use computers as a means to:

- engage targeted young people in constructive group activity
- enhance young people's capacity and safety in using the Internet and computers generally
- develop specific computer-linked skills
- use ICTs to communicate information
- use computers as a means towards other ends such as improved literacy and the development of creative talents
- develop www.ballymunyouth.ie

To support this development we need to seek adequate resources from the YPFSF, traded income and other grant sources.¹⁶

I&C support to BRYR's work programmes

An effective information and communications strategy has the potential to greatly enhance BRYR's core work. The following are some examples of the type of work to be supported:

- Assistance with preparing outreach workers to undertake street education by accessing information and compiling it in user friendly means
- Planning information displays in The Reco
- Helping to prepare and disseminate BRYR's publications, including; Youth Work Newsletter, Crimson Dozen, Resource Workshop brochures, Developmental Arts Strategy brochure, SPLAT etc.

¹⁶ We are applying to the Dormant Accounts Fund (through RAPID) for a component of the CITY project called Creative IT for Youth.

- BRYR's PR. This includes assisting BRYR to better use public relations opportunities such as press releases, publicity events etc. It also includes the publication of BRYR's Annual Report.
- Launching and maintenance of www.BRYR.ie our "corporate" web site (which has been developed but is not yet launched due to lack of resources to maintain it properly).

Actions:

1. *Initiate the Ballymun Youth Information Resource*
2. *Develop the CITY project including www.BallymunYouth.ie*
3. *Develop supports to BRYR's work programmes including:*
 - a. *Contribute information dimensions to such programmes as street education*
 - b. *Develop The Reco's displays*
 - c. *Produce and distribute BRYR's Annual Report*
 - d. *Launch and maintain www.BRYR.ie*
 - e. *Help produce BRYR's information brochures, publications etc.*
 - f. *Lead increased PR activities such as press releases and publicity events*

4.5 Development and Support

This work programme is concerned with practical supports to and development of the youth welfare and development community, both organisations and individual workers (paid and voluntary) in Ballymun.

BRYR has a commitment to this work at two levels. Firstly, a portion of our funding¹⁷ specifically requires this work and secondly, because investment in other organisations and individuals can positively influence youth welfare and development.

There are four elements to BRYR's Development and Support programme:

Volunteer Support

This work programme refers to practical supports for individual adult volunteers including student/trainee placements working for youth welfare and development in Ballymun.

When considering volunteer support strategy, it is helpful to specify the different types of adult volunteers:

- Youth work volunteers; adults over 18 with a focus on general youth work
- Youth work volunteers who are working towards a career in youth work
- Volunteers with special skills such as art, sports, computers etc
- Organisational volunteers; management committee, finance etc
- Event or programme specific volunteers; street arts, summer projects, Reco volunteers
- Student/trainee placements
- Quasi volunteers: people on special programmes such as Community Employment with some involvement in working for young people.

There are also an increasing number of young volunteers (u-18)

Adult volunteer youth workers can be hugely beneficial to youth welfare and development. If their energies can be channelled in effective ways their skills and their sense of commitment can be very beneficial to young people.

It has been challenging for BRYR to establish its role in supporting individual volunteers but we have learned some key lessons:

- It is important to recognise the different types of volunteers and to respond to their support needs and to utilise their skills and energies in a flexible fashion.
- It is unreasonable to expect an adult without experience, training or substantial support to start good quality work with young people. To achieve minimum

¹⁷ Especially the Volunteer Support Worker and the Training & Development Worker grants (both of which were originally for BVYC) and the grants originally from CDYSB for the youth service that are now part of the YPFSF 2 funding.

- standards of child protection, health and safety and reasonable quality activity for young people, training and substantial support is now not optional but **essential**.
- Structured training is one of the best routes into youth work. It helps with confidence, establishes support networks and provides the essential basic skills necessary.
 - Working with challenging teenagers is rarely possible for volunteers without substantial direct support of paid professionals.

To respond to these varying needs we have developed a draft “volunteer support policy” and the following general supports:

- Recruitment & selection procedures
- Induction packs and processes
- Placement support
- Ongoing post-placement support
- Tailored training
- Youth Leadership Programme (see below)

Organisational & Programme Development and Support

The aim of this work programme is to enhance the work of organisations, both with paid and voluntary workers, which are involved in youth welfare and development.

