Report of the Pilot Phase of the

Special Educational Needs Initiative

in Youthreach

January 2007 to June 2008

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Preface

This report is an account of the Special Education Needs Initiative in Youthreach. The SEN Initiative is an action to provide for learners with special educational needs which was piloted in twenty Youthreach centres between January 2007 and June 2008. This report gives the background to the Initiative; outlines the needs of learners as identified by stakeholders and others; reviews the relevant research literature; tells the story of the implementation of the Initiative during the pilot phase; details the range of actions that were introduced by the twenty centres and how these were organised and structured; describes the impact of the Initiative on the learners as reported by the centre coordinators; summarises the coordinators' reflections on their experience of the Initiative; and concludes with a discussion of both the practical outcomes and the learning achieved during the pilot phase and consideration of future directions.

The methodology used in the SEN Initiative was action research. Action research "takes its cues – its questions, puzzles, and problems – from the perceptions of practitioners within particular, local practice contexts… It builds descriptions and theories within the practice of the context itself, and tests them there through intervention experiments …" (Argyris and Schön, 1991: 86). According to Reason and Bradbury, the primary purpose of action research "is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives. A wider purpose … is to contribute through this practical knowledge to the increased well-being – economic, political, psychological, spiritual – of human persons and communities**…"** (Reason and Bradbury, 2001:2).

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The third part of the report explores the needs and difficulties of Youthreach learners, drawing on sociological data, the experience and insight of those responsible for their education and the analyses of inspectors and psychologists. The incidence of special educational need, as defined by the EPSEN Act, is high and considerably greater than that found in post-primary schools, particularly in the areas of specific or mild general learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Section 4   Research literature and theoretical influences

The ways in which four distinct theoretical disciplines – youth work, guidance, special education and developmental psychology – have informed the model used in the SEN Initiative are reviewed in this section.   All stress the centrality of personal engagement. Also important is understanding and taking into account the young person's social and economic contexts; the tailoring of responses to their unique situation; listening to their voice; good quality teaching; a secure, ordered environment; the deliberate promotion of emotional and social competencies; the use of informal and non-formal approaches; and the provision of training, guidance and support to staff.

Section 5   The WebWheel model

The fifth section describes the WebWheel model, which is a set of structures, systems and practices for supporting learners that was informed by the analysis of learner needs and the research literature discussed in the previous sections. The WebWheel encourages a positive centre culture; provision of mentoring in a formal, timetabled way; profiling and individual action planning; and inter-agency working. Staff capacity building through training, case supervision and staff support measures is also central to the model.

Section 6   The establishment of the Special Educational Needs Initiative

The pilot Special Educational Needs Initiative in twenty Youthreach centres commenced in January 2007. The financial resources invested were €58,500 per annum per group of 25 learners. The Initiative was led by the senior psychologist in Further Education Section, supported by an advisory committee. Structural inputs included a national programme of staff development. An action research methodology was used which meant the Initiative was refined during the pilot period. An external evaluation report, submitted in October 2007, concluded that the model accorded well with international

good practice and compared very favourably on a value for money basis with other SEN support systems in place in the Irish education system.

Section 7   Reports of centres on the implementation of the SEN Initiative

How the SEN Initiative was implemented in the twenty centres during the pilot phase is described in Section 7, with details of the centre inputs, activities and outputs and an analysis of the learner outcomes. By the end of the pilot period all coordinators reported that the following key practices were fully in place:

a) An assigned key worker for each learner
b) Systematic profiling of the learner using the Wheel
c) The development of an individual action plan out of this process
d) Engagement in inter-agency work if appropriate.

The coordinators' reports listed many benefits to learners and to staff and reflected on the changes introduced in the centres.

Section 8   Achievements, learning and future directions

The report concludes with a summary of the achievements of the Initiative for learners, for staff, for the programme and for the Department; with the author's observations on the organisational learning that has resulted from the pilot phase; and with recommendations for future developments and practice.

2.   Overview of report

2.1   The special educational needs of Youthreach learners

The first part of the report explores the needs and difficulties of Youthreach learners, drawing on sociological data, the experience and insight of those responsible for their education and the analyses of inspectors and psychologists.

