

## **Workshop B3: Young Offenders**

### **Michael Staines**

I started working in the Children's Court as a defence advocate in approximately 1979 and for the next ten years spent much of my working life there. During that period and indeed up to the present day I also spent time working with different juvenile projects in the North Inner City. In the course of that ten years I probably got to know 80% of all the children who appeared before the Children's Court. Two fundamental points occurred to me quite quickly as a result of my work.

Firstly, we should do our utmost to deal with children within the community from which they come. Secondly we should strive to keep them not only out of juvenile detention centres but also out of the juvenile justice scheme. After thirty years I still hold that these two concepts remain true and should be strived for as much as possible.

Large numbers of interested parties have been demanding reform in the juvenile justice system over the past forty years. The Kennedy committee which was set up by the Government made numerous recommendations in relation to juvenile justice when it reported in 1970. Many of these reforms have been introduced. The age of criminal responsibility has been increased, the outdated 1908 Children's Act has been repealed and many other sentencing options have been given to Judges who deal with children. However the root problems remain the same.

The Children's Court was moved initially from Dublin Castle then to Morgan Place and then to Smithfield. The court in Smithfield has been refurnished leaving it with an extremely large cell (!) and a courtroom which is so designed that it is like a sauna in summer and an ice box in winter. As usual none of us working in the area were asked to advise in relation to these cosmetic changes. What has not changed over the period is that young children are carried on conveyor belts through the best designed educational system we have in this country. Educating the kids for crime is not something we should be proud of however. The Children's Court performs the function of a kindergarten where neophytes meet other people and indeed older people much better educated than they are in various criminal techniques and concepts. These older kids will often take them on as apprentices and will eventually give them something that society will not – a job. This job is, however, in the criminal sector. The court proceedings themselves are a mystery to the kids. They go in to a small room where they listen to judges, guards and solicitors speaking in an archaic language, are they going to elect for a trial on indictment, do they permanently deprive the owner? Even adults find this type of language hard to understand. This workshop is being run under the auspices of the International Society for the Reform of Criminal Law. Because of the peculiar way which our legislature repeal, substitute and amend previous legislation I find it quite difficult to understand new provisions in new legislation. If I do, the children being brought before our Children's Court are in an even more difficult situation. The sooner the criminal is codified in this Country the better.

Moving up through our educational system they will attend the primary schools of St Michael's and St Laurence's and the Secondary Schools of Oberstown, Trinity House and St

Patrick's (which in the words of Fr. Peter McVerry is "a disaster and an obscenity") and will eventually graduate to Mountjoy or Wheatfield. At that stage over two thirds of them are committed to the life of crime. If one was asked to design a system to foster the development of criminality in the country we could not devise a better scheme. Children who appear in the Children's Court have one characteristic in common, almost all are children who come from a deprived background. I can say this anecdotally but many reports confirm this and I commend the report of Dr. Jennifer Hayes and Dr. Gary O'Reilly published in 2007 which describes exactly the type of children that appear before our courts. That is not to say that middle class children do not commit crime but for whatever reason a child from such a background is a rarity in the Children's Court. Children Court Kids inhabit a world of wholesale unemployment and irrelevant education. Many come from broken homes, dysfunctional families and alcoholic parents. Of course these days many come from families riven by the drug menace. As we predicted back in the 1980's we now have situations where not only are the children taking drugs but their parents are drug addicts and worst still their grandparents are drug addicts. At University I studied Criminology and at that time one of the great unsolved problems was "what makes a person a criminal?". The idea was that if we could identify potential criminals we could divert them from a life of crime and thus immediately ameliorate their and society's future. In today's Ireland there is not the slightest problem identifying a large number of kids who will appear in the Children's Court in the future and we can identify them even before that they are born. I know that the social workers and community workers that I associate with in my work in the North Inner City would be in a position to prepare a list of the names of children who will be in trouble in fifteen years time. Many years ago Peter McVerry made the same comment on the Late Late Show. In my mind's eye I prepared a list of clients that my office would be acting for in fifteen years from then and that list proved to be correct. Since we have this information the onus rests on society to divert these children away from the juvenile justice system and away from a life of crime. Instead society seems to prefer to spend huge sums of money on guards, courts, judges, solicitors, jails and secure residential centres rather than spending this money at an earlier stage when the children are growing up and when it is really needed. As I stated earlier my belief is that children should be dealt with in the community from which they come. If sufficient youth encounter projects, adventure sport centres and residential hostels were set up, my view is that many kids could be diverted away from a life of crime. Society does not appear to be sufficiently interested in these alternative methods of dealing with the problem. The Probation Service have had their allocations capped and several of the projects that we work with in the North Inner City have difficulties in obtaining sufficient funds. There does appear however to be plenty of funds to create children's detention centres (otherwise children's prisons). At the time Trinity House was created approximately twenty five years ago ( I recently got a letter indicating that they were celebrating! twenty five years of existence) this project cost millions to set up and at the same time inner city projects such as the Adventure Sports Centre almost had to close down due to lack of funds. This was a project that had great success with some children who were involved in stealing cars and driving them, by offering them the alternative of legal use of cars, motorbikes and at one stage a small hovercraft.