The strategic objective is to support the growth and development of such organisations with particular emphasis on standards of work and supporting the youth work approach.

BRYR’s programme includes:

- Access to finance (including Small Grants and Micro Funds)
- Access to equipment and facilities (minibus, RECO, canoes etc.)
- Administration support (laminating, photocopying, minute typing etc...)
- Development and dissemination of ethical standards and work guidelines¹⁸
- Directly supporting other organisations development including policy development, strategic and project planning, assistance with major programme developments, etc.

Training and Volunteer/Staff Development

The focus of this work programme is on the level and quality of individuals’ involvement in the youth development process. This includes young and adult as well as voluntary or paid staff, and it also involves people working with BRYR or other organisations. There are three key elements to this work:

¹⁸ This includes all the guidelines noted in Section 2, such as *Do the Right Thing*, Child Protection, Outreach Guidelines, Alcohol and Drugs Policy etc.....

1. **The Short-Course Youth Work Calendar** includes courses such as First Aid, Coping with Bullying, Child Protection, customised Youth Leadership and customised Introduction to Youth Work. This calendar operates on a needs basis and is designed to be responsive and flexible. It trained 105 people in 2004.
2. **Assistance to individuals seeking training.** BRYR, through the Youth Work Newsletter and through maintenance of the library, provides information and advice to many people seeking training outside of BRYR's Short-Course Calendar.
3. The **"Integrated Youth Work Training Programme"**. This will be a major programme anchored in the new Reco. This programme will offer both young people and adult volunteers and would-be professionals training options with substantial practical experience that will be integrated into national awards. It will be tiered and integrated and have a specific nomenclature to help identity. It will be developed in collaboration with CDYSB and it is hoped to become operational in late 2005 or early 2006.

In addition to these structured programmes of support, we plan to initiate a youth workers' network along the lines of Slí Eile to be based in the Reco.

Youth Leadership Development Programme

The objective is for BRYR to create a supportive framework from which young people and adults can develop leadership capacities to ultimately enhance the welfare and development of young people in Ballymun and the community in general. There are two linked elements to this strategy; youth leadership for young people (10-21 years) and the youth leadership for adults

1. Youth Leadership for Young People

The support framework for youth leadership for young people will have three elements:

- Youth Leadership Foundations,
- Community Youth Leadership Programme, and;
- Specialised Youth Leadership Programmes.

All three of these programmes will be for young people between the ages of 10 and 21, with a special emphasis on those aged 16-21.

2. Youth Leadership for Adults

BRYR will offer leadership skills development opportunities to adults wishing to pursue interests or careers in the field of youth leadership. The following programmes will be offered:

- **FETAC Youth Work Training** (levels 4 and 5)
- **Placement support.** We will offer support in finding short term or long term voluntary placements within BRYR and within the greater community.

- **Short Course Training Calendar.** We will continue to offer youth work training in short courses to help those interested in pursuing work with young people gain the skills required to be effective leaders. Courses will include: child protection basic awareness, Child protection reporting procedures, Health and Safety, First Aid, etc.
- **Training Support.** We will offer training advice and support where appropriate to link young people and adults with other training organisations, schools and colleges within the community to pursue other training.

Actions:

1. *Further develop the volunteer support strategy*
2. *Continue organisational and programme development support, especially the dissemination of new guidelines and policies*
3. *Continue to develop the training programme, with special emphasis on the Integrated Youth Work Training Programme to be centred in The Reco*
4. *Finalise and implement the Youth Leadership Programme*
5. *Create an informal local network of individuals involved in youth development including volunteers on a similar basis to the Slí Eile model.*
6. *The Development and Support Team will prepare a small brochure defining and advertising the services of this Unit.*

4.6 Advocacy

BRYR can substantially influence the lives of young Ballymunners through affecting decision-making processes and the attitudes of key people, (parents, residents, statutory functionaries, politicians, business people etc.). This is the objective of BRYR's advocacy work.

