

Evaluation Report of the Reproductive Health Programme for Young Lone Mothers and Young Men



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A Journey Called Life

*There is a journey that we travel
Each and every day
Ours has been a Special one
And helped along the way*

*We have crossed so many paths
We never thought we'd see
Overcame so many challenges
And insecurities along the way*

*And the greatest gift we have received
On this journey that we've made
Are bonds that can't be broken
And newly found friendships
That we hope will never fade.*

(poem written by the participants on the young mother's programme, Doras Buí, 2004)

Chapter 1

Executive Summary

Doras Buí - a parents alone resource centre - formerly known as the Parents Alone Resource Centre received funding in 2003 to deliver a reproductive health programme for young lone mothers, with a workshop on the same topic to be delivered to young men.

In Autumn of 2003, a six module programme for young lone mothers was delivered in Doras Buí over 16 weeks to 15 young women at the Doras Buí centre in Coolock. The six modules included: contraception and sexually transmitted infections; reproductive cycles; reproductive health history in Ireland; emotional and mental health; sexuality, body image and parenting skills, including issues on parenting alone; and dealing with the health system in Ireland. Doras Buí also developed a relationship with Bonnybrook Youthreach and through that link saw the delivery of a two and a half day residential workshop attended by nine young men from the Youthreach centre.

Both programmes, their development and delivery, have been evaluated using a co-evaluation model whereby all stakeholders are systematically asked for feedback on their experiences and the programme in all its aspects is formatively evaluated throughout its lifetime. This report is a summary of the process and findings of that co-evaluation activity.

Using the co-evaluation method both reproductive health awareness programmes were found to be very successful for participants, with expectations being met and even exceeded according to participants. For other stakeholders, other agencies involved in development and delivery, staff and management at Doras Buí, the programme was a major success with a much needed programme being delivered to young mothers in a way that suited them and met their needs.

The development of stronger links with other agencies in the catchment area was also seen as a good outcome for Doras Buí, while successfully drawing down the funding from the Crisis Pregnancy Agency to meet this need for young lone parents was seen as an excellent development in the range of supports and services being offered by Doras Buí to young mothers.

Doras Buí staff spent a lot of time planning, developing the programme and choosing the suitable tutors and selecting participants for the programme. The success of the reproductive health awareness programme at Doras Buí is testament to the respectful, empowering approach adopted by Doras Buí in its work.

The success of the co-evaluation approach supports Doras Buí in its commitment to seek to build and integrate such an approach into all its work in the coming months and years. There is no doubt that the co-evaluation allowed regular feedback and analysis of the experience for all stakeholders and allowed minor issues or matters arising during the programme to be dealt with effectively, before they had the chance to turn into significant problems.

The delivery of the workshop to young men from the Youthreach centre was an interesting development in the services of Doras Buí. Noting that the majority of lone parents in Ireland are women, Doras Buí is very aware of the need to raise awareness and educate young men on the need to be responsible and aware of their reproductive and sexual health. For Doras Buí, working with other agencies who have young men as a target group, this experience was a positive one. The preventative work that needs to be done with young men and women in Ireland is a huge piece of work, one in which Doras Buí will continue to play a growing role, on foot of the success of this programme and their experience of it.

Finally, the programme was such a success, especially for participants that the co-evaluation process can clearly recommend that Doras Buí seek to repeat this programme in its current format for the many other lone young mothers and young men who are in danger of becoming young parents, without planning and a conscious choice. This programme is a very useful and successful one which could be mainstreamed and copied by many other agencies working with young women and young men, and in particular those agencies which find young lone parents amongst their general target group.

This programme shows that targeted programmes, suitable for young people, are a clear route to engagement of this target group, prior to and subsequent to sexual activity and crisis pregnancy.

Leaving the last word of the Executive Summary to the participants on the programme, they said:

‘I learned a lot about my body that I didn’t know.’

‘I learned a lot more about my body, I learned to have more respect for myself, realizing all the STD’s there are woke me up and I feel more in control of my life and body now.’

‘I am more cautious sexually than I ever was.’

‘It has made me more aware and to be more careful and to look after my health, mental, physical and sexual.’

‘It’s made me stop and realize a lot more about my body and taught me to take care of it a bit better. It also gave me useful information that I can pass on.’

Chapter 2

Introduction and Rationale

2.1. Doras Buí

Doras Buí – a parents alone resource centre was founded in 1986 as part of the EU Second Programme to Combat Poverty. Formerly known as the Parents Alone Resource Centre, it has been part of the Community Development Programme since 1990. Doras Buí was the first locally based resource centre for lone parents and their children in Ireland.

The catchment area of the centre has a population of 106,000 people, 5,000 of whom are in receipt of One Parent Family Payment (OPFP) as lone parents. There is no true figure available for the actual amount of lone parents in the area. There are lone parents on other types of payments and many in employment and not receiving any social welfare payment, who do not appear in the official figures.

Eight of the 29 districts that form the catchment area for Doras Buí are classified as amongst 'the most disadvantaged' in Ireland. Some of these Districts have concentrations of families headed by one parent, many of whom have no formal education or primary level only. This experience inevitably leads to poverty and social exclusion.

In 1997, 91% of all lone parents in Ireland were women and only 38.6% of lone parents were participating in the labour force. Doras Buí supports lone parents to extend their life choices; overcome discrimination and isolation and become socially and economically independent.

2.2. Rationale for Reproductive Health Programme

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency was set up by Government following recent referenda regarding abortion rights and in the light of the growing numbers of women with crisis pregnancies, thousands of whom travel to the UK for abortions annually, while thousands of others become parents, some lone parents. The agency seeks to provide supports to those providing advice and guidance to women with crisis pregnancies, including preventative and educative work on reproductive health matters.

Doras Buí has been providing services to lone parents since its foundation. The lone parent target group is not an homogenous group – lone parents may be those parenting alone after marriage or relationship breakdown, or divorce. They may be young women or older women and men. They may be in receipt of social welfare payments or coping without state support.

Young women usually seek the services of Doras Buí when they are either already pregnant or have given birth, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and Doras Buí share a somewhat similar target group.