2.1.1   Risk factors associated with early school leaving

The sociological literature associates early school leaving with risk factors including increased likelihood of poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation, unemployment or insecure and/or poorly paid work, low levels of literacy, alcohol and drug misuse, youth offending, lone parenting and homelessness (Department of Education and Science, 2008).

2.1.2   The problems of Youthreach learners

Youthreach stakeholders identified a wide range of problems that were typical of learners (Gordon, 2007). These included difficulties in attendance and participation in education, and low achievements in many basic and life skill areas. Personal and social development problems included low expectations, poor physical health, mental health issues such as stress, depression and low self-esteem, lack of emotional regulation and difficulties with social interaction. Learners were also described as having to deal with a myriad of practical factors relating to their lives outside the centre which acted as a barrier to their participation in the Youthreach programme and their ability to benefit from it. These practical factors included home and community matters, problems with housing or income and issues associated with substance misuse and criminal offending (Gordon, 2007: 7-9).

2.1.3   Review of Youthreach by Inspectorate

The Inspectorate remarked on the wide and varied mix of individual learning needs that they had observed during their whole centre evaluations. The inspectors noted that a significant number of learners failed to engage fully with the programme and they identified gaps in provision at the level of the centres, a lack of linkage with national agencies and the absence of many of the preventive and supportive measures that were available in post-primary schools (Department of Education and Science, in print).

2.1.4   Incidence of disability in Youthreach

The incidence of disability among learners in Youthreach is very high and considerably greater than that found in post-primary schools, particularly in the areas of specific or mild general learning difficulties (Smith, 2002) as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties. The practice in centres generally is not to distinguish between difficulties that derive from organic factors such as disabilities and those that are caused by contextual and experiential factors. While spending on special education in mainstream schools has increased exponentially since the mid 1990s there was little in the way of dedicated provision for SEN in Youthreach until the SEN Initiative.

2.1.5 *Resilience and resourcefulness of Youthreach learners*

Much of Youthreach's success lies in the emphasis it places on the learners as resilient and resourceful rather than as disabled or needy. Fitting with this orientation, the approach adopted by the Department in the SEN Initiative was not to prioritise diagnosis of disability but to provide resources to centres on a general allocation basis, for the purpose of building organisational and staff capacity and increasing general responsivity to the individual needs and circumstances of their learners.

2.2 Research literature and theoretical influences

The ways in which four distinct theoretical disciplines – youth work, guidance, special education and developmental psychology – have informed the model used in the SEN Initiative are reviewed in this section.

2.2.1 *Youth work*

Youth work, alongside the methodological strands of education and training, has had a significant impact on the style of the Youthreach programme (Department of Education and Science, 2008). Characteristic of youth work interventions are their flexibility, informality and emphasis on engagement (Harland, Morgan and Muldoon, 2005). Because of its facilitation of engagement, mentoring is a tool that is frequently used with disaffected or at risk young people and with other hard-to-reach groups (Clarke, Classon, and Phillips, 2007).

2.2.2 *Guidance*

The emphasis in guidance is on helping people to manage their options, whether in relation to education, training, occupational choices or personal issues. Under national and EU policy guidance is associated with tackling educational disadvantage and social exclusion as well as promoting lifelong learning and economic prosperity. Guidance literature emphasises non-formal approaches which can engage with socially marginalised young people in their own communities and which can take account of their lifestyles and understand their phenomenological perspective (Watts, 2001).

Guidance for learners in Youthreach is an issue that has been addressed extensively in the recent past and the SEN Initiative has been strongly influenced by this work, and in particular by the linking of formal and informal approaches to the development of personal pathways for learners in a way that engages with them as partners rather than as clients (Stokes, 2000; OECD/European Commission, 2004; Watts, 2002).

2.2.3 *Special education*

In Ireland an administrative distinction is made between support for students with special educational needs that are considered to derive from organic or within-child factors such as disabilities and those that are provided for under social inclusion measures. Many commentators are critical of tying resources or interventions to diagnoses of disability because of the possibility that the diagnostic label will do more harm than good and lead to stigma and exclusion. A definition of SEN that can incorporate organic, experiential

or cultural causes supports the development of practices and structures that are responsive and flexible to the individual needs of learners, regardless of what has caused them. The emphasis is not on categorisation or diagnosis of disability but on eliminating barriers that get in the way of learning and on providing immediate intervention (Ainscow, 1999; Ainscow and Booth 2002; Dyson, 1994, 2001; Gresham, 2001).