At one level we advocate on behalf of individual young people; to press their individual case; for example, when they have problems with the justice system or school. At another level we work with local agents to modify their work practices and projects to better suit young people. At yet another level we can represent the interests of young people on decision-making bodies or networks (the Drugs Task Force, RAPID, etc.) and directly to various powerful agencies (DCC, BRL etc.). At all levels we endeavour to bring youth welfare and development to the fore.

In recent years BRYR's growth and improved organisation has increased its advocacy capacity substantially and this is apparent at both the level individual advocacy through inter-agency collaborations and at the level of representation at certain key organisations.

It is important to be aware that much of this advocacy work is led by members of the management team and the management committee and that it is necessary to set aside time and resources to successfully pursue this important work.

The table on the following pages summarises the key forums in which BRYR has representation, as well as a short commentary and some actions:

A. Youth Dev Networks	Description	BRYR Rep.	Comment	Recommendation
BRISK	Network supporting alienated youth to do sports	SYW-O	After a shaky period. Now going well. SYW-O as rep is contributing to a lot of new initiatives.	Continue
Forum of Large Local Youth Dev Orgs in Dublin	Not yet in existence. Idea is to create a forum of the larger professional youth work organisations in Dublin emerging in recent years.	PM	Such a network has the potential for better co-operation, information sharing and representation.	CDYSB are looking into inviting such a network to come together.
B. Representation by YP				
Regeneration Youth Council	BRL initiated representation of YP vis Regeneration	PM, VSW	Substantial work input to date. Three sub-groups of c. 10 young people to sit on Council in Civic Offices. Adult advisory group of key organisations to support. BRYR (VSW) to offer training and other supports.	Looks like an interesting possibility. Detailed plans available.
BDGCYP (Atlantic) consultation with C&YP	Consultation with Children & YP re outcome targets for 10 year strategic plan for children and YP	PM	Finally showing some shape and direction after major input from PM. Top government support indicated. "YoungBallymun" will have a costed action plan by the autumn.	BRYR can play a very important role in this potentially huge strategy. PM may need assistance to participate properly.
C. Advocacy for Individual YP				
Inter Agency Project for High Risk YP, now Ballymun Network for Assisting Children and Young People	BLDTF initiative to create effective collaboration by at least 11 key agents for high risk 12-18 year-olds.	PM, SYW-O	Substantial progress. Protocol for collaboration agreed by 11 agencies. Interagency contacts already growing re individual YP. Big challenge to BRYR to be professional. Have Eileen O Neill on April 20 th training all key staff to assist with documentation and reporting procedures. Protocol to be launched at an "Open Day" in axis on April 28 th	Will promote protocol and build contacts by front-line staff. This initiative poses major challenges to BRYR. We now have a mechanism to respond to high risk YP's needs and need to gear up to play our part while maintaining the integrity of our youth work approach.
D. BRYR representation on wider Dev orgs/projects				
BLDTF	Key network esp. re preventative measures	PM, SYW-O, VSW	Upcoming review day. BRYR has prepared short but strong submission/position document.	Remains key agency for YP and BRYR.
RAPID AIT	Enhance youth element in overall planning.	PM	Dormant accounts to be substantially influenced by RAPID.	Will apply for input into development of new CITY project in Reco.
Ballymun Partnership	Key local dev network. Education strategy esp.	PM	Tara now on education W. Group.	
BCON	Comm. orgs network	Dev Art W	Leisure Centre Campaign, East Ballymun	

		(Helen)	Facilities work.	
BIG	Anti-racism network	T&DW		Will likely become an important vehicle.
Poppintree Comm. Centre	Future major youth facility in West Ballymun	FM	Slow progress. Will go on-site soon.	Rep on MC. Use of "BAY" space by BRYR?
Aisling Project, Balcouris	After-school support to v high risk children/YP	SYW-G on their MC	Lots of Vols. BRYR input/collaboration/training at various levels	Rep on Man Comm.
BEST – SCP	School completion programme	PM on Steering Grp.	Low levels of actual attendance at meetings.	ACE might be bring a serious increase in actual collaborative work.
Safer Ballymun	ASB of YP a particular focus. BRYR reps youth view.	SYW-O	Important for us to contribute youth views and engage joint projects.	Will propose the "Bus Project".
Homelessness Forum	Representing youth views.	SYW-O	Making progress. Special housing research tendered recently. Likely to be procured soon.	Continue.