The experience of Doras Buí is that lone parents, in common with all parents, need support at varying times of their lives. Lone parents living in poverty have particular needs for information, housing, childcare and other supports along with empathy with their particular situation if further crisis pregnancies are to be avoided and if they are to move out of poverty and unsupportive relationships.

Misinformation, stereotyped notions regarding young lone parents and a lack of awareness amongst society at large, and delivery agencies in particular, can affect the manner in which services are delivered to lone parents. While the stigma of lone parenting is not so deep in some communities, there is a huge lack of support for young lone mothers and their children. Many young lone mothers have left school early, are very socially isolated and come from poor families themselves.

Over the years Doras Buí has learned from several self-development programmes aimed at lone mothers that programmes that are designed in consultation with that target group inevitably lead to positive outcomes for all concerned. With this in mind, Doras Buí had just concluded delivery of a Young Lone Mothers 'Goal Achievers' Programme (funded by NWCI/Zonta – Zest Programme and the Dept of Social, Community & Family Affairs) which had not included an element regarding reproductive health awareness. An informal survey of young lone mothers from that programme showed that there was an interest and a demand for such a programme.

In 2003 Doras Buí successfully applied for funding to the Crisis Pregnancy Agency to fund the development and delivery of a reproductive health awareness programme for young lone mothers with a workshop to be delivered to young men, potentially or actually young fathers.

2.3. The Programme

The Doras Buí reproductive health awareness programme for young lone mothers and young men has two strands: Strand 1 offers young lone mothers the opportunity to participate in a group-based programme that will increase their knowledge about their own bodies, provide them with accurate information on reproductive health issues and build self-awareness about issues of responsibility in relation to their children and their own personal relationships.

Strand 2, was for young men known to be sexually active. Doras Buí in collaboration with local Youthreach centres devised and delivered information workshops for young men with the aim of increasing their knowledge of reproductive health issues and responsibility in sexual relationships.

The programme for lone mothers was planned, consulted over, developed and delivered between August and December 2003. The workshops were delivered over 16 weeks, two mornings a week. The programme for young men was delivered as a two-part residential programme in a rural location.

2.4. Evaluation: description

Doras Buí uses a model of co-evaluation throughout all of its activities and programmes. This model is designed to ask 'good questions' throughout the life of the programme; to assess progress and to draw all stakeholders appropriately into all aspects of the programme, so that a formative process will take place over the lifetime of the programme. This process keeps the programme true to its aims and objectives and ensures that resources are used effectively and efficiently and to the desired end.

Co-evaluation nurtures a climate of trust so that participants, tutors, staff and partnership agencies can examine progress in a safe environment. It means that any problems or issues arising during the programme are examined and dealt with there and then, making the programme truly respond to the needs and wishes of the stakeholders.

Co-evaluation is a simple and cost effective user friendly evaluation method which for this programme was undertaken with the support of an independent evaluation consultant.

The role of the evaluation consultant was to support the development of the evaluation framework, support the development of 'good questions' and appropriate means for gaining feedback from all stakeholders; facilitate focus groups of stakeholders (outside agencies, participants) and facilitate the end of module review and next module previews with a programme steering committee which included the Director of Doras Buí and the two staff with direct responsibility for delivery of the programme. Also, to produce a short report on the programme and the evaluation process when the programme is complete.

At the outset the role of the co-evaluation consultant was agreed as:

- Devise model of model of co-evaluation with relevant staff.
- Oversee gathering of evaluation information
- Facilitate analysis of feedback and identify required changes to programme.
- Facilitate, as agreed, meetings with non-participant stakeholders.
- Provide ongoing support to programme co-ordinators through regular agreed meetings.
- Seek agreement on shape, size and content of evaluation report.
- Produce draft evaluation report for consultation and agreement.
- Produce final report in hard and e-format.
- Support for formative evaluation approach - good questions - good answers - make changes - good questions cycle.

Chapter 3

Programme Story

3.1. Aims/objectives

The aims of the reproductive health programme – are:

- To support young lone parent mothers to take control of their reproductive health.
- To provide information on contraceptive methods for young lone men so as to avoid crisis pregnancy.
- To influence the programmes delivered to young lone mothers and fathers by the local youth focused agencies.

The Objectives to deliver the aims – are:

- Devise and deliver a training programme on reproductive health to 15 young lone mothers.
- To devise and co-deliver information workshops for young lone men on reproductive health.
- To provide individual mentoring for young lone mothers.

3.2. Expected Outputs and Outcomes of the programme are:

- Evaluation report.
- Increases self awareness by the young lone mothers and young men.
- Increased knowledge about reproductive health matters by young lone mothers and young men.
- To have influenced other youth-focused agencies in their delivery of services to young lone parents, male and female.

3.3. Other agency involvement in development and delivery

Apart from Doras Buí a number of other agencies and bodies were involved in the development and delivery of the programmes for young lone mothers and young men. These included: Northern Area Health Board, Youthreach Centres in the catchment area, Community Training Workshops in the catchment area, Dublin Wellwoman Centre, St. James's Hospital and Northside Partnership Education Officer.

Doras Buí was in a position to fill the places in its programme for young lone mothers directly as a result of the database of the centre of those to whom it currently provides services. There are few young men approaching the centre for support and due to their circumstances and the reality of life for young people with crisis pregnancies, it is overwhelmingly the young women who end up parenting alone.

Doras Buí was able to find 15 young mothers for their 16-week programme. The staff at the centre then embarked on a series of meetings with other agencies and bodies in the catchment area to develop the programme for young mothers and the young men. Initial meetings were held with those known to provide services for, or be in touch with, young men, known to be sexually active and possibly even fathers themselves.

An information session was held, at which Doras Buí outlined the sort of programme it was proposing to deliver to young men and women. It further outlined the requirement to source appropriate young men and the timeframe involved. Local schools were also involved and Doras Buí was informed of the RSE programme in schools which delivers information on sexual matters to those young men and women who remain in school. The gap for those who leave school early was again identified and the need for non-school based programmes such as this one emphasized.