I remember well when both Loughan House (a children's prison) built in the wilds of Co. Cavan, (as far away from the children's community as possible) and Trinity House were opened. At the time there was a large amount of serious juvenile crime. Judges and police were demanding secure residential places. What happened? As soon as they opened the first

facility all the places were taken by the first available kids that came along including kids that only had two or three convictions. A large number of the kids who were causing the real damage missed the cut and were from then on untouchable. These children had been threatened with secure residential placements and they went to Court expecting to take them up and were pleasantly surprised to find that there was no room for them. A threatened sanction that cannot be imposed is worse than no sanction at all. However, a strange thing happened. Some of these children ended up going to Tabor House, a residential unit which was set up in the North Inner City Community and dealt with kids at risk. Some were dealt with in the Youth Encounter Projects and Adventure Sports Project already spoken about and others just continued on their merry way. The surprising thing was that many of these children did much better than the actual kids who ended up in Loughan House and Trinity House and the reason for this is simple. The children came from a community, they must be dealt with within the community. It is madness to think you can take a city kid away from the city for two years and then dump him back into the milieu from which he has come without any real supports and expect him not to re-offend. On the other hand, if a child is shown love and affection and is brought up in a homely atmosphere within the community there is some chance that they will make it. At least he does not have to put up with the shock of reorganising himself back into a community from which he was wrenched two years previously.

In all the time that I was working in the Children's Court I came to the conclusion that there were only two kids of all the kids I dealt with who should have been locked up in Trinity House. By far the most difficult child I have ever dealt with went to Tabor House, the residential home already mentioned. During the period he was there he did not get into any serious trouble. When he left he recommenced re-offending and is now a drug addict and is seriously ill.

However, the improvement in him as a person was phenomenal and I am of the view that with a few exceptions every child that passed through Tabor and other such projects received something from it which helped him in later years. Had there been a proper aftercare program to deal with the kids when they came out of the other inner city projects, they could have done even better. But even the children who re-offended seemed to me to be better human beings than they had been before they went into the projects.

The other child of whom I speak was the leader of a group that ransacked the city at the time. There was no room for him in Trinity House. He is now happily married and has settled down and as far as I can make out is committing no crime. Most of his colleagues are either dead or are seriously addicted to drugs such has been the effect of the drug problem. As indicated earlier, the drug problem which in effect commenced in Dublin in the beginning of the eighties has made a very difficult situation almost impossible. What chance has a twelve year old if both his parents are suffering from Aids and are drug abusers and, if indeed, that also can be said of his grandparents. Bringing such a child before the Court to listen to proceedings he cannot understand is nonsensical. Even young children of that age are now becoming addicted to heroin. They have to commit much more crime in order to feed their habit. These crimes are that much more serious than heretofore. Handbag robberies were almost unknown thirty years ago and serious aggravated burglary and robberies using weapons such as syringes have greatly increased and are being committed by juveniles. As I see it, the only possible answer is to attempt to divert potential offenders away from the juvenile justice system and especially the Children's Court.

There have been many attempts made to do just this and full recognition must be given to them.

There of course have been improvements over the past number of years. I am particularly impressed by the Garda Diversion Program and other work carried on by the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers. The objective of the Diversion Program is to deal with children who commit crimes by way of a caution thus obviating the need to bring them to the courts and keeping them out of the criminal educational system which I have referred to earlier. I understand that the Liaison Officers also work with the families of these children and also with other projects in their area. Finally they spend time visiting schools and projects giving lectures and workshops to children. In the North Inner City there is a specific community/Garda project whereby members of the community and the Gardai can speak about matters which are causing difficulty in the community and thus help to avoid trouble before it actually starts.

As a result of the new legislation there are now many more non-custodial methods of dealing with children who are brought before the court. If these work this at least means that the children do not go to the prisons that I have spoken about. Again it would be preferable if the children never had to go to court at all but once they are there it is better that they are dealt with in the community as opposed to being taken away from it. I refer you to the list of community sanctions as set out on page 47 of the National Youth Justice Strategy 2008 -

2010, a copy of which is attached<sup>1</sup>. I understand that whereas one or two District Court Judges may receive some training in relation to dealing with children, the vast majority of them do not and in fact they are in the position of all other judges in this country who in my view ought to receive training in aspects of sociology, psychology, community studies and dealing with children. All the judges that I know who have worked in the Children's Court were sympathetic and had the children's welfare at heart but found the system very hard to deal with.