4.7 Youth Facilities

Youth facilities facilitate actions for youth development. The quantity and quality of provision and their proper resourcing and management can make major contributions to youth development work. When young people sense that they are in a space that values them and cares for them, they respond positively.

For BRYR there are two strands to this area of work. The first is actually managing youth facilities, and the second relates to BRYR's role in influencing the development and usage of other facilities by young people and their relationship with the broader physical environment.

Our work is core to the evolution of the Ballymun Youth Development Groups' facilities plan (ref. *Ballymun Youth Development Plan, 1998*). The Reco is open, Poppintree Community Centre development has gone to tender and the **East Ballymun Youth Facility** has made slow progress but is still a live part of the for the area and recently BRL appointed an architect to prepare plans.

Managing youth facilities

St Pappin's has been managed by BRYR for over two years now. We have made good use of the building for both BRYR groups and other groups (especially the boxing club and pool club). With the opening of The Reco we have been able to switch some groups from St Pappin's, and these time slots have been taken up by others.

The **East Ballymun Temporary Youth Facility** will open this autumn and BRYR are likely to play an important role in its management.

The extended **Reco** was opened in October 2005 and plans are advanced for "Phase Three"; the development of football and basketball facilities to the rear of The Reco.

The strategic principles and objectives behind taking responsibility for managing youth facilities were defined in preparing the *Business Plan for The Reco*. They are as follows:¹⁹

1. The *Reco* is for all young people aged 10-21
2. The *Reco* will operate a policy of inclusiveness and will proactively prioritize accessibility and usage by the YPFSF target group
3. The *Reco* will make special efforts to include young people with disabilities
4. All activities in the *Reco* should have clear and explicit youth development or recreation goals

¹⁹ See *The Reco Business Plan* for more details

5. The *Reco* should be a high quality facility, sustained indefinitely
6. The *Reco* should have high levels of occupancy by 10-21 year-olds. (not offices)
7. Usage is open to any organisation or individual who shares the fundamental YPFSF goals of youth development and recreation
8. The *Reco* should generate a reasonable and transparent traded income
9. The *Reco* should receive adequate grant income from state sources to ensure the above

Objectives

The specific objectives of the *Reco* can be defined in quantitative and qualitative terms.

Quantitatively, the *Reco*, when fully operational will have a weekly usage of between 700 and 800 different young people in organised, pre-booked groups. In addition there will be up to 100 casual drop-ins, individual young users of the Café, Internet Café, Youth Gym and Youth Information Centre or groups and individual adult users of the building. The previous smaller *Reco*, which had about 350m² of space, accommodated about 190 different young people per week.

It is anticipated that BRYR-managed activities will account for around 50% of this activity, while the remainder will be led by other organisations.

The expansion of BRYR's work will entail a combination of: the relocation of existing clubs and special interest groups; the development of new groups and activities (for example the new Gym, the new Internet Café etc.,) and; the growth of existing initiatives (for example Roundabout Youth Theatre group).

Non BRYR-led groups and initiatives will also grow. Already, there are several initiatives being developed. Some examples include:

- A new Aisling After-School Project for 20 10-12 year-olds, funded by DCC and BLDTF

- The All Sorts special needs youth club
- A new Youth Health Promotion project involving collaboration with several agents including the Ballymun Primary Health Care Team
- Temporary housing of the Columban Youth Project.

Finally, it is important to note that an objective of the management of the *Reco* is for young people, especially those involved in BRYR's Youth Leadership programme, to increasingly take initiative and generate much activity in the building.

Adults

Apart from activities directly involving young people, there will also be substantial usage by adults working with young people. For example, there are already several youth-related meetings/conferences/workshops and training programmes booked into the *Reco*.

BRYR's Development and Support Work Programme will also make substantial use of The Reco. This includes: youth work training; volunteer support; assistance to access finance; administrative assistance; advocacy work and more. It is anticipated that the *Reco* will become the hub of Ballymun youth work.