Emotional and behavioural difficulty (EBD) is considered to be a particularly difficult diagnostic category (Thomas, 2005). Nevertheless, clinical research suggests that there is a connection between particular kinds of negative experience, especially in early life, and subsequent psychopathology or mental health problems; also, young people with learning or emotional / behavioural difficulties appear to be more at risk of mental health problems (Rutter, 2002; Murray and Pianta, 2007).   There is considerable agreement about the measures that are effective with children with emotional problems and challenging behaviours. These approaches emphasise the importance of good relationships between students and teachers and of a caring, warm ethos; the need for consistent boundaries and for classroom structures, rules, routines and activities that convey a sense of community and continuity; the necessity for both care and challenge; the holding of high expectations of learners; the modelling of desirable behaviour by teachers as well as good quality teaching; the use of positive evaluative feedback systems; the creation of opportunities for one-to-one interactions with teachers; and explicit teaching of emotional and social skills (Department of Education and Science, 2006; Visser, 2005; Rogers, 2005; Izard, 2002). The value of consulting children directly about their needs and involving them in the planning of educational interventions that will affect them is increasingly emphasised at both policy (e.g. UN, 1989; Government of Ireland, 2000; O'Brien, 2005b, 2005c) and research levels (e.g. Gersch, 1996, Rose and Shevlin, 2004, Groom and Rose, 2005).

2.2.5   *Developmental psychology*
Developmental psychology describes normal developmental progression and also addresses the issues that arise when development occurs in less than optimal circumstances. Much of the research locates the developing person in their social context (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Attachment and psychodynamic theories, in particular, focus closely on the nature of interaction between the infant and their primary caregiver within the family context. Attachment theory postulates the primary status of intimate emotional bonds between individuals, particularly in the parent-child relationship but also throughout the life cycle. Early attachment relationships are considered to have a powerful influence on personality development and, if these are inadequate or negative, on the origins of psychopathology (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Marrone, 1998).

A child who grows in conditions of emotional security and stability is likely to follow an optimal pathway and to possess the resilience to cope with adverse conditions later in life. Even children who have not had a satisfactory attachment with their primary care-givers can benefit from secondary attachment figures who provide them with support and stability. What matters most is the care-giver's sensitive responsiveness to the developing person. Sensitive responsiveness evokes feelings of self-integration and self-worth in the child and elicits cooperative and reciprocal responses from them. This gives

the child the sense of self-efficacy and power that allows them to separate gradually from their care-giver and begin to explore, learn and engage socially in the world (Ainsworth, 1969; Winnicott, 1953).

The patterns of interaction that the child experiences during the years of childhood and adolescence come to be internalised as the way they see themselves and think about the world. Children who have experienced poor levels of care by their primary care-givers (that are not supplemented by other key figures in their life) or who have experienced neglect or abuse will display anxiety and frequently present as disruptive and confrontational, preoccupied and distressed or withdrawn and inaccessible (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall, 1978). Failure to negotiate the childhood stages in an optimum way leads to an adolescent who is characterised by mistrust, shame, doubt, guilt and a sense of inferiority (Erikson, 1963).

Attachment Theory has been applied in a wide range of educational, clinical and social work settings with children and adolescents who have not had sufficiently good early attachment experiences (e.g. Bennathan and Boxall, 2000; Patton, Glover, Bond, Butler, Godfrey, DiPietro and Bowes, 2000; Murray and Pianta, 2007; Schofield and Brown, 1999). The resulting programmes and approaches focus on the development of *secondary attachments* as a means of changing these young people's negative working models. The professionals consciously establish a holding environment where the young people can feel secure and where they experience sensitively responsive interactions to them. The experience of working with a reliable, caring adult who does not reject or exploit them leads to the development of a sense of self-efficacy. This new identity then allows them to begin to take account of the nature of reality and of the feelings and needs of others, leading to a greater capacity for self-regulation, for learning and for cooperative interaction.