I also believe that the community and social workers who work in the communities from which these children originate now appear to be working much closer together to ensure that much fewer children slip through the net. A discussion as to what the various community groups are doing in the North Inner City would take up a full speech so what I have done is I have attached to my speech an update from the YPAR (Young People at Risk Initiative) which may be of interest<sup>2</sup>.

These community based projects need as much Government assistance as possible. All of the projects which I have mentioned were set up more or less at the same time as the famous Gregory deal when the Government under Charles Haughey was prepared to plough money into the North Inner City to obtain the vote of Tony Gregory TD. At the time there was a small number of very committed local community activists and who then started running these projects and who I can confirm worked way beyond the hours they were required to do. One of the aims of these groups was to get young people who possibly would have been at risk themselves to involve themselves in this type of work and perhaps become community workers themselves. This has succeeded to some extent but it is very hard to find the same level of commitment and vocation that was exhibited in earlier years. There have been many new projects, one of which is the Wexford Centre Project which is worth mentioning in some small detail. For transparency I must point out that I am Chairman of the Management Committee. It was felt that all the projects in the North Inner City could benefit if a premises was purchased down the country where each of the projects could bring the kids attached to that project to that house and out of the environs of Dublin for even a few days a couple of times a years. As a result of a private donation and of money received from the Irish Youth Foundation such a house was purchased in Wexford and huge support was then given to it by the Probation Services and the Eastern Health Board as it then was. This house has now become the jewel in the crown of community work in the North Inner City and many kids at risk, other kids in projects and their workers have availed of the facility in recent years. There are residential projects in the Inner City which also deal with kids at risk such as Tabor which I have mentioned already. It is projects like these that the Government should be financing rather than putting the money in to new prisons for juveniles. That having been said there is no doubt that St Patricks must be closed down and perhaps a juvenile prison such as the one envisaged for Thorntan Hall should be built. I cannot understand why it has to be built miles way from the community from which these kids originate and I see no reason why a purpose built prison could not be built on part of the Mountjoy Prison site rather than selling the whole thing off for redevelopment.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2

Other speakers will deal in much more detail with other initiatives. I am just sad that all the predictions that people such as Peter McVerry, Fergus McCabe and myself made twenty and thirty years ago have all been fulfilled.

The most troubling thing about all of this is that we talk a lot about problem kids. As indicated, I knew the vast majority of kids who passed through the Juvenile Justice System twenty years ago. Many of them have had great potential and talents that would have benefited society. In particular some of the girls had beauty, innate intelligence and personality so that if they had come from different backgrounds they would have been film stars or actresses. Some of the lads with great sporting abilities would have ended up playing for famous teams and indeed Ireland, if their potential had been realised. Some of the lads that we played soccer with and who were capable of destroying us on the football field are now either dead or are shambling drug addicts walking around homeless in their own city. That was the great waste. I knew it at the time and the District Judges also knew it. We all just seemed powerless to do anything about it.

Other people from my office now work in the Children's Court. You will hear speeches today from other persons who are working there. All of these people are saying now what I said twenty years ago. I can only hope that if this workshop is held in another fifteen years time that the speeches may then be different.

## Appendix One

*National Youth Justice Strategy 2008 – 2010* 47

### Appendix 3: Community sanctions

The provisions of the Children Act 2001 (as amended) provided for additional community sanctions to the Courts. These sanctions are aimed at reducing the number of children sentenced to detention by the Courts and improving the outcomes for children in a range of areas, including such matters as the rate of re-offending, education attainment, family supports and substance abuse. An investment of €104m is being made under the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 for the implementation of these new community sanctions. In April, 2007, the Government agreed the allocation of additional resources to allow for the effective implementation of the Children Act 2001. The additional resources include staff for the Probation Service and the Courts Service.

The following are a list of the range of community sanctions now available and involve the Probation Service and specifically the Young Persons Probation (YPP) Division:

- **Day Centre Order (Section 118 of the Children Act 2001(as amended)):** This requires a young person to attend a Day Centre for the purpose of participating in an occupation or activity or to receive

instruction that is suitable to the child's development and beneficial to the child. This order is for a maximum period of 90 days/6 months.

• **Training or Activities Order (Section 124 of the Children Act 2001(as amended)):** This order requires the child to complete a programme of training or specified activities which is suitable for the

child's development and designed to prevent the child from re-offending.

• **Probation (Intensive Supervision) Order (Section 125 of the Children Act 2001 (as amended)):**

This order provides for a child to be closely supervised and to complete an education/training or treatment

programme while residing at a specified residence (living at home or with an adult). The order cannot

exceed 180 days and if the order is over 90 days, it is subject to review after 60 days.