The process to get male participants was time-consuming and perhaps an indication of how little support regarding reproductive matters is being targeted at young men - the Bonnybrook Youthreach centre responded to the request and after a detailed process of consultation and planning, Bonnybrook Youthreach agreed to provide participants for the Doras Buí programme and that it would be best delivered off-site in a residential setting. Bonnybrook Youthreach centre agreed to provide the extra funding to cover the residential costs of the programme, while Doras Buí covered the training costs of the programme.

3.4. Participant Profile

Strand 1. There were 15 young lone parent women on the programme.

Summary Profile:

- Ages ranged from 18-25
- Live in 10 different district areas
- Majority in local authority accommodation or renting
- Majority early school leavers (level does not indicate certification)
- Majority on home duties (only 6 working part-time)
- All but 1 on One Parent Family Payment
- Majority of participants had just one child
- Childcare needs were being met either through the Doras Buí facility or children were at school

Age

| Number of participants | Age |
|------------------------|-----|
| 1 | 18 |
| 1 | 20 |
| 3 | 22 |
| 3 | 23 |
| 4 | 24 |
| 3 | 25 |
| Total: 15 | |

District

| Number of participants | District Area |
|------------------------|---------------|
| 2 | Artane |
| 1 | Baldoyle |
| 1 | Beaumont |
| 2 | Belcamp |
| 2 | Clonshaugh |
| 1 | Coolock |
| 1 | Darndale |
| 2 | Kilbarrack |
| 1 | Kilmore |
| 2 | Priorswood |
| Total: 15 | |

Housing situation

| Number of participants | Type of accommodation |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2 | In family home |
| 6 | In rented accommodation |
| 7 | In local authority accommodation |

Education status

| Number of participants | Education levels |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 3 | Secondary level |
| 7 | Junior Certificate level |
| 5 | Leaving Certificate level |

Employment details

| Number of participants | Employment details |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 6 | Part-time |
| 9 | On home duties |

Social welfare payment

| Number of participants | Type of payment |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | No payment |
| 14 | O.P.F.P |

Children

| Number of participants | Number of children |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 2 (twins) |
| 10 | 1 child |
| 2 | 2 children |
| 2 | 3 children |
| Total : 15 | Total: 22 children |

Childcare

| Type of childcare used | Number of children |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Doras Buí child care center | 8 children |
| External crèche | 1 child |
| School | 9 children |
| External minders | 4 children supported by Doras Buí |
| | Total: 22 children |

3.5. Strand 1. Programme for young lone mothers

The programme was delivered two mornings a week for two hours in six modules:

The Plan:

Module 1. Women's Reproductive Cycle

- Understanding female and male reproductive systems
- The menstrual cycle
- Getting to know our bodies
- Common gynecological problems

2 sessions: Delivery partner: NAHB

Module 2. Reproductive Health Issues

- The legal situation in Ireland
- Contraception, abortion, infertility
- History of women's reproductive health – change or not?

3 sessions: Internal delivery

Module 3. Sexuality and Body Image

- Self-image, body image
- Relationships and sexuality
- Women and self image
- How to influence and improve self image

2 sessions: Independent trainer

Module 4. Emotional and mental health

- Emotions and mental health issues
- Mental health: women/men?
- Exploring ways to achieve emotional health

2 sessions: Independent psychologist & counselor

Module 5. Parenting

- Parenthood
- Exploring emotions about parenthood
- Expectations and reality
- Historical perspective
- Changing standards
- Exploring coping skills

2 session: Independent childcare expert trainer Module

Module 6. Dealing with the Health System

- How the system is structured and works
- Approaching the health care worker – rights as a patient
- How to get the best from the service

2 sessions: Independent psychologist and counselor

3.5.1. Participants' expectations

At the outset, participants were asked to state their expectations for the programme. They were as follows:

Original expectations of participants of programme:

- To get to know our bodies and understand them better.
- To find out about the history of women's reproductive rights in Ireland.
- To look at our self-image and see how we see ourselves.
- To learn and understand more about mental illness.
- To be more patient and understanding as parents and so gain parental confidence.
- To get to know our rights and healthcare options.

At the final focus group of participants, when asked if their expectations had been met, of the 10 in final

evaluation focus group, seven said they had been exceeded, two said they had been met and one was unsure.

Comments from participants following the programme include:

The reproductive health programme has affected me and my life because:

‘It made me more aware of STIs that are out there. I also learned about my body and how it works – in detail.’

‘I learned a lot about my body that I didn’t know.’

‘I learned a lot more about my body, I learned to have more respect for myself, realizing all the STDs there are woke me up and I feel more in control of my life and body now.’

‘I am more cautious sexually than I ever was.’

‘It has made me more aware and to be more careful and to look after my health, mental, physical and sexual.’

‘It’s made me stop and realize a lot more about my body and taught me to take care of it a bit better. It also gave me useful information that I can pass on.’

‘It’s made me more aware of how easily infections are passed and to look after myself more.’

3.5.2. Summary findings of six module review meetings

3.5.2.a. Findings after module 1. Women’s Reproductive Cycle

Content:

This module included elements on Understanding female and male reproductive systems; The Menstrual cycle; Getting to know our bodies; and Common gynecological problems.

Feedback:

Participants’ daily and end-of-module evaluation sheets reported that they were ‘mostly very satisfied’.

A huge amount of learning took place in both sessions, in particular the participants said; ‘I can now work out my own menstrual cycle’, and;

‘I now have information about my body that I didn’t know.’

‘Very helpful and I learned things I didn’t know about.’

‘Great learning experience.’

Tutor’s feedback confirmed that the learning objectives had been reached and that they had been supported by the centre in their work.

Staff felt that the group seemed to enjoy the sessions and they ‘got the sense that the tutor really enjoyed working with the participants.’ One request from the group was that they would like more information on sexually transmitted diseases. Arising from this request, the course co-ordinator organized for a specialist from St James’ Hospital to provide participants with a whole session on this issue. Also useful leaflets and information was sourced from the Dublin Well Woman Centre in Northside Shopping Centre.

