

Dun Laoghaire Youth Information Centre



2008

INTRODUCTION

The objective of Dun Laoghaire Youth Information Centre is *to provide information that is complete, impartial, accurate, practical and up-to-date in an informal and supportive environment*. Each user is received as an individual and the response is adapted to the request. This Annual Report provides an opportunity to highlight the important contribution the service has made in the year 2008 to the social, personal and vocational development of young people and to reflect our commitment to our objectives in all areas of our service.

In 2008, **3,983** young people contacted the centre directly. It reaffirmed our opinion that young people needed somewhere to come to access information and how important a front window premises was to allow people to be aware of the service. 8 outreach activities were organised providing information and creating awareness of our service to young people. A total of **7,399** individual pieces of information were distributed through this medium. The publications 'I've Had Enough I'm Outta Here' and 'Little Book of Series.....' were disseminated through a postal campaign with **7,820** being distributed. Due to an upgrade of the server statistics for the website www.youthquest.ie were unobtainable but the number of visits to the website for 2007 was **26,246** with **21,726** being unique. There were, however statistics available for 2008 from the months of August to November with **8,944** visits for those four months, **6,051** being unique. The problem with the statistics has been rectified and they will be available going forward.

Highlights

'I've Had Enough, I'm Outta Here!'

In 2008 the Dun Laoghaire Youth Information Centre and Youth Choices published a new booklet entitled *'I've Had Enough, I'm Outta Here! – Thinking of Leaving School Early?'*. The booklet is a guide which is aimed at young people in the Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown area, who may be having difficulties at school and are thinking of leaving early, or may have already left. This was extremely well received by young people, local schools and services and facilitated in raising our profile.

'The little book of....' series.

They are a series of four little booklets that can fit comfortably in a wallet. They each have a separate theme, inclusive of; education, accommodation, employment and support. They are a series of pocket-sized guides for young people with a wide range of services in the local area that can be approached for support or advice. The aim was to inform young people of the services available to them in their area, and in the absence of local organisations, national ones.

Youth Café

In 2008 we continued to be members of the steering committee for the Dun Laoghaire Youth Café. We continue to participate in meetings, both on an advisory level, and with an aim to promote the Youth Information Centre within the Youth Café setting.

Hosting a Group from Paris

The staff of the Youth Information Centre had the opportunity to host 15 staff and young people from a Youth Information Centre in Paris. Ideas and publications were exchanged. The main themes that were discussed were employment and education.

Resource Library

Links were established with the local college, (Sallynoggin College of Further Education) who run a Fetac level five course in Youth Work. We offered the service of our resource library of which students and course tutors alike have been fully availing of. We met with the course tutor and students, devised a lending system and demonstrated how we as a service could support them both in their work and studies.

1.0 PRINCIPLES

Dun Laoghaire Youth Information Centre acts in accordance with the principles as outlined in the Code of Conduct for Youth Information Centres. The service is provided free of charge, it is free from any political or commercial interest. The style of work is warm, friendly and relaxed. The Centre guarantees and respects the autonomy of its users and is non discriminate.

The service is aimed at young people between the ages of 15 and 25 years of age but is also availed of by parents, teachers and other professionals working with young people.

Each worker is asked to read the '*Code of Standards for Youth Information Centres*' when they start working in the Centre. The principles are given special focus and the Youth Information Co-ordinator explains how these principles form the basis of how the Centre is run.

Our mission statement is to promote a youth work response that is caring, compassionate and Christian and enables young people to participate more fully in the life of society and church.

2.0 MANAGEMENT

The Youth Information Centre is managed by the Centre Co-ordinator in consultation with the Education Officer (Youth Service Manager). The Centre is part of Dun Laoghaire Youth Service, which is a joint project of Dun Laoghaire VEC and Catholic Youth Care. The Education Officer reports to Head of Youth Services who is responsible to Director of Catholic Youth Care. Issues concerning the Youth Service are the responsibility of the Director of the Catholic Youth Care and the CEO of Dun Laoghaire VEC.