2.2.7   Recent Irish studies
Recent studies on Irish adolescents in the area of mental health have led to a call for individually focused interventions and multi-systemic programmes that aim to address deficits in the personal and social resources of young people with psychological problems and the development of services that are more accessible, youth-friendly, integrated and engaging (Nevin, Carr, Shevlin, Dooley and Breaden, 2005; Bates, Illback, Scanlon and Carroll, 2009).

2.3   The WebWheel model
This section describes the structure and operation of the WebWheel model, the means by which the SEN Initiative was put into effect in the centres.

2.3.1   Underpinning theoretical framework
A number of common themes emerge from an examination of the four academic and research traditions discussed above, the most striking of which is the emphasis on *relationship*. All stress the centrality of personal engagement, while the psychological literature analyses the actual mechanisms for developmental growth and maturation that

underpin personal interaction and gives it its power: the creation of a secure base or holding environment, which allows the young person to move towards a sense of self-integration and self-efficacy and to find ways to co-exist with others and live effective lives, is crucial.

Understanding and taking into account the social and economic contexts of the young people is also important. The most successful structures and processes are likely to be those which start from an awareness of contextual factors and which engage on the basis of the learners' lived experiences. Other practical structures and processes that can be successful encourage flexibility and the tailoring of responses to the unique situation of the individual learner; listening to the learner's voice and understanding their view of the world; good quality teaching and a secure, ordered environment; the deliberate promotion of emotional and social competencies; the augmentation of professional support services with informal and non-formal approaches; and the provision of training, guidance and support to staff.

The WebWheel model is a set of structures, systems and practices for supporting learners in Youthreach (and indeed other centres for education and training such as Senior Traveller Training Centres and Community Training Centres) that was strongly informed by this research literature.

2.3.2   Centre culture
A culture that ensures the physical and emotional safety of the learners is at the centre of the WebWheel model. Interactions within the Youthreach centre are characterised by respect and warmth, whether between teachers and teachers, teachers and learners or learners and learners. Emotions and social behaviours are on the agenda – they are named, described and discussed. The personal and social development of the learners is at the core of the work of the centre.

2.3.3   Mentoring
Formal mentoring arrangements are put in place, with members of staff acting as key workers to the learners. The mentoring sessions are timetabled on a weekly or fortnightly basis and last for a minimum of 20 minutes. These key workers[1] are ordinary members of staff – part-time or full-time employees of the centre – who feel comfortable with this role. The success of mentoring depends on the quality of the relationship between the key worker and learner and the development of trust, goodwill and understanding between them. If the mentoring relationship is not good, for either learner or key worker, a new arrangement is made.

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[1] The SEN Initiative Advisory Committee decided to use the term 'key worker' rather than 'mentor' for a member of staff engaging in mentoring. Many centres had a tradition of key working already, where a tutor took on a type of pastoral role to a group of learners, and the mentoring was seen as a formalisation and extension of this role. The term 'key worker' was also chosen to avoid the risk of the role being seen as a dedicated or specialist one and those carrying it out as a new category of employee.

2.3.4 The Wheel profiling process

The mentoring session is structured by the use of the Wheel profiling tool and the Egan skilled helper three-step process (Egan, 1998). The Wheel maps sixteen factor areas representing many aspects of the learner's life. Some relate directly to their education in the centre (e.g. participation, basic skills), others to their personal development (e.g. identity, physical health, relationships) and the rest to practical issues relating to their lives outside the centre (e.g. home, income, substance use).

The Egan process is applied to each of the factors in the Wheel in turn. First, the key worker invites the learner to talk about themselves and their circumstances under each factor heading and to rate how happy or otherwise they are with their situation on the basis of a five-point scale. In the second step, the learner is invited to describe how they would prefer things to be and in this way to identify goals for themselves. In the third step the key worker and learner make out an action plan for how together they will advance these goals. Further mentoring sessions will consider other factor areas and will continuously review the progress of the plan, making alternations or additions as desired.

2.3.5 Individual action planning

The plan that emerges from the mentoring sessions is shared with the rest of the staff team and informs the work of the centre with that learner. Making the learner the main architect of their action plan increases the likelihood of their commitment to it and their engagement with the Youthreach programme. Over time the key worker comes to know the learner better and to understand what is important and motivating to them. As trust builds the key worker's influence increases and they can begin to introduce their own perceptions, to make comments and to challenge the learner about their choices and behaviours.