Quality

The objective of the *Reco* is also to improve the quality of work with young people. The high quality facilities, equipment etc, envisaged for the *Reco* will enable BRYR and other agents to pursue deeper and more effective youth support and development work. Apart from the obvious practical implications of having more and better computers, gym equipment etc, there is the cumulative effect of the existence of a high quality place for young people that embodies a fundamental statement of trust and respect. These are the most fundamental ingredients in the development of a community of healthy, young active citizens.

There remain a number of key challenges for The Reco:

- **Licence and service agreements** with BRL/Dublin City Council have to be agreed. These will embody the principles of public ownership of such assets and management by an agent such as BRYR with our commitment to young people as noted in the principles above. The license/service agreements are proving difficult to develop as this is new territory. The NAC of the YPFSF is currently working on this issue too.
- **Finance.** The operation of The Reco to the high standards set out above is expensive. BRYR has made substantial efforts to isolate building operation costs in The Reco Business Plan and in subsequent financial calculations. We have a major challenge ahead in securing long term adequate resources. Again the NAC is working on this issue and we have also approached BRL/DCC for assistance.

Section 5 Organising our work

BRYR's core beliefs and values concerning how we organise our work are spelled out clearly in Section 2 of "Do the Right Thing", our ethical guidelines.

This section sets out our strategic plan for achieving the community task internally while keeping the priority on the operational task. It does so in 6 sections:

- The operation of the management committee
- Management team
- Staff
- Work planning and reporting
- Internal communications
- Financial administration

The Operation of the Management Committee

Earlier we considered the representative composition and representation of our management committee. Here we look at how we organise and support the work of the committee. As part of this strategic planning process we undertook a number of reviews which concluded with the following:

1. **A strict schedule and format for meetings of the committee.** This schedule has 6 "business" meetings focusing on work programmes and 5 "policy/guidelines" meetings. The schedule aims to keep the members informed, involved in strategic level planning of programmes and involved in policy development and monitoring.

Schedule of Management Committee Meetings for 2006

- January 30th Update on decisions of review meeting,
- February 27th Autumn Term Report
- March 27th Policy/Guidelines (Child Protection, Support to individual Young People, Protocol on Collaborative working for high risk young people)
- April 24th Programme Manager's Report.
- May 29th Policy/Guidelines (Company AGM: Auditor's report)
- June 26th Spring Term Report
- July 31st Policy/Guidelines
- September 25th Draft Annual Report & Plan
- October 23rd Policy/Guidelines
- November 20th Programme Manager's Report. Financial Report
- December 11th Policy/Guidelines