The Co-ordinator of the Centre is a member of the National Youth Work Advisory Committee sub-committee on Youth Information and is aware of the necessity to uphold the Code of Standards. The responsibility for the daily maintenance and development of the Centre rests with the staff of the Youth Information Centre.

3.0 FINANCE

Budget, Salary and programme expenses are managed by the Director of the Catholic Youth Care and the Head of Youth Work Services in Catholic Youth Care. Payment for programme expenses is requisitioned in accordance with standard procedures.

The 2008 Income and Expenditure account does not reflect the true cost of operating the Youth Information Centre. We have moved to new premises which involved numerous long-term costs rent, heating, security. These costs were covered over and beyond the actual grant that the Youth Information Centre received from the Dept. of Education and Science for the annual running of this service.

4.0 PREMISES

Since September 2005, Dun Laoghaire Youth Information Centre is located on the Main Street of Dun Laoghaire town centre. Public transport servicing the Youth Information Centre includes 6 buses, Dart, and cross channel ferries.

The service is located on the ground floor of a shop-fronted building which allows for information to be displayed in the window of the premises. The new centre is part of an integrated service for young people with other youth focused services located in the premises.

5.0 PERSONNEL

At present two full-time positions provided for are shared between two professionally qualified members of staff and an administration personnel trained in youth information.

The administrative staff of the Youth Service also provides relief cover, when required and it is important the commitment is acknowledged.

Staff Training

An analysis of training needs is undertaken regularly. Provision is made so that Information Officers can attend relevant seminars and workshops.

Quark Publication Software – how to get publications print ready.

Eurodesk – Immigration

Filezilla – Introduction to managing documents and files on a website

Databases – Introduction to managing a Sports & Leisure database.

6.0 INFORMATION SERVICE/ SYSTEM

Our emphasis is to provide centre-produced information in leaflet form that is youth-friendly.

Use of the Internet ensures instant up-to-date information

Pro-active in identifying the information needs of young people, highlighting deadlines and promoting events or opportunities that young people should be aware of.

Responsive, encouraging young people to ask for information that may not have been readily available but will be researched and thus build the information stock.

Appropriate referral procedures were administered for specialised queries.

Up-dating was carried out in a methodical and systematic way, ensuring that the information is up-to-date at the time that a young person needs it most. During 2006, special emphasis was given to up-dating and developing the information on our resource library and youth work (policies, law and history).

Free Public Internet Access - available to young people visiting the centre free of charge. The Internet will assist young people to answer their queries through information available on relevant websites and through e-mail. The demand for the public internet access continued in 2008 with **333** users benefiting from the free service.

Websites

www.youthquest.ie

Due to an upgrade of the server statistics for the website www.youthquest.ie were unobtainable but the number of visits to the website for 2007 was **26,246** with **21,726** being unique. There were, however statistics available for 2008 from the months of August to November with **8,944** visits for those four months, **6,051** being unique. The problem with the statistics has been rectified and they will be available going forward.

A grant has been applied for to facilitate the updating and redesigning of the website in 2009. Still ongoing it is intended that the website will become increasingly user-friendly and adding links to useful websites. The staff are also trained in Web-Authoring and we acquired the technology to run the website from our own server, allowing more independence and less reliance on outer services to maintain the website.

7.0 OPENING HOURS

The Centre's opening hours are: Monday -Friday 9.30am - 5.00 pm

The Centre is accessible twenty-four hours a day through the Centre's website www.youthquest.ie, which provides information on our services, hours of opening, directs young people to useful websites through the 'information zone' and allows them to e-mail the Centre with queries. The Centre also provides a call management service, replying to messages left.