The action plan can contain a variety of possible interventions. The most straightforward will be the modules and subject areas that are already being provided in the centre e.g. LCA subjects or FETAC modules in woodwork, communications, catering, hairdressing, etc. A learner who has identified an occupational goal during mentoring (e.g. to be a hairdresser, to get a Leaving Cert.) will put the achieving of the relevant accreditation into their action plan. Likewise, the plan might detail the kind of work experience they would like. The plan might also include interventions relating to health or social development (e.g. programmes to give up smoking, to increase fitness, to manage conflict, to develop assertiveness skills) or activities (e.g. drama, football, foreign trips). For a learner with literacy or numeracy difficulties the plan might include one-to-one literacy classes. If areas of personal difficulty emerge during mentoring the key worker and learner might identify a series of sessions with the centre counsellor as an action for the plan.

2.3.6 Inter-agency work

Given the nature of the difficulties that many of the young people face it is taken as a given that the centre will not be in a position to address all of the issues that are likely to arise during mentoring. In such cases, the job of the key worker will be to identify the appropriate community service or agency and to support the learner in making contact

with it. Inter-agency liaison and collaborative working is therefore a key element of the WebWheel model.

2.3.7   Centre capacity building and staff development
The focus of the WebWheel model is on increasing the capacity of the centre to provide for the needs of the learners. As well as creating structures and processes for doing this through direct work with the young people, the model also emphasises the importance of ongoing staff training and of the establishment of regular professional supervision and support.

2.4   The establishment of the Special Educational Needs Initiative
This section reports on the establishment of the SEN Initiative, describing the financial and other resources that were put in place at a national level, and the outcomes of a formative evaluation process that looked at the early implementation of the measure.

2.4.1   Funding of the SEN Initiative
The provision of resources for a special needs initiative in Youthreach was announced by the Minister in late 2006. Funding was provided to implement the WebWheel model on a pilot basis in twenty centres from January 2007. The first and largest part of the funding (€52,500 per group of 25 learners per annum, allocated on a pro rata basis) was to increase the staff resources by approximately 1500 hours per year, to introduce a mentoring support system, processes for profiling, individual planning and inter-agency work, and additional teaching and support interventions. A smaller amount was to pay for a measured systematic development of professional practice through case supervision and staff support (€4,000) and through additional staff training (€2,000).

2.4.2   Choice of centres
The twenty centres were chosen to be a mix of sizes and locations and included some centres that had atypical populations (e.g. participants in one consisted predominantly of Travellers, while another was established to cater explicitly for participants with serious substance use issues). Payments were made to the VEC responsible for the Youthreach centre and were paid out when the Department approved the centre's implementation plan.

2.4.3   Structural supports for the implementation of the Initiative
The Initiative was led by the senior psychologist in Further Education Section, supported by an advisory committee set up to oversee the development and implementation of the Initiative during the pilot phase. This committee consisted of Department personnel and nominees together with nominees of the national bodies representing VEC officers and centre coordinators. It met approximately once a month. In addition the senior psychologist held six general meetings in Dublin for centre coordinators and VEC staff to exchange information, clarify any concerns and share ideas. She linked closely with coordinators and VECs through emails and visits, provided guidelines and resources to centres and facilitated staff meeting to resolve difficulties and review progress.   A

website containing a range of resource materials to support the Initiative was launched in November 2007.

2.4.4 Staff training
A two-day programme in mentoring skills training was developed by the senior psychologist and provided to all of the SEN pilot centres by a team of training facilitators. This programme was delivered to coordinators and those members of staff who had agreed to take up the role of key workers, and was completed by the autumn of 2007. In addition, the National Learning Network was contracted by the Department to deliver three additional days' training to all members of staff in the twenty centres on the subject of identifying and responding to learning difficulties. This programme ran until early 2008.