• **Probation (Residential Supervision) Order (Section 126 of the Children Act 2001 (as amended)):**

This order provides that a child shall reside in a hostel residence. The child shall be under the direction of

the person in charge of the residence, which should be reasonably close to the young person's usual place

of residence or to any place where the young person is receiving education or training or is employed. The

hostel must be inspected and certified as suitable for use by the Head of the Probation Service.

The order

should not exceed one year's duration.

• **A Suitable Person (Care and Supervision) Order (Section 129 of the Children Act 2001**

**(as amended)):** A Court may assign a child to the care of a suitable adult, including a relative. The parents

or guardian of the child must consent in writing and the Probation Service must inform the Court that a

suitable person is available. This order carries a maximum duration of 2 years.

## Appendix Two



## YPAR Update April 2008

The Young People at Risk Initiative (YPAR) started working in Dublin North-East Inner City in January 2004. Activities are focussed on promoting better outcomes and policy change in relation to children and young people at risk. A central element is the full involvement of young people in the process. Key Goals include:

- To develop responses to the identified and emerging needs of young people at risk
- To facilitate the participation of young people and their families in the development of services in the community
- To develop common protocols to facilitate the integration of service provision and delivery for young people at risk

The Initiative is managed by representatives of all key players involved in integration process; Statutory, Voluntary/Community project representatives.

### **Strategic Plan (2005 – 2008)**

- YPAR Strategic plan (2006-2009) has continued to be reviewed on a six monthly basis.
- It is noted that much of its agreed actions have been completed.
- A Final six monthly review will take place in the Autumn
- The Steering Group will also undertake some preliminary work on a new three year Strategic Plan will begin in the Autumn.

### **Resourcing**

- It has been agreed that YPAR will get financial support from Mott Foundation. €50,000 per year.
- The Management Sub Group of the YPAR Steering Committee has made specific recommendations to Statutory Agencies regarding funding and other resources for YPAR activities- formal response is awaited.
- These recommendations include the provision of adequate funding resources for ongoing staffing, coordination and evaluation of the Protocol etc. (See below).

### **YPAR Protocol for Coordinating Interagency Services**

- A consultation process on interagency working with YPAR members and other local agencies was facilitated by Kieran McKeown during 2007.
- The resulting Report *Working Together – A Study of an Initiative to coordinate Multi Agency Services for Young People at Risk in North East Inner City of Dublin* was published in March 2007 made specific recommendations.
- A Protocol Dev Group comprising reps from key agencies met during the Autumn of 2007 to draw up a Draft Protocol on Interagency working
- This Document was agreed by the Steering Committee and agencies were asked to formally sign up to implementing the Protocol.
- Training took place in January 2008 with staff from those participating agencies who drew up the Protocol.
- A Protocol Steering Group comprising reps made up of those agencies who signed up have agreed to oversee the implementation of the protocol
- YPAR General Meeting of YPAR members and other invited agency staff was held on March 12<sup>th</sup> where other agencies were asked to also become partners in signing up to the Protocol.
- Piloting of the Protocol is now taking place with full implementation and launch of the Protocol will take place at a later date.

### **YEPP**

In 2004, YPAR has been a member of a transnational network, YEPP, ([www.yepp-community.org](http://www.yepp-community.org)). The overall goal of YEPP is to promote systemic change through: Youth and community empowerment, holistic and community-based solutions, and cross-sectoral partnerships on local, national, and trans-national levels. YPAR has agreed in principal to take part in the next phase YEPP II. YPAR will host the 3<sup>rd</sup> YEPP Community Conference which will take place in NCI in June 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of this year. A number of local young people will be involved in activities including Media training



# **Young People at Risk Initiative**



**Dublin North East  
Inner City**

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## Young People at Risk Initiative YPAR

The **Young People at Risk Initiative** (YPAR) started working in Dublin North-East Inner City in January 2004. For Background on the Process to date see the Appendix below.

YPAR has defined a child at-risk as:

*“Primarily a child/young person aged 0 to 18 years experiencing severe personal, family, educational or social problems (which could benefit from outside support).”*

Risk Factors include early school leaving, anti-social behaviour and crime, drug and alcohol abuse.

**Partners** are; Inner City Organisations Network, Health Service Executive Northern Region, Dept. of Education and Science, City of Dublin Youth Service Board, National Education Welfare Board, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Youth Foundation, voluntary and community groups operating in the North-East Inner City of Dublin are represented at Steering Level. YPAR also has full support and involvement of statutory agencies and Initiatives including the Local Drug Task Force, Dublin Inner City Partnership and Community Policing Forum etc.