8.0 PUBLICITY

Publicity about our location and the service we provide continued to be an important aspect of our work in 2008. This included:

A full page feature in the national magazine for Youth Work practitioners. Information about the booklet *'I've had enough, I'm Outta Here!'* featured in Issue 57 of the *Irish Youth Work Scene* published by the Irish Youth Work Press.

There was also a feature for the booklet *'I've had enough, I'm Outta Here!'* in Volume 9 Issue 3 of *The Forum*, the Newsletter for the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Community Forum and in the Autumn 2008 Issue of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Community Platform newsletter.

Re-establishing our relationship with the local media – by drafting up a new media list of newspapers and radio stations for press releases.

With outreach activities especially exhibitions we gave particular emphasis on promoting the new location

Poster Campaign to various public services including FAS, Social Welfare Office, Libraries, Cinema, Garda Station Health Centres, Colleges

9.0 OUTREACH

Outreach allows young people to become aware of our services and reaches out to non-users, bringing the service to young people within their own environment. In 2008, Outreach became an integral part of the Youth Information Centre service provision. 8 outreach activities were organised providing information and creating awareness of our service to young people. A total of **7,399** individual pieces of information were distributed through this medium. The publications 'I've Had Enough I'm Outta Here' and 'Little Book of Series.....' were disseminated through a postal campaign with **7,820** being distributed. Our full repertoire of outreach can be seen in Appendix II at the back of the publication. But of particular note are the following:

Linking with specialised services

In 2008 we made a specific effort to link in with Sallynoggin College of Further Education. They are operating a new Fetac Level 5 course in Youth Work. It was important to demonstrate to them how we as a service could support them in the work. We met the individuals involved asking what they needed from us and made contact with them throughout the year on issues that would be of particular relevance to their tutors and students. This was extremely well received by these services and raised our profile

Information Exhibitions

Shopping Centre –

Going to College (Jan 08) - providing information on applying to college, evening classes, grants....

Summer Activities (May 08) - providing information on how to get summer job here and abroad, summer camps, activities, events & festivals....

What Next (Aug 08) – providing information on going to college, alternatives to college, accommodation, student travel, student grants.....

Local Colleges -

SCD open day (Jan 08) - - providing an information point at the Senior College Dun Laoghaire open day.

Summer Work Abroad (Feb 08) – – providing information on working and travel abroad including J1 visas, Australian Working Visa, Summer work in Ireland, Gap Year....

Orientation Roadshow (Sept 08) – providing information on student grants, local doctors, maps, accommodation, student travel, things to do.....

Grants Workshop (Sept 08) - - Providing a workshop on all the grant options available to students.

Information Points

As part of our commitment to provide information to young people in their own areas, it was decided to install information points in different areas throughout the Dun Laoghaire area. Five information points have now been developed.

Hosting Visits

The Youth Information Centre has been very willing to welcome groups from schools, youthreach groups, professionals working with young people etc. We hosted the students from the Alternative Learning Pathways Project. Also we had the opportunity to host a group of people from a Youth Information Centre in Paris. We exchanged ideas and publications.

Disadvantaged Groups

Every effort is made to target the less advantaged in the area. As part of our commitment to provide information to young people in their own areas, it was decided to install information points in different areas throughout the Dun Laoghaire area.

Young people from the two local youth reach programmes come and visit the Centre as part of their programme. They are introduced to the service and encouraged to use the service. This approach has had encouraging results.

The Development Officers are encouraged to inform the Centre's staff of the information needs of the young people in their community.

Event/ Theme Centred Promotion -

Each month topical issues/events were highlighted and promoted in a structured and formal way. This has worked extremely and the system developed is both efficient and effective.

10. EDUCATIONAL ROLE

In 2008 Dun Laoghaire Youth Information Centre continued to provide an education role to young people

I've Had Enough – I'm Outta Here!

This campaign intended to inform young people who have left school or are thinking of leaving school, about the options and support available to them in the Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown area. They were distributed throughout the county.