2.4.5 Staff development
Centres were responsible for organising their own staff support and case supervision provision. The requirements of a practitioner included accreditation in psychotherapy or psychology with relevant experience, a minimum of three years supervised clinical practice themselves, experience of supervising others and membership of an appropriate professional body. Recognising that centre coordinators had responsibility for managing and leading the work in their centres it was considered that they would benefit from support; part of the staff support budget could therefore be used by the coordinator to locate assistance if they wished.

2.4.6 Action research
The short time between the first announcement of the Initiative (November 2006) and its commencement (January 2007) meant that it was not possible to complete all the preparatory work in time to allow the Initiative measures to be introduced immediately in all centres. Explicit and detailed guidelines were not ready for centres and the training programme in mentoring skills had yet to be finalised and made available. In the first year, this led to a delay by many centres in the full implementation of the SEN Initiative.

The action research nature of the pilot (Reason and Bradbury, 2001), however, meant that the focus of the pilot phase was on maximising the learning from the implementation of the new measures in centres. The experiences of staff and the feedback they received from their learners therefore provided important information to the leadership of the project. Centres and VECs could try out different approaches to the introduction of the key elements of the Initiative: e.g. to decide how often and for how long the mentoring sessions would take place, the terms of employing new staff, how the key worker/learner pairings would be determined, the nature of the new interventions to be introduced for learners, etc. This meant that participants at all levels had a role in developing practice.

2.4.7 Formative external evaluation
Contributing significantly to the action research was the external formative evaluation that was carried out during the first nine months by Eustace Patterson Ltd. Their report was received in October 2007. The evaluators reviewed relevant international literature, national policy and legislation, consulted with key stakeholders including the Department

of Education and Science, the advisory committee and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and conducted interviews, focus groups, case studies, surveys and workshops with staff and learners in centres (Clarke et al, 2007).

The evaluators stated that they were not in a position to assess the outcome of the Initiative on learners because the process was at too early a stage for this. However, from their desk research they were able to conclude that the model accorded well with what was viewed as good practice internationally and fitted with the holistic and integrated approach of the original concept for Youthreach and as comprehended in the Quality Framework process. They also concluded that the SEN Initiative compared favourably on a value for money basis with other support systems in place in the education system in Ireland.

However, the evaluators noted differences in the ways the Initiative was being implemented and recommended that clearer guidelines be given to centres. They were also concerned that centres were at different stages of implementation and recommended an extension of the pilot period by another six months in order to allow the Initiative more time to "bed in".

These recommendations were accepted by the Department. The pilot phase was extended to the end of June 2008 and more specific directions were given to centres about how they were expected to implement the Initiative measures.

2.5   Reports of centres on the implementation of the SEN Initiative
This section describes how the SEN Initiative was implemented in the twenty centres during the pilot phase. It is based on the reports submitted by the individual centre coordinators and their VECs outlining their inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.

2.5.1   Learner needs and staff skills
The coordinators gave a description of the needs they had identified in their learners and reported on the audit of staff skills and competences they had carried out with their teams. They had also been asked to identify any gaps in the skills or competencies required to address their learners' needs. The intention of the Initiative was to fill these gaps by making new staff appointments, by locating suitable services in the community and by training staff.

2.5.2   Initiative practices
By the end of the pilot period all coordinators reported that the following key practices were fully in place for each learner:
  a) An assigned key worker for each learner
  b) Systematic profiling of the learner using the Wheel
  c) The development of an individual action plan out of this process
  d) Engagement in inter-agency work if appropriate.

2.5.3 Centre outputs

The coordinators identified the key outputs they had put in place using the SEN Initiative funding. These included the resources invested in mentoring as indicated by the number of their staff members who were acting as key workers; the number of learners each was mentoring; the frequency and length of mentoring sessions; and the timetabling of other learner support work (e.g. staff meetings, the writing up of IAPs, inter-agency liaison).

They also gave an account of the specific teaching interventions they had introduced in small groups or one-to-one settings for particular learners (under such headings as basic education, life skills, academic accreditation, social, personal and health education and arts education); of the specific support interventions that had occurred in small groups or one-to-one settings for particular learners; and of the organisation and review of work experience placements.

Other outputs included the mechanisms used by the centre to identify and measure distance travelled in the 'soft' skill areas; the local services and agencies that were liaised with for information and advice; and the local agencies with whom they had collaborated in respect of particular learners.