### **Mission**

YPAR’s Mission is:

*“To promote and develop a principled and integrated approach to working with young people that serves their needs and realises their dreams.”*

### **Main Goals are:**

- To establish **an integrated, interagency structure** for children and youth at risk
- To **improve the quality and delivery of services** for children and youth at risk
- To **establish appropriate mechanisms to co-ordinate and integrate services** for children and youth at risk
- To support young people at risk in **accessing services, education, training and employment**
- To **ensure anti-discriminatory and accessible policies and practices** in services for young people at risk
- To **support children and youth** at risk to develop the skills and capacities needed **to become active members of the community**
- To **ensure the voices and views of young people at risk to be heard**
- To **evaluate the intervention** from the very beginning in order to monitor progress and to learn what works and what doesn’t.

## **Structures**

A Steering Committee manages the Initiative, made up of representatives of the key players involved in integration process; Statutory, Voluntary and Community representatives including local young people.

YPAR is co-ordinated David Little on a half time basis.

## **Working Groups**

YPAR operates through a number of Working Groups that have been set up to address specific prioritised issues or gaps. The Working Groups are the means through which representatives of agencies can input into the YPAR process and forward the Strategic Plan (see below). Working Groups *include* the Foreign National Young People Working Group, Youth participation Working Groups and Early Years Working Groups.

## **YPAR Strategic Plan**

YPAR is currently at the end of its 2005 – 2008 Plan which has been reviewed on a six monthly basis. A Final six monthly review will take place in the Autumn

It is noted that much of its agreed actions have been completed. The Steering Group will also undertake some preliminary work on a new three year Strategic Plan will begin in the Autumn.

## **Key Objectives of YPAR Strategic Plan**

- Developing the Process of Integration at local level with agencies and community groups through the identification of common principles, codes of practice, and protocols etc .
- The maximising of Information and Communication between local key agencies re integrated approach and ownership of Strategic Plan
- A Number of Areas of Need and Gaps in Services have been identified – These include - After-hours/Weekend services, Afterschool Care, respite care, school transitions etc.
- The full involvement of Young People in the process is a key element;
- To Influence Policy and lobby to promote integrated and interagency work at appropriate levels; Govt. Department, agency levels and local levels..
- Evaluation and Research To try to creatively measure the outcomes and impact of early interventions; through case histories, case conference outcomes tracking;

## **YEPP**

YPAR is a partner site of the transnational Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme (YEPP) (see Appendix). YEPP was initiated by a group of foundations.

The overall goal of this joint initiative is to promote systemic change for equitable and democratic societies and sustainable human development through

- youth and community empowerment,

- holistic and community-based solutions, and
- cross-sectoral partnerships on local, national, and trans-national levels.

# Appendix

## Background

The Young People at Risk (YPAR) initiative brings together a number of different strands, which have been gathering momentum over the past two decades or so. Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, various statutory and community initiatives have sought to improve the lives of people in the NEIC, particularly children and young people at risk. On the voluntary/ community side, **ICON** is a network organisation of approximately 65 community and voluntary projects and local interested individuals that was formally launched in **1993** to tackle social disadvantage, exclusion and long-term unemployment through acting a forum for debate, policy-making and lobbying on issues that affect the local community.

The perceived need to integrate services generally, and particularly for children at risk in the NEIC has underpinned much of **ICON**'s work over the past 10 years or so. The issue of '*Youth and Childcare*' was addressed at **ICON**'s first seminar in 1993, where participants noted that schooling and education failed to meet the needs of children in the area. The **ICON** '*Youth, Family and Childcare*' Working Group recognised the need for an integrated approach to childcare and child development by considering children in terms of school, family and community by forging links between them. The **Integrated Services Initiative** (ISI), which grew out of **ICON**'s **1994** conference and operated until 1997, arose from a concern that considerable public resources were devoted to educational, health, justice and social services and were not having an impact in terms of alleviating social problems and promoting social development and solidarity.

As a result of the success of the ISI, the North East inner city was selected for a new government pilot programme, called the **Integrated Services Process** (ISP), to integrate the delivery of services in areas of disadvantage. This programme operated in the North East inner city of Dublin from **1998** to 2001. The conclusion to the ISI report emphasised the need to coordinate services and specifically those targeted at young people, as follows:

'Despite the considerable public resources which are currently devoted to a wide range of social services in the North East Inner City, it is clear that the area is suffering intense social and economic decline. The poverty of the area gives rise to an intensity of needs and to consequently high levels of service provision required to meet these needs. ISI's starting point in attempting to improve the provision of services has included analysis of the needs of families which are services are intended to meet, the needs actually met and a profile of unmet customer needs... Many of the issues involve several different agencies and are best addressed through collaborative approaches. The models recommended go well beyond improved inter-agency communication or cooperation around individual cases. While this activity is important, it is not sufficient to allow the planning and delivery of services, which contribute to long-term development of the community and the prevention of crises. We recommend a fully integrated, multidimensional model, requiring the establishment of joint planning, goals, activities and policy development. Local people must have a key role in service design and delivery and their participation is central to this process.... We recommend the establishment of a pilot project to develop innovative approaches providing and developing services to meet the needs of young parents and their children in the North East Inner City'.