The tutor got through the material in one session and this allowed the co-ordinators to devote more time to questions and discussion during the second session. Regarding the data gathering mechanisms and their effectiveness, it was agreed that in such short modules only one of the sheets would be administered to avoid evaluation overload. It was also decided to add a further question regarding levels of participation in the learning.

This first module review session uncovered that information on the module can come to the co-ordinator in her opening introductions of any session and it was agreed that these would be fed into the process by the co-ordinator as they arose during the half hour check-in.

Finally, the co-ordinator felt that the end of module review and preview was most supportive to her work and helpful in flagging concerns and dealing with issues.

‘It’s a great way of measuring the impact of the learning that participants are receiving whilst checking in with facilitators that they are on track with their work.’(co-ordinator)

Overall participant comments:

‘Brilliant! Well explained, well taught.’

‘Very informative.’

‘Very helpful.’

‘Very interesting’

‘Good learning experience’

‘Great’

3.5.2.b. Findings after module 2. Reproductive Health issues

Content:

The elements of this module included: Reproductive health issues; The legal situation in Ireland; Contraception-abortion-infertility; History of women’s reproductive health & how things have changed or not. This module was to be delivered over two sessions, but as all learning objectives were achieved. Participants had discussion and a video for session two.

Feedback:

Participants learned a lot from this module and found it very interesting. One or two participants found the material and topics challenging and described discussions on topics such as abortion as ‘annoying’. Participants were able to clearly understand the materials and ideas presented and found the tutor very clear and ‘to the point’. Regarding involvement in the learning process, participants said they felt very involved in the session and had ‘the freedom to say what they wanted to say and got the opportunity to ask about things they did not know.’

voicing opinions and speaking out and listening that they really participated in their own learning. The discussion on abortion was challenging, but managed to air all viewpoints without silencing any. As one participant said, ‘if we were to do that sort of session in a bigger group we would have argued much more, the small group size allowed everyone to express their viewpoint and be heard.’ They enjoyed in particular the use of video and one participant said she realized ‘how far women have come.’

Their comments on significant learning included:

‘I learned about women’s rights, abortion and family planning.’

‘I learned not to judge women because they have abortions.’

‘I learned that women have choices and we need to stand up for our rights.’

‘I realized how much things have changed and how oppressed women were in Ireland in the past.’

‘It taught me that there is a lot of help out there for women nowadays.’

‘I just learned about the struggle women went through to fight for contraception.’

The tutor was found to be most helpful ‘she listened and explained things fully’ and others commented she was ‘interesting and lively.’

The tutor’s feedback showed her pleasure at the level of participation by the group. She also said the group were ‘open and honest’ and really participated in the debates and discussion. The content of the module ‘provides participants with the background on issues of women’s choices and through awareness of this enables participants to take control of their own choices.’

Staff feedback showed that the discussions on abortion really caused a stir in the group. High emotions were raised and in particular the group enjoyed discussions arising from watching the video on the Magdalene Sisters. The fact that the events from that video and the events regarding contraception etc were not ancient was cause for further interest and discussion, especially given that the events took place so recently.

Overall participants found through the discussion,

Staff commented that while the co-evaluation process was working well, it does mean more work and has increased the workload of the co-ordinator.

Overall comments from participants:

'I found the history of women's rights interesting and slightly disturbing.'
'I learned about discrimination against women.'
'I learned about contraception and abortion.'
'I realized how hard it is for women.'
'I was interested to hear about rights to contraception.'
'I was amazed at the differences in the way women's issues have changed in the past few decades.'
'I learned about how women were treated.'
'I heard about the struggle for women's rights.'

Final comments by participants on the module:

'Very interesting and enjoyable.'
'Learned a great deal.'
'Facilitator was helpful.'
'Good to know how Ireland has changed.'
'Made me respect myself more.'

3.5.2.c. Findings after Module 3. Sexuality and Body Image

Content:

Elements in this module included: Self image-body image; Relationships and sexuality; What kind of self-image do women have?; What is image influenced by and how can we improve it?

Feedback:

Participants liked this module and felt that a lot of awareness and learning took place for them. Common themes of learning included:
'I realized what confidence can do and how important confidence is.'
'I learned how we look after ourselves can affect our life and the way we feel about ourselves.'
'I learned about different types of relationships and sexuality.'

'I learned how self-image is affected is you don't have confidence.'
'I learned how ignorant I am about people's sexuality.'

Apart from more time on this topic, including more time to explore personal grooming techniques, participants had no other changes to suggest. They found the module 'very satisfying' and appreciated the tutor's approach and efforts.

Tutor's feedback was positive. The tutor felt that after the session 'the group can now look at themselves in a different way and they have more self-respect.' She used demonstration and discussion as methodologies and felt all learning objectives had been achieved. She commented on the fact that a number of participants were absent for her module and that this smaller group can make discussion harder for participants.

Staff feedback picked up on the issue of attendance and the co-ordinator took a proactive approach to addressing the matter with participants. Participants were reminded of their contract to attend. While acknowledging that some of the participants have chaotic lifestyles and little support, if the group numbers fall below seven it really makes the job of the tutor very difficult and the learning experience for other participants is undermined. To encourage a positive attitude to attendance and punctuality, it was agreed that the attendance book would close 30 minutes after start time. Also, all absentees received a telephone call and were engaged in a dialogue around attendance.

Overall comments from participants:

'I enjoyed the personal grooming.'
'The body image and self image really improved my confidence.'
'I realized that we all had our opinions on sexuality and that there was no argument in the group.'
'I realized how societies image can affect people.'
'Very satisfying.'
'Would like to do more on this topic.'
'Facilitator was very good, helpful and nice she answered all our questions.'
'Didn't think it was going to be as good as it was.'

3.5.2.d. Findings after Module 4. Mental Health issues

Content:

Elements of this module included: Emotional and mental health issues; Why are women more likely than men to become mentally ill; Exploring ways of achieving mental health.

Feedback:

Participants learned a number of significant things including:

‘That every body has problems and nobody is perfect.’

‘How strong emotions can take over and affect you.’