Coordinators reported on the use they made of the staffing budget for specific interventions or actions; the specific staff training measures they had introduced; and the forms of support they had received under the case supervision / staff support measure.

2.5.4 Learner outcomes

The current location of the learners who had attended the centre during the pilot phase was given, whether in work, further training, still in the centre or who had left but not yet moved on to anything else. Other learner outcomes were described under the following headings:

- The development of basic skills
- The development of life skills (i.e. the practical knowledge and competencies needed to live in Ireland in 21st century)
- The acquisition of academic skills
- The acquisition of vocational skills
- Increased effectiveness in work and learning settings (e.g. study skills, time management, working with people)
- Socio-emotional development (i.e. ability to manage emotions and relationships)
- Increased resilience and mental health (including confidence and self-esteem)
- Increased ability to seek out and benefit from available support services within and outside the centre

2.5.5 Coordinators' reflections

Finally, coordinators were asked to discuss both their successes and difficulties in implementing the SEN Initiative during the pilot period. They identified benefits to learners, to staff and to the work of the centres and also some of the challenges they had faced. Some coordinators also gave their observations on the impact of the changes that had been introduced in their centres and the insights they had gained from them.

- *Benefits*

The reports indicated that the response of learners to the mentoring was unequivocally positive. Communication was facilitated by the mentoring and relationships between staff and learners improved. This had a positive impact on centres, leading to greater engagement with the programme and reduction in misbehaviour. As learners participated better they engaged more with the academic programme and standards were raised. They also became more willing to seek support.

They reported a change in the orientation of centres towards a greater focus on the learners and increased sensitivity to issues of curriculum relevance. Centres engaged in more inter-agency liaison. There was an increase in the capacity of centres to be responsive to the unique situations of each learner. Coordinators were generally positive about the experience for staff of mentoring and staff found they developed more understanding and empathy for the learners and that there were changes in staff capacity and the culture of work in the centre.

Staff support through training and supervision led to the development of necessary skills, the identifying and clarifying of boundaries and an increase in professionalism and good practice.

- *Challenges*

The reported challenges included practical difficulties with organising mentoring sessions and with finding both physical space and time. The commencement of the Initiative before definitive guidelines had been put in place and core staff training done resulted in some centres feeling adrift at first and unsure of how to proceed. Clear guidelines from the Department were welcomed when they arrived. In some centres the SEN Initiative significantly increased the work of the coordinator and resource staff. Nervousness about mentoring was an issue for staff in some centres and took time to resolve. Some staff found it difficult to come to terms with the very serious problems of some of the learners. These learner problems required a high degree of support by staff and solutions were not found to all of them.

- *Changes and learning*

Among the observations offered by coordinators was that there was a strong relationship between anxiety reduction and learning and that it was important to develop a centre culture of inclusion and acceptance. Learners responded to the concern and care shown to them by the staff. Learner anxiety and difficulties with social interaction meant that these things needed to be addressed directly by staff. Learners benefited from being both supported and challenged.

It was observed that family circumstances impacted significantly on learners and that centres needed to take these into account and work with them. Not all learners moved at the same rate or started from the same place. For some the mentoring provided an opportunity to think about the future in a new way and this had an impact on their attitude to education.

The importance of having high expectations of the learners and conveying these to them was mentioned, although the difference in expectations between home and centre could make this difficult. The role of language in naming problems and constructing possible solutions was noted, as was how changing the way problems were talked about had changed the culture in centres for the better. For some coordinators, the SEN Initiative meant that the Youthreach programme could now get back to doing what it was meant to be doing.

2.6   Achievements, learning and future directions

The report concludes with a summary of the achievements of the Initiative for learners, for staff, for the programme and for the Department; with the author's observations on the organisational learning that has resulted from the pilot phase; and with recommendations for future developments and practice.

2.6.1   Achievements

While the SEN Initiative was built on a considerable body of previous work addressing learner needs and how to respond to them, it is the first action to take account specifically of special educational needs, as defined under the EPSEN Act, and to make provision for them.

The Initiative has provided an original and holistic approach to providing for SEN so that needs deriving from any source can be addressed. This is in line with the move towards more systemic resourcing approaches (e.g. the general allocation model now at primary level) and the development of more nuanced and tailored interventions (NCSE, 2006; DES, 2007).