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ICON responded to the issue of children at risk by establishing a sub-group, RIPON, in 2000 and this was effectively the start of the Young People At Risk (YPAR) process. RIPON comprised members of voluntary, statutory and community organisations working directly or indirectly with children and young people with the purpose of integrating services for children at risk in the NEIC. An essential element of RIPON was that its vision and plan for integration should be constructed by a membership working on the ground with children and families. The aim of the group was to promote high quality, effective and coordinated services to children at risk, through the integration of services.

In August 2000, RIPON facilitated a workshop of key statutory, community and voluntary service providers in response to a growing concern that services were not meeting the needs of children and young people experiencing on-going problems regarding crime, addiction, homelessness, lack of education and training etc<sup>3</sup>. A second workshop '*Exploring Child-care services in the North Inner City*' was held in October 2000 where it was decided to continue the process, to include other relevant agencies in the process, to discuss the outcomes with ICON's *Youth, Family Support & Childcare Group*, and to develop the principles and policies that would govern the development of an integrated child-care programme.

In 2002 RIPON produced a draft proposal for the integration of services for children at risk in the NEIC. Six aims were identified in this proposal:

1. To have appropriate mechanisms in place at a local level to coordinate and integrate services for children at risk in the North Inner City of Dublin.
2. To ensure that an appropriate level of accurate and timely information is available to inform the response to the problem of children at risk.
3. To support children at risk in the North Inner City to develop the life skills needed to become effective members of the community.
4. To allow the voices and views of young people at risk to be heard.
5. To support children at risk in accessing services, clubs or training through street and outreach work.
6. To promote and ensure anti-discriminatory and accessible policies and practices in services for children at risk in the North Inner City.

Although ICON was the driving force for this process, they also recognised that the process could not operate effectively without the active involvement of relevant statutory agencies. The active involvement of statutory agencies was not perceived to be readily forthcoming<sup>4</sup> and eventually

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<sup>3</sup> The workshop identified 'an urgent need for a coherent approach to the provision of services for children and young people in the area'. The group defined a 'child at risk' as follows: 'A child (0-18 years) experiencing severe personal, family, educational and social problems'.

<sup>4</sup> The problem was not just reluctance on the part of state agencies to cooperate with voluntary and community groups, but also with one another. In the words of one local activist: *There is a very poor history in the country of state agencies co-operating with one another or, in fairness, state agencies being enabled to cooperate with one another*'.

ICON decided to approach the National Children's Office and the Minister for Children in 2002. As a direct consequence of this meeting, formal meetings were set up between the Northern Area Health Board (NAHB), the Department of Justice, and the Department of Education.

In June **2003**, it was agreed to operate the YPAR project through the structures of the Local Child Protection Committee (LCPC). The project was taken on board as an inter-agency project, where ICON would take the lead, subject to the governance of the LCPC, on which the Department of Education and Probation & Welfare were represented. Other partners in YPAR included the Northern Area Health Board, the Local Drug Task Force, CDYSB, and the Education Welfare Board. A steering committee was established to manage the YPAR initiative and comprised representatives of the key players involved in the process. Three sub-groups were also set up to focus on three different age groups: 0-5 years; 6-12 years; and 13-18 years.

In **2004**, the NEIC was selected as one of the local sites (Centre of High Intensity) for the *Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme* (YEPP), which was initiated by a group of foundations, including the Irish Youth Foundation, to establish an innovative European and trans-Atlantic partnership of the independent, public and private sectors targeted at disadvantaged children and youth and the communities in which they live ([www.yepp-community.org](http://www.yepp-community.org)). The overall goal of YEPP is to promote systemic change for equitable and democratic societies and sustainable human development through:

- Youth and community empowerment.
- Holistic and community-based solutions, and
- Cross-sectoral partnerships on local, national, and trans-national levels.

A mapping exercise of services was initiated in the latter part of 2004 to highlight any existing gaps and/or duplications in service provision in the NEIC. The final report from this exercise is due in September 2005.