‘That women can get emotional, some more than others and that some people are bitter and negative and need some work done on themselves.’

‘I learned that I have to love myself first.’

Participants got a lot from this module and liked the approach of the facilitator. They felt they participated well and had the opportunity to speak, they enjoyed a relaxation exercise conducted towards the end of the session. The module dealt with mental health issues and some of the discussions led to consideration of parenting issues, the topic for module 5.

Following class discussions on difficult issues, some of the participants used the mentoring support provided by Doras Bui which includes possible referral for counseling as appropriate.

The tutor was found to be ‘very good’ and ‘she explained everything and helped me to understand mental health issues.’

Tutor feedback showed that learning objectives had been achieved as ‘participants are now more aware of their mental health, which allows them to take control of their lives,’ she said.

The tutor expressed the view that a module on parenting would be a good idea as the issue was coming up a lot for the participants. The next module is on parenting skills.

Staff feedback was that participants had indeed enjoyed the module and there was a definite ‘buzz’ to the group.

Other comments from participants included:

‘I learned to help myself and deal with my problems by exploring my past.’

‘I learned about the power of thought.’

‘I learned about depression and criticism.’

‘I learned be listening to other people’s stuff and how they deal with their issues.’

‘It was good to talk about we want to love our kids and not be giving out to them all the time.’

‘This module was my favourite one and I would like more.’

3.5.2.e. Findings after Module 5. Parenting

Content:

Elements included: parenthood and coping with children; Exploration of issues and feelings about parenthood; Expectations and reality of parenthood; What it was like for our fore-parents; Changing standards and expectations; Some important issues for parents; Exploring a range of possible ways of coping.

Feedback:

Participants comments were very positive: ‘I loved this module.’ And ‘I find the parenting issues very interesting because its stuff we will use with our kids.’

Participants noted how they learned ‘to take note of all the pressures on one parent families,’ and ‘How much pressure there is on families today.’

Significant learning on this module included:

‘It was interesting to explore the changes of parenting over the years.’

‘We talked about fears and pressures on family.’

Participants felt involved in the learning and had the chance to share views. One participant said 'a lot of stuff was about child-birth which was useful for me being pregnant.' They really enjoyed the tutor's ability to share her own personal and professional experience with the group which enhanced their learning.

Tutor's feedback was that the learning objectives were reached, guided by the participants need.

Overall comments:

'We all joined in and asked questions.'
'I got a chance to talk about my children.'
'We talked about day to day things.'
'We asked lots of questions and the tutor answered all of them.'
'I think our children are much luckier than compared to year ago.'

3.5.2.6. Findings after Module 6. The Health System

Content:

The elements of this module were: Dealing with the health system in Ireland; Talking to health care workers, your right as a patient; How to get the best out of the health care service.

Feedback:

Participants enjoyed the discussions in this session and the introduction of some alternative or complimentary approaches to health and stress management, including colour therapy and chackras. The discussion about patient rights in the health system was interesting and some comments include; 'I learned how to deal with stressful situations,' and 'I realized that I have to look after myself.'

Feedback sheets included comments from participants on what was significant in the learning for them; 'I learned not to be scared going to hospital, there are people there to help,' and 'That talking about mental

health and to look after ourselves is important.'
Participants saw the tutor as supportive and helpful.

Tutor feedback was that learning objectives were achieved and the tutor felt very supported by the centre.

Overall comments:

'I learned about how to get answers about my health.'
'I learned how important it was to get myself checked out.'
'We learned a lot about the health care system.'

3.5.3. Review of whole programme: young lone mothers

The planning and development of the programme was very labour intensive. The staff spent a lot of time deciding on outline content for the programme. This was followed by a search for suitable trainers and tutors. It was thought that only those with a lot of experience of dealing with groups and in particular young people, would be suitable. It would seem from the feedback from all participants and staff that each of the trainers delivered on the learning objectives and used participative and inclusive methodologies in the programme.

Following the programme participants reviewed it with the co-ordinator and also were part of focus group with the Evaluation consultant.

The most significant learning for participants overall from the programme were listed at:

- 'Gaining parental confidence.'
- 'Getting to know more about my body and loads more stuff.'
- 'I think it all had an impact on me but especially reproductive health and body image/sexuality.'

Asked what changes they might make to their lives as a result of the programme, they said:
'Always to have safe sex, no matter what, to move on and do more things for myself.'

'I learned how important it is to control my temper.'
'I feel confident to do anything I want.'
'I'll go for regular check-ups.'
'I'll be more cautious and aware, sexually.'

Asked what they would change about the programme they said:

- 'A longer time with the woman from St James's on STIs.'
- more on parenting.'
- a longer programme, with the opportunity to go into some topics in more detail.'
- that it would not finish!'
- More focus on young teens.'
- A more intensive and longer programme where we could find out in detail about all the topics we looked at.'
- To have two to three sessions on each topic.'

Asked what was the thing they had learned about themselves during this programme, they said:

'That I can be good at things. I've really gained confidence. All in all I've changed and feel much better about myself and my situation..... most importantly I'm happy. Not always, still.... I have problems and hurdles like anyone else but I've learned how to handle them and not let them get to me. My head is much clearer now. Thanks to the programme.'

'I was oblivious to my own health and I was scared about learning about what dangers are out there.'

'I know now that I can achieve and finish things, see them through.'

'I have gained in confidence. I am a lot more assertive and I feel life is worth living now.'

'I can talk for Ireland! I'm more friendly and have a lot more confidence and determination. (Thank you.)'

'That I can do anything once I try and stand on my own two feet.'

'That I am a better person than I thought and I can make things happen.'

Additional comments from young women:

'I think fellas should be involved in health subjects i.e. diseases etc, as a mixed environment might stop what goes on in Dublin city every day!'

'I'd like to thank everyone. It has been so good and I have learned so much and got on with everyone. Doras Buí, thank you so much.'

'I've never been to a warmer, more friendly environment as Doras Buí. I feel honoured to know the girls on the group and the staff.'