Workshops:

The service identifies the information needs of young people and holds various workshops in second and third level colleges on various subjects.

The little book of.....

This campaign was intended to inform young people in the area of the services available to them. The series of booklets were themed; education, employment, accommodation and support.

Financial Support – to students in Rockford Manor, St. Laurence's Secondary School, Cabinteely Community School and Newpark Comprehensive. A very well received and appreciated service.

CV Clinics – Aimed at 15 year olds plus in youth groups in Loughlisntown and Mounttown. We visit the groups and do up CVs for anyone who wants one. We give them a pack which includes how to get a job, interview skills and their rights/ entitlements as under 18s

Publications - 2008

I've Had Enough I'm Outta Here! – book for early school leavers
No! You are Not Alone – a little book of support services
Accommodation – a little book of accommodation
Employment – a little book of employment
Education – a little book of education
Going to College 08
Leaving Cert Results - What Next 08
A Rough Guide to Student Finance
Youth Information Directory
Youth Exchanges – A guide
Accommodation List
Counselling Services in the Dun Laoghaire area
Someone will Listen – support services for parents
Summer Activities – various leaflets
Student Guide to Dun Laoghaire area
Part-time Work u18 & 18+
Resource Directory for Youth Workers
Courses in youth work
All can be viewed on our website www.youthquest.ie

11.0 LIAISON

The Centre is in constant contact with various agencies, both on a referral basis and also for the promotion of the Centre. The service also promotes services dealing with young people in the area.

Statutory bodies liaising with the Centre include *Fás, Social Welfare Office, Dept. of Education & Science, Dun Laoghaire VEC, Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown County Council, Public Libraries, Community Dev Worker(HSE), Citizen Information Centre, Money Advice Bureau,*

In 2008, the Youth Information Centre staff was involved in various committees and action groups including:

NYWAC Sub-committee on Information (Dept. of Education & Science) – did not meet in 2008

Youth Information Support Partnership – an interim support committee made up of a representative of all agencies dealing with youth information throughout the country.

Eurodesk Monitoring Committee – Eurodesk is a European network which disseminates European Union information and provides telephone enquiry answering services at national or regional level for young people and those who work with them.

Eurodesk Relay Network

Unite (Asylum Seekers Action Group – Youth Work & Information Sub-groups) – Interested local organisations who come together to discuss how to best serve unaccompanied minors and other immigrant groups.

Youth Information Centres Network

Youth Café Committee – This involves the development of a youth café for the local area. It is felt that youth information has a lot to contribute to such a service and it is extremely important to be involved from the onset to ensure the youth information forms part of the concept.

The staff attended functions and meetings, in order to network with other professionals working with young people and to promote the Centre as an important part of

youth work - meetings included launches, exhibitions, Southside Partnership meetings.

Strong links exist between the Centre and the other Information Centres within the Network. This allows us to share experience and develop joint initiatives.

12.0 MONITORING/ EVALUATION

The Co-ordinator and Information Officer also met on a regular basis throughout 2008 to assess and review the Centre's performance. Information was exchanged and the work for the period ahead was planned.

Quantitative Success is measured by:

- The amount of young people accessing the service
- The geographical spread of who access the service
- The ability to answer the query as comprehensively as possible
- The pro-active practice of the service
- The adaptation of the service to respond to the specified needs of the young people

Qualitative Success is measured by

- Comment cards available requesting young people to evaluate the service
- Thank you cards and letters of approval are kept
- The relationship and trust that is built up with the young people accessing the service
- The young people who come back or recommend the service to others

13.0 Relationship with Youth Information Resource Unit

The Youth Information Centre staff were very active in the participation in any activities organised by the Youth Information Resource Unit. We are still in contact with the Department of Education & Science Youth Affairs Department in the absence of the Youth Information Co-ordinator.

The Youth Information Co-ordinator is very involved in NYWAC monitoring committee and the Youth Information Support Partnership.