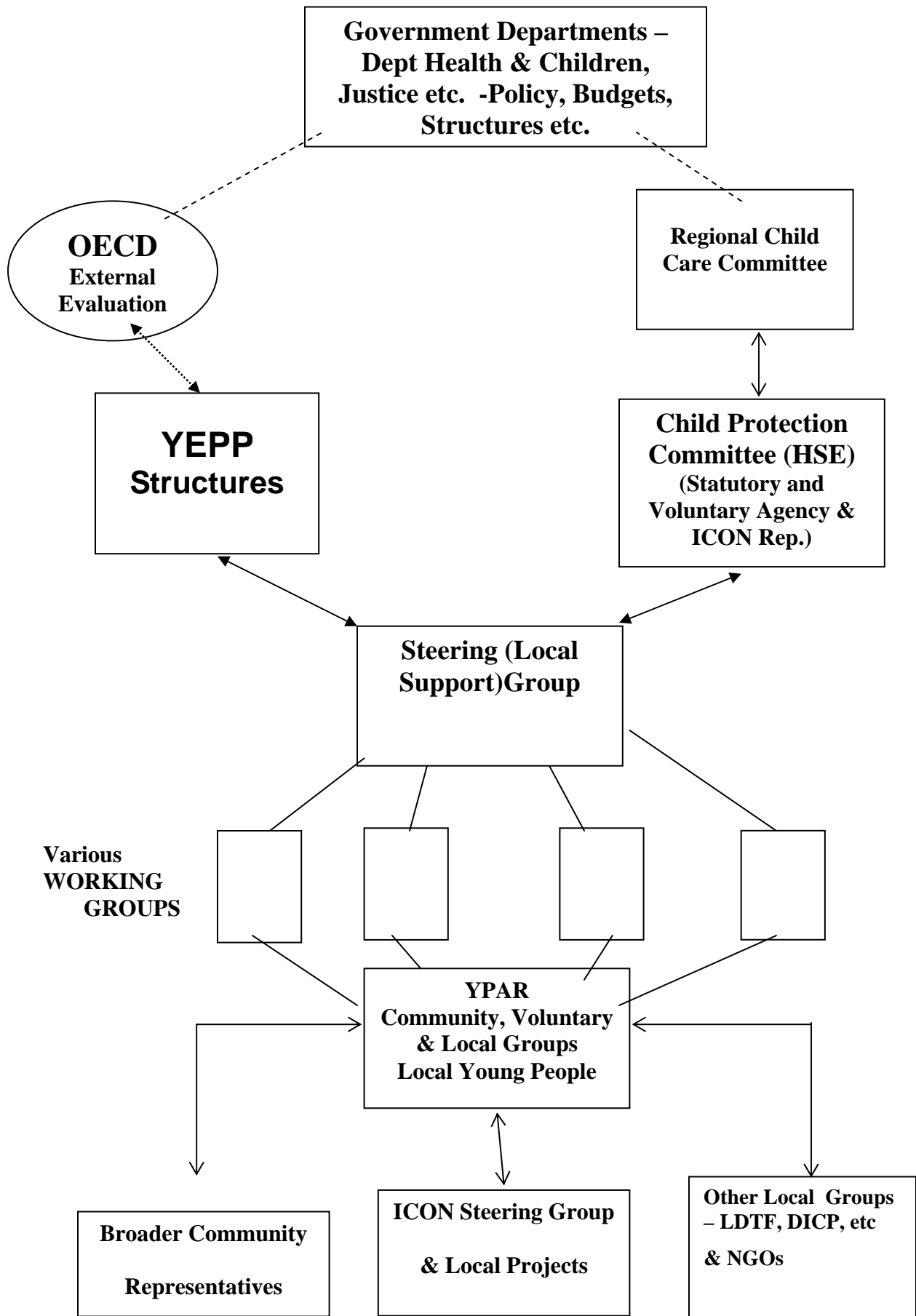
During 2004 and into **2005**, the steering committee decided on a number of strategic goals and objectives for the YEPP local development process, which will form the basis of the operational plan. The goals comprised the following:

1. To establish an integrated, interagency structure for children and youth at risk.
2. To improve the quality and delivery of services for children and youth at risk.
  - To establish appropriate mechanisms to coordinate and integrate services for children and youth at risk.
  - To support young people at risk in accessing services, education, training and employment.
  - To ensure anti-discriminatory and accessible policies and practices in services for young people at risk.
  - To support children and youth at risk to develop the skills and capacities needed to become active members of the community.
  - To ensure the voices and views of young people at risk are heard.



- To evaluate the intervention from the very beginning in order to monitor progress and to learn what does and doesn't work.

The task of the Steering Group is to operationalise these goals in light of the needs of young people at risk in the NEIC of Dublin.



# **Protocol for Coordinating Inter-Agency Services For 0-18 Year Olds in the North Inner City of Dublin**

This protocol provides an agreed structure for supporting cooperation between agencies in the north inner city of Dublin for the purpose of ensuring a coordinated, person-centred service for children, young people and their families. Agencies who adopt this protocol undertake to use it as the template for inter-agency coordination in all situations where a multi-agency response is required, whether that involves prevention, early intervention or treatment<sup>5</sup>.