'This course has changed my life for the better. I have dealt with issues I never thought I would have and it has given me the confidence to strive for a better future and I want to praise Doras Buí for being my lifeline to the outside world. Thank you so much you have become my extended family and I'm only sad 'cos it has to come to an end.'

'Thank you all at Doras Buí for helping me to become the happy, confident, determined, goal-focused, self-loving person I am today! I couldn't have done it without you all.'

'It has helped me in a lot of ways and made me a stronger person and it's so good to have so many friends to lean on and to be able to talk. I no longer feel trapped and alone.'

'I really loved it and would have liked it to go on longer. I loved all the other girls and the tutors, but most of all Anita, who gave us all her support. She is a great person and made it all happen for me. Thank you.'

'This course came at the right time when I was at my lowest point. I was depressed and ashamed of myself. The staff and the girls were the support I needed for a long time. I pulled myself together feeling much stronger and full of awareness now. I have confidence for the future... it was the best thing that ever happened to me.'

Final comments on the overall programme were:
'I thought it was great, I made a lot of changes to my life and I am so much happier now.'

'Don't take life as a joke, look after yourself and your health.'

'It has changed my life for the better – am so much happier.'

3.6. Strand 2: Programme for Young Men's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development Programme

3.6.1. Development of Strand 2

While the planning and preparation for delivery of Strand 1 was taking place, staff at Doras Buí were in consultation with other agencies and organizations in the catchment who have young sexually active males in their target group. The discussion took the Doras Buí staff to schools, Youthreach centres, Community Training Workshops and the Northside Partnership. Following many phone calls and conversations an information meeting was held in Doras Buí to explain the purpose of the programme being offered and the type of involvement being sought.

Generally the information workshop participants felt that, while some of this type of work was being done in schools, it would have benefits to provide such a programme for young men who have fathered a child or are known to be sexually active. While it was acknowledged that the RSE (Relationships and Sexual Education) Programmes delivered in schools were good programmes, they obviously were not accessible to those who had left or dropped out of school early. The early school leaver is targeted in particular by the Youthreach programmes and populated by young men and women. It was felt that this route would be an appropriate one to take to seek engagement of that target group with the Doras Buí sexual and reproductive health and development programme

3.6.2. Bonnybrook Youthreach

Bonnybrook Youthreach agreed to support the programme through providing participants and covering costs for the residential aspect of the programme for young men. It was agreed that a suitable tutor would be sourced to deliver a reproductive health awareness programme to young men on the Youthreach programme who were known to have fathered children or were known to be sexually active. The underlying idea of supporting the delivery of this programme to young men was to raise awareness and raise issues relating to responsible sexual activity and to provide information on contraceptive methods for young men to avoid crisis pregnancy.

Planning the delivery and organizing of this residential workshop module required a major amount of consultation, collaboration and clarification between Doras Buí and the staff of the Bonnybrook Youthreach centre. Many weeks of discussions, agreement building and consultation led to the programme content being defined, a suitable experienced tutor and venue being sources and finally the delivery of a successful workshop to young men.

Bonnybrook Youthreach was set up in October 1990 and is a programme of education, training and work experience for early school leavers, provided in an out-of-school setting. It caters for young people aged 15-18 who have left school with little or no qualifications. It is operated by the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee.

3.6.3. Desirable content for young men's programme

Outline desired content for the young men's programme was agreed as:

- Background information on Doras Buí and where the programme originated.
- The legal situation in relation to reproductive health
- Responsible parenting/responsibilities attached to being a parent.
- Exploring relationships/masculinity –assertive behaviors & peer pressure.

- Understanding female and male reproductive systems.
- Sexually transmitted diseases & contraception.

It was agreed that as literacy levels can sometimes be an issue with this target group, appropriate methods for evaluation would be devised.

3.6.4. Profile of participants

Profile of participants young male programme:

- All aged between the age of 16 and 18
- Two from the Travelling community
- The remainder are all from addresses in the Moatview, Belcamp and Bonnybrook districts of the catchment area
- All are early school leavers
- Average age of leaving school was 14

3.6.5. Preparation of Strand 2

Working closely with Youthreach staff, a suitable tutor was sourced and it was agreed that while Youthreach is provided in a mixed sex setting, this material would be best explored in a single sex group and out of the usual location.

Doras Buí staff engaged in lengthy and detailed planning and pre-planning work with Youthreach. While Doras Buí has delivered training in the past off-site, they usually retain control over the training and this partnership approach where content and approach had to be agreed and negotiated between Doras Buí and Youthreach was very successful but also very time consuming.

The programme content for the young men was accredited as part of the FETAC system of accreditation. This meant that the young men gained FETAC credits for participating in the programme.

It was agreed that the tutor would complete the same evaluation sheets as the tutors on the women's programme, while she would build feedback sessions into the work with the young men as part of the programme. Also a half-day evaluation session was also planned as follow up.

3.6.6. Strand 2 Delivery

Areas covered over two and a half days:

- Relationships and how the participants view them.
- Peer pressure and how that affects their sexuality.
- The reproductive systems of the male and female.
- Contraception.
- Sexually transmitted diseases.
- Responsible parenting and the responsibilities attached to being a parent.
- The legal situation in relation to sexual activity.

Methodology:

- The tutor used a variety of methods including brainstorming to see what level of knowledge the participants had of the topic:
- This was followed by input on the relevant information.
- Questionnaires were also used to support learning on topics covered.
- As a therapist, the tutor challenged any unhealthy beliefs expressed.
- Handouts included: STDs, roles of men and women in society, various forms of contraception, aids related sheets, various life situations in relation to responsible parenting.

Nine young men attended the training, which was delivered in Siamsa Training Centre in Meath. Two staff from Doras Buí attended the training in a support role, with three staff from Youthreach. The tutor was very experienced and was a rational emotional therapist and psychologist recommended by the Dublin 17 schools initiative and Youthreach, who had used the trainer before. The training was delivered over two and a half days with a follow-up session.