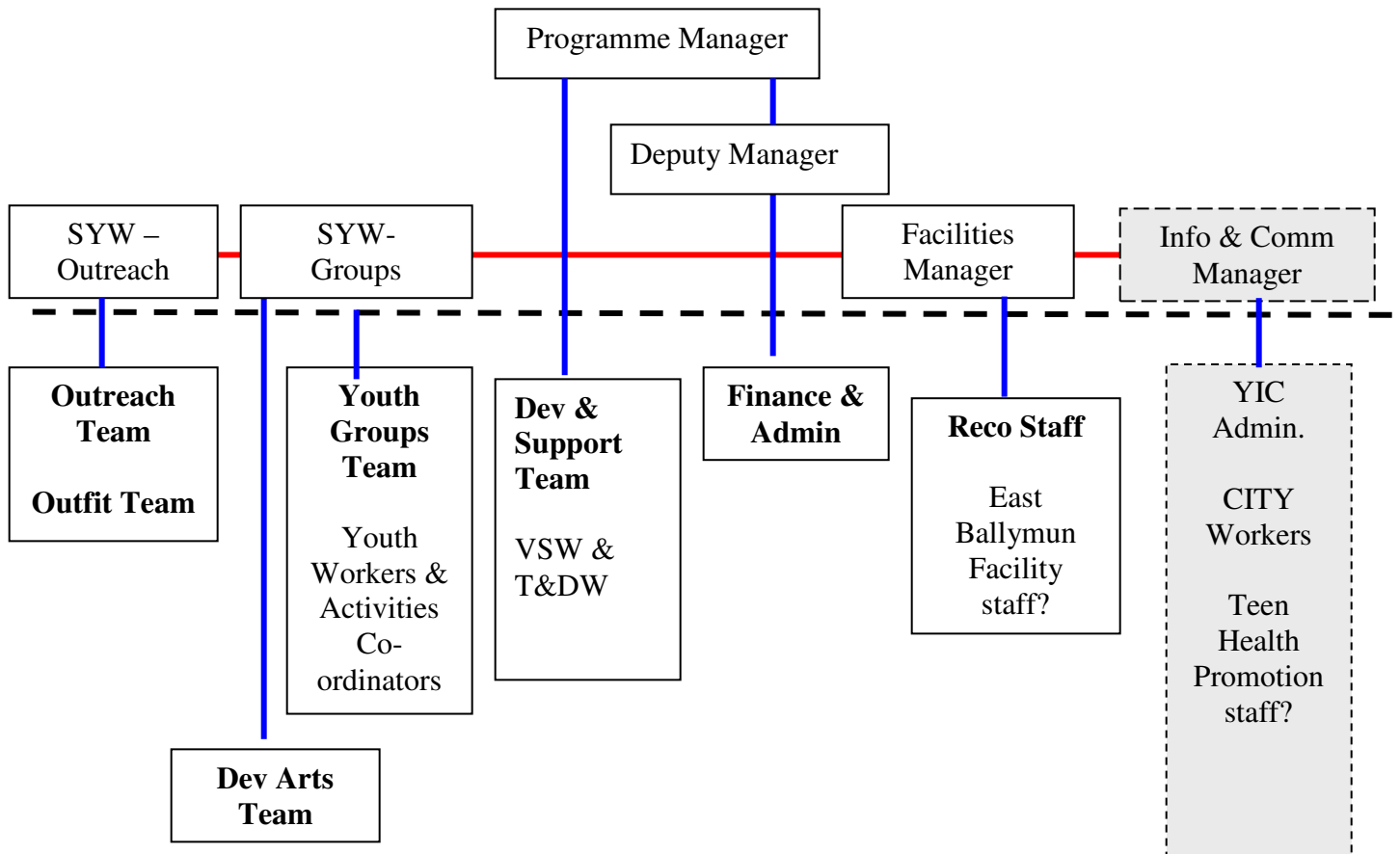
2. **Defining mechanisms for members of the management committee to be involved in the planning and reporting cycle.** The most important element is the provision of proper information flows to the committee. The key reports are listed above. In addition the key guidelines and policy documents are noted in Section 2. These reports will help members to connect and feedback to their

representative bases. Members will be involved at key times in the planning cycle (see below) and will be encouraged to part-take in specific working groups with staff (and, when relevant, external consultants).

3. **Training/induction for new members.** An induction pack is being prepared. It will be similar to that for staff and volunteers.
4. **Finance & Administration committee terms of reference.** The goal is to clearly define the FAC’s responsibilities and powers. The ToR are being drafted by the FAC and will soon be presented to the management committee.
5. **Some specific policy issues.** These are particular policies that relate to the operation of the management committee:
 - a. The need for a policy to avoid conflict of interest for members
 - b. Definition of expenses for members
 - c. Better definition of the brief and person specification for the chairperson

Staff

The proposed BRYR staffing structure for the medium term is as follows:



Management Team

Our management team currently comprises: the Programme Manager, the Facilities Manager, Senior Youth Worker–Outreach and Senior Youth Worker–Groups.

We are currently reviewing the job description (and title) of the Programme Manager and preparing a job description for the Deputy Manager. These are critical measures to take advantage of BRYR’s growth and increasing capacity to influence youth welfare and development. While it is difficult to acquire the necessary finance for a Deputy Manager, given that funding is normally project not organisationally linked, we will pursue this objective with the following considerations:

- The Programme Manager should concentrate on advocacy, strategy, policy and programme development both for BRYR and as part of wider youth welfare and development initiatives. He should also offer increased support to the management committee.
- The Deputy Manager will focus on: financial administration, cost efficiencies and reporting; programme reporting; certain personnel functions; general administration, and; certain public relations.

It is also proposed that should finance for the YIC be secured that we create a new position of Information & Communications Manager. This would both reflect the importance of information and communications work both directly for youth welfare and development and in promoting BRYR.