It is recognised that the agencies who serve the north inner city of Dublin operate with somewhat different catchment areas. This protocol encourages each agency to be flexible in accommodating the catchment areas of other agencies, and to ensure that no one who needs a service is denied it because of difficulties in defining catchment areas.

The basic concept of the protocol is that any agency can seek the assistance of another agency to support a child, young person, or family by calling a case meeting at which a care plan is agreed and then implemented. The protocol outlines a set of procedures to enable this to happen as efficiently as possible. As such, it is designed to support and strengthen the implementation of Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, whose procedures for child protection always apply. Similarly, it is not intended that this protocol will replace existing informal contacts between agencies.

The ultimate aim of this protocol is to support the delivery of high-quality, person-centred services to children, young people and their families. As such, it is part of a broader quality framework designed to ensure that services are delivered to the highest standard. The effectiveness of the protocol therefore requires not just an external conformity to agreed procedures, but an internalised commitment by staff in all agencies to an ethic of excellence in their relationships with children, young people and families – and in their relationships with other professionals and agencies. Accordingly, all agencies who subscribe to the protocol are committed to developing a quality framework for services and ensuring that a practice of excellence pervades both its inter-agency work as well as its relations with children, young people and families.

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<sup>5</sup> Services are sometimes referred to as forms of intervention which vary according to the time at which they intervene in the life of a problem. Some interventions are made before the problem is allowed to emerge (prevention), others occur after the problem has emerged but are made early in order to stop the problem getting worse (early intervention), while yet others take place when the problem is fully developed in order to address the consequences which have evolved (late intervention, sometimes referred to as treatment). These concepts can be illustrated using the example of interventions to promote the well-being of children and their mothers. Prevention could take the form of ensuring that pregnant mothers have good mental health and have healthy lifestyles. Early intervention could involve regular screening of children in terms of developmental milestones, mental health and reading ability while offering support to mothers who may be showing signs of negative affect and depression, or using excessive discipline on the child. Late intervention would involve addressing emotional, behavioural or intellectual difficulties which are displayed when the child goes to school, or serious difficulties in the parent-child relationship, or maternal depression and dependence on sedatives, tranquilisers and anti-depressants.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Steering or Protocol Group</b>
Adventure Sports Project	
After School Education Support North wall	
<b>An Garda Siochana</b>	✓
Anna Liffey Children's Project	
ATD 4th World	
Ballybough Youth Services	
Belvedere Youth Club	
Bernardo's Family Resource Centre	
Bradog Youth Services	
Bradog	
C.T.A.	
Cairde	
Cavan Centre	
<b>CDYSB</b>	✓
Child Care Centre Amiens Street	
Children's Acts Advisory Board (CAAB)	
Community afterschools Project CASPr	
Community Policing Forum	
<b>Crinan Youth Project</b>	✓
Crosscare	
Curam Family Centre	
CYC	
DALC	
DICP	
DIME Project	
Director of Public Health Nursing	
<b>Dublin City Council</b>	✓
Foundations Project CDVEC	
Hill Street family Resource Centre	
Holy Child Pre-school	
Home Scholl Community Liaison	
HOPE	
<b>HSE Childcare Manager</b>	✓
<b>ICON</b>	✓
ICRG	
Inner City Drug Task Force	
<b>Irish Youh Foundation</b>	✓
Juvenile Liaison Officers	

<b>Larkin Community College</b>	✓
LES	
LYCS	✓
Marino College	
Mater Child Guidance Clinic	
Mount Carmel School	
<b>National Education &amp; Welfare Board</b>	✓
National Educational Psychological Service	
NCCCAP	
NICDTF	
Nichol Project (Garda Diversion Project)	
North Wall women's Centre	
<b>NYP 1</b>	✓
<b>NYP 2</b>	✓
<b>Ozanam House Children's Centre</b>	✓
Probation Service	
<b>Probation and Welfare Service (Juvenile Team)</b>	✓
Progression Routes SAOL	
Public Health Nursing	
Rutland Street Pre-school	
Saol Project	
School Completion Programme	
Separated Children Education Service	
Sheriff Street Pre-school	
SLOT 2	
Social Work Department	
Special Education Project	
St Brigid's Day Nursery	
St Louise's day care centre	
St Mary's Nursery	
St Vincents Trust	
Store St Garda	
SWAN Youth Service	
Tabor House	
Talbot Centre	
Transition Project Equal	
Transitions Project	
<b>Wexford Centre</b>	✓
Youth Advocate Programme (YAP)	

Youth Reach
Youthreach Transition Centre