3.6.7. Feedback from Strand 2

Feedback:

Participant's initial feedback showed that the young men found the session very interesting and liked the materials and approach used by the trainer. They felt included in the training and liked the tutor a lot. Comments from participants on the materials and

approach included: 'I learned a lot,' and 'She made it very clear in terms of preventing accidents from happening.' Also, 'The teacher was talking at my level.'

When asked what was one thing of significance they had learned, the young men said:

'How to prevent diseases.'

'Don't have sex with someone who sleeps around and always wear a condom.'

'That women have to do a lot more than men.'

'To protect yourself.'

'Making love is way better than sex.'

'It's okay to show your emotions.'

The tutor felt that the session worked well and provided an opportunity for the participants to 'look at the tangible consequences of sexual activity.'

She also felt that the module raised a lot of other issues for many participants such as their relationships with their own parents and family situations. She suggested follow up on this with the Youthreach staff who took it on board and have offered follow up with the counselor for those who need or want it. The tutor expressed her own concern at the lack of concrete knowledge of the participants who were actually sexually active.

Their overall rating of the programme was 4/5 out of 5.

The tutor and the staff of the Bonnybrook Youthreach all felt that the programme was a success. They agreed on the strong need for follow-up in support sessions for the participants. They also agreed that the girls in the Youthreach programme could do with attending a similar type of programme, as these matters are usually dealt with as they arise rather than as part of any structured programme.

While the programme was essentially in the general field of sex education, as with the young women's programme, the work seemed to raise issues of a much broader nature to do with their lives and that of their families etc.

In the focus group with Bonnybrook Youthreach after the programme it was agreed that they are interested in running a women only programme supported by Doras Buí on reproductive health. They were very satisfied at the supportive relationships which had developed between the two organizations and hoped it would continue and develop.

In particular, they would be interested in tackling issues with the girls like respect and values, any programme that challenges prevailing misinformation and notions about pregnancy, sex and parenting would be welcome, they said.

The expectations of Bonnybrook Youthreach were exceeded in their experience of the young men's reproductive health programme with Doras Buí.

A further benefit to the Youthreach participants was the socializing aspect of away training sessions.

Opportunities for young people from disadvantaged situations to eat in restaurants, sleep in bed and breakfasts, try new food, and interact socially. These benefits were noted as very important in helping to develop the social skills of participants.

A significant outcome for the Youthreach programme in Bonnybrook is that the centre has decided to make an application to the Crisis Pregnancy Agency to deliver within their own programme a reproductive health module based on the module developed with Doras Buí.

When the participants were brought together for a further half-day to do the evaluation of the programme they were asked about their key learning from the programme, they said:

'Unprotected sex is not worth it.'

'I learned how women get pregnant.'

'I was amazed at the number of STDs there are.'

'Not to abandon your children.'

'To know your role as a father.'

'Effects on a child when there is no father.'

When asked what changes they might make to their lives as a result of the learning on the programme, they said:

‘Not to abandon my children.’

‘To be more careful.’

‘Talk out.’

‘Not to get anyone pregnant soon.’

In terms of changes to the programme, some suggestions included: making it longer, including the girls, more away-days, more on pregnancy and parenting, more on drugs and their effects.

Finally, some participants offered a final comment on the experience of the programme as:

‘Scary.’

‘Learned a lot.’

‘It was good, I got a chance to talk.’

‘Good group experience.’

3.6.8. Summary of outcomes from Strand 1 and Strand 2

The Doras Bui reproductive health awareness programme for young lone mothers and young men delivered on its promise to offer young lone mothers the opportunity to participate in a group based programme to increase their knowledge about their own bodies. It provided them with accurate information on reproductive health issues and build self-awareness about issues of responsibility in relation to their children and their own personal relationships.

The Strand for young men known to be sexually active was also successful and Doras Bui in collaboration with Bonnybrook Youthreach centre has successfully devised and delivered the information workshop for the young men which achieved the stated aim of increasing their knowledge of reproductive health issues and responsibility in sexual relationships.