Staff organisation

BRYR’s staff is the living expression of our work. The professionalism (competence, confidence and commitment) of our workers is absolutely essential to the achievement of our vision. Fulfilling the internal community task by assuring that staff feel secure, significant and in solidarity with BRYR is a vital objective of internal organisation.

In BRYR’s work to date there has been constant and substantial growth of staff numbers. There are now 19 full-time, 13 part-time and several sessional or short term positions. We have achieved low levels of staff turnover and high levels of staff development. To ensure this continues we will do the following:

- Team working and clear lines of supervision/reporting. The chart above has outlined the key changes in this respect.
- Staff supervision. BRYR has instigated a system of internal staff supervision on a monthly basis. This has proven to be an excellent mechanism for both achieving the community and operational task.
- Staff development policy. BRYR has instigated several staff development measures including: structured induction; proactive support for external training, the provision of a wide range of internal training, a staff health promotion fund and more. We will shortly finalise a document that encapsulates this de facto policy.

- Staff handbook and contracts. We have completed a comprehensive Staff Handbook and are in the process of revising contracts to come into line with recent legislation.
- Employment equality policy. We have initiated a process that will soon bring an employment equality policy into practice. Although much of the elements of such a policy are in place, this will ensure proper adherence over time.

Work planning and reporting

Our work is now organised around three terms: “autumn” (September to December), “spring” (January to May/June) and “summer” (June to August). Between the terms there will be inter-term planning and reporting periods which, due to lessened direct project work will also permit elements of staff development and contributions to guidelines/policy development. The length and content of these periods will vary according to the needs of each team.

During these inter-term periods some elements of programme work will be curtailed, but certain elements must go on (e.g. opening of Reco, administration, certain groups and individuals, externally imposed schedules etc.). The reasons for term working and specified inter-term periods are:

- To make better use of the times when young people are free from school. Much informal or non-formal youth development takes place outside school hours and terms and these are moments, especially the summer, rich with opportunity for youth work to either work directly with young people or to resource them to make connections to other recreational and developmental opportunities.
- To create more coherent and simple organisational schedules and procedures that will allow management and staff to better organise their work
- To place a clear and strong emphasis on reporting and planning
- To co-ordinate, simplify and regularise the reporting and planning process
- To help time allocation²⁰ including leave, training etc by having a predictable annual schedule, including the possibility of management committee involvement.
- To support annual reporting and funder requirements
- To offer possibilities of collective staff development and team-building activities.

Each project or substantial activity will be recorded on standard record sheets or data bases. Management team members are responsible for collating these and distillation into the core “Annual Report and Annual Plan” format. At the end of August and start of September each year the various teams will devise annual reports and draft plans. In September the draft “Annual Report and Annual Plan” will be presented to the management committee along with a set of appendices.

²⁰ Staff will be requested to minimise taking holidays in these periods.

Once approved this will act as the base for reports to funders, a published Annual Report and the actual Annual Plan until the following August. Each February and June an update in the same format will be presented to the management committee.

Internal Communications

There are significant demands on a larger organisation to adopt its communications systems to being more systematic and formal and to do so without losing certain human dimensions to our work.

Internal communications are and will continue to be primarily verbal and face-to-face. The skeleton on which this communication is built is BRYR's supervision and team-working system, at the core of which is the management team. The improved documentation and reporting will improve written communication. Each worker has an e-mail account with systematic addresses²¹ and levels of internal email communication have risen substantially. BRYR will shortly move to a situation where certain communications will only be made by email! The new Reco permits use of our Intranet, access to individual staff folders from any terminal and closer monitoring of all usage by staff and others of BRYR computers.

BRYR's dependence on computers and the growth of IT projects such as CITY has led to the need for substantial technical support. It is now necessary to employ a person specifically to fulfil this function.

Financial Administration

In response to increased levels of transactions and the need for more demanding financial management and funder reports, BRYR has adopted computerised accounts and Internet Business Banking.

This system will enhance financial management by the management team and permit easier and more effective involvement of the management committee via the FAC in financial management. It will also increase general transparency (internally and externally) and imply more simple and efficient accounting procedures and financial reporting.

²¹ Each email address begins with "BRYR" followed by the staff member's initials and "@eircom.net".