Chapter 4

Evaluation Results

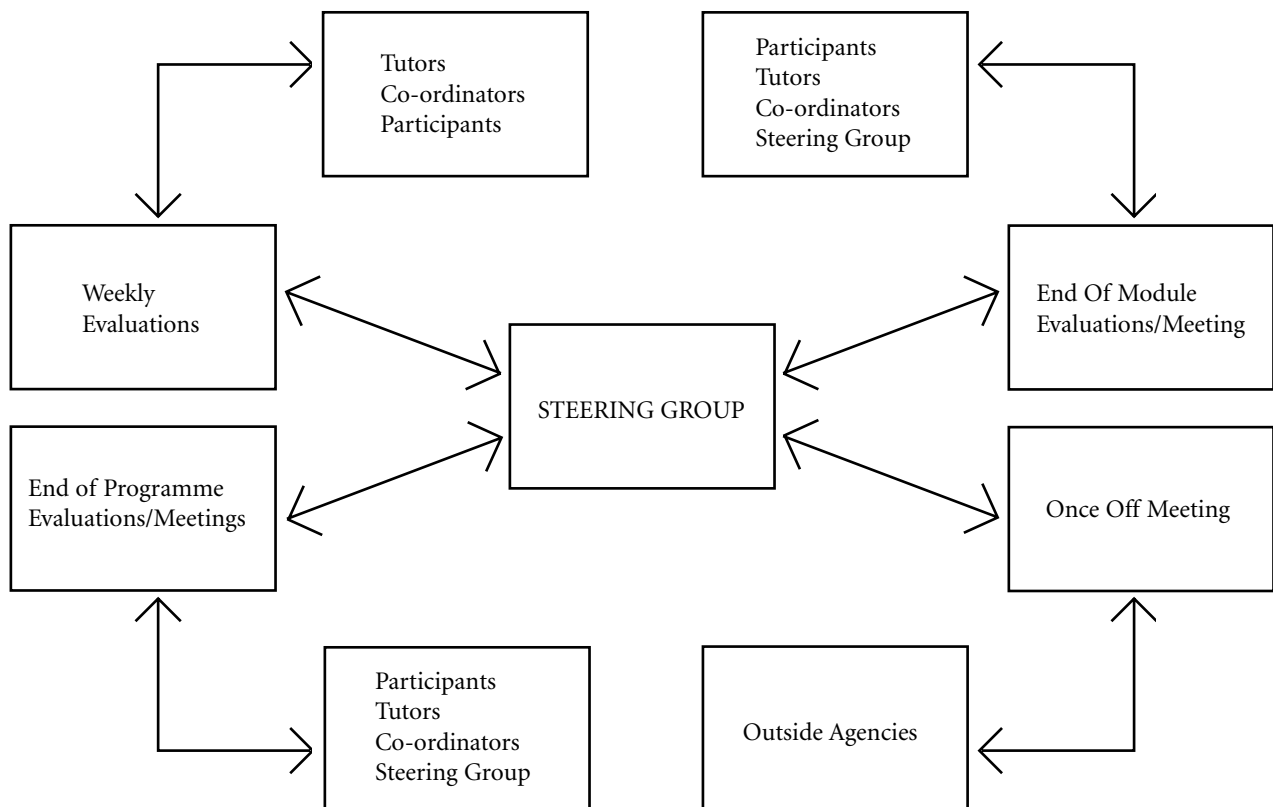
4.1. Overview

The co-evaluation approach worked very well for the development and delivery of the programme. In the planning stage the systems necessary to capture the required information on a regular and systematic basis were set up between the consultant and the steering group. Following on from this regular data gathering exercises with analysis allowed for changes to be made to the programme. Some such changes were in relation to physical changes, such as putting a fan in the room to make it more comfortable or reminding a tutor of the aims of the programme for a two-part session delivery.

Evaluation feedback sheets, with 'good questions' were devised in consultation with the steering group and were reviewed for effectiveness as they were applied. Some tweaking and changing to avoid overlap of questions were made and when a module consisted of only one session, only one evaluation tool was applied to avoid evaluation overload!

The end-of-module review sessions involved key staff delivery persons presenting a short report summary result of the evaluation tools. In most cases the feedback was gathered by a short written questionnaire or in discussion focus groups. Sometimes the evaluation feedback was added to via information interactions between participants and tutors outside of the formal group.

4.2. Co-evaluation structure – diagram



4.3. Co-evaluation development process

A pre-programme planning session created the Doras Buí Co-evaluation Steering Group at which the appropriate level of involvement of all stakeholders was assessed and agreed as follows:

- Programme co-ordinator would complete weekly feedback questionnaires which would include a summary of findings from participants, tutors and outside agency developments. This data would be shared at the end of module Steering Group meetings facilitated by the external consultant.
- Participants would be given daily and end of module questionnaires which would capture their experience, learning, participation and any changes or suggestions for improvement they might have.
- Board of Doras Buí would be presented with a draft of the final report for comment and input.
- Outside agencies and participants would be part of a separate focus group at the end of the programme to glean overall satisfaction and any outstanding issues or lessons going forward.
- Tutors would complete the daily and end of module feedback sheets for the co-ordinators.

Following this session the appropriate sheets and questionnaires were drafted and amended by consultation, ready for administration once the programme began.

4.4. Desired outcomes for the evaluation process included:

- To develop a model of evaluation which can be applied to any project, event or piece of work in the organization.
- To understand how a specific project impacts on the whole organization and share the learning of that.
- To ensure appropriate involvement of others in the organization.
- To use a model which ensures that needs and lessons arising are really heard by the organization.
- To enhance the skills of staff in both evaluation and in general work approach.

- To take a moment to value the work being done and acknowledge the inputs which create the success.

On completion of the programme the above desired outcomes for the evaluation process were reviewed and scored on a scale of 1-5. (1=not achieved 5=achieved) All 6 of the desired outcomes agreed at the outset were achieved over the course of the co-evaluation process of the programme. Thus the process was deemed to have achieved the desired results and Doras Buí are committed to continuing to include co-evaluation as a process in all the work of the organization.

The end-of-module facilitated sessions were found to be especially useful for sharing on an ongoing basis the detail of the programmes development while the opportunity to celebrate ongoing success and make changes as needed were also selected as good outcomes from the co-evaluation process. The experience supports the wishes of Doras Buí staff that such co-evaluation would be an integral part of all the work of the organization.

Chapter 5

Recommendations

1. That Doras Buí seek support, as part of its core grant, to maintain delivery of both Strand 1 (for young mothers) and Strand 2 (for young fathers/men) reproductive health awareness programmes.
2. Given the role that crisis pregnancies play in social exclusion and poverty, Doras Buí should continue to provide services, which include preventative educative work in this area.
3. That Doras Buí continue to find suitable partners amongst the agencies and organizations which have young lone parents amongst their target groups to deliver suitable supports and training from a Doras Buí ethos.
4. That Doras Buí continues to develop the co-evaluation approach to all the projects and core work of the organization as a good practice approach.
5. Given the lack of knowledge amongst both male and female participants of reproductive health matters, schools and youth organizations should prioritise development of appropriate awareness training for boys and girls at school going age. These to include appropriate models, such as the Doras Buí one, for delivery to early school leavers and those in danger of having a crisis pregnancy.
6. Given the number of young lone mothers who are attending Doras Buí regularly and had to leave full-time education, the programme supports Doras Buí's approach to insist on the delivery of a range of interventions for young women of school-going age who get pregnant, so that they may remain in school and complete their education and gain some qualifications for life.
7. That research be commissioned to examine how crisis pregnancy amongst young people can best be tackled, to include inputs from the experiences of lone parent organizations and their clients, such as Doras Buí.

Thank You

*There is so much I wanna say about all of you
That're here today,
Each one of you in your own way has helped
Us be where we are today.*

*Anita who was there from the very start,
Who always cared, who had a heart.
Sarah Jane who told us where to start and
Lorraine who played an epic part.
Dolores who always made our tea and the
Girls in the crèche, most importantly.
To everyone who came in to educate us, I'm
Thanking you from all of us.*

*So now then girls it's time to go, continue to
Learn, continue to grow.
Some faces I'll see most ever day and thank
You girls I had a lovely stay.*

(poem by participant on programme)





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