The SEN Initiative ensures that good quality support work is formalised and given space by the timetabling of mentoring sessions and the allocation of staff for this, by the insertion of mentoring, reviewing and planning processes into the core work of centres, by the development of closer working relationships with other services and agencies in the community and by the development of staff capacity through dedicated training, case supervision and staff support. This represents an important development in the provision of formal, professional and effective services to Youthreach participants.

The SEN Initiative has achieved a number of very significant outcomes during the 18-month pilot period which have benefited in concrete ways almost a thousand learners, and the staff in their centres. These benefits include
- Universal support by VECs and centres for the measures contained in the Initiative
- Guidelines developed and disseminated on all aspects of practice
- A website containing detailed materials to support staff established
- Training programmes devised and a national team of facilitators trained to deliver them
- A system for providing feedback to the Department through the development of annual centre planning and reporting templates

- A key worker assigned and regular timetabled mentoring sessions for learners
- Engagement in a holistic assessment process leading to the development of a meaningful individual action plan
- The implementation of their plan in the centre, through provision of additional tailored teaching and support interventions
- Inter-agency liaison and, if needed, engagement by the centre staff in joint actions with community agencies and services
- Greater clarity and guidance for staff about their role
- Support skills increased in a wide range of areas
- Staff training provided in how to identify and respond to learning difficulties, in mentoring skills and in other training organised by centres on the basis of their own local needs
- Case supervision provided by an appropriately qualified psychologist or psychotherapist to discuss and clarify issues relating to their learners
- Staff support provided to guide key workers in the maintenance of professional boundaries and self-care.

Benefits to the Department include
- The development and implementation of a cost effective model for addressing SEN in the Youthreach setting
- The development of an innovative and creative approach to a challenging task that is founded on an extensive research base.
- The high level of accountability for the SEN Initiative investment that is provided by this report with its body of detailed data on
  o the use of the budgets
  o the nature of the interventions and
  o the learner outcomes achieved.
- The decision of the European Commission to showcase the SEN Initiative as an example of creative and innovative practice for its European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 and to publish details about the project on its website (http://create2009.europa.eu/).

2.6.2 *Learning from the SEN Initiative*
For the author, the main challenge of the pilot project was to find the most effective ways of leading and managing an ambitious systemic approach to support provision for SEN. The Initiative has resulted in a considerable body of professional, organisational and personal learning. The key lessons relate to:
- The primary place of staff as a resource
- The importance of modelling desirable attitudes and behaviours
- The role of challenge
- The existence of differences between centres
- The value of using action research
- The importance of attention to language and how it is used
- The role of educational psychology in the SEN Initiative

2.6.3   *Future directions*

Finally, Youthreach participants are a particularly vulnerable group but, like most young people, they are also full of possibility. The SEN Initiative is an investment in this possibility. The following actions are recommended:

- Extension of the SEN Initiative

Provision for special needs in Youthreach compares unfavourably with investment in special education in mainstream schools. The SEN Initiative provides an appropriate, effective and inexpensive response to high incidence special needs in Youthreach, including those associated with most EBDs. As soon as resources permit, it should be extended to all VEC Youthreach centres, along with all relevant education support bodies and services.

- Immediate provision for learners with low incidence disabilities

The question of provision for the relatively small number of learners in Youthreach who have low incidence special needs has not received any formal attention to date. Without access to NEPS and NCSE, these participants are not having their needs assessed or catered for and the staff working with them are not receiving any professional support. Equity between this group of learners and their peers in secondary schools requires that this matter be addressed as a matter of urgency and some form of support be introduced immediately for them.

- Working with clinical services

The WebWheel model represents a non-formal approach to providing support to learners but this does not mean that clinical services are not needed – on the contrary. However, they will generally be more effective if they work with the people who know the learners and have good relationships with them. This means developing more collaborative inter-agency approaches between those working in centres and community based services. Making their expertise available to the staff can also be a most useful way of supporting learners. This two- step or 'nested-container' approach[2] and is an efficient use of scarce resources.

- Continuation of SEN Initiative

The SEN Initiative should be maintained in the twenty Youthreach centres under the leadership and support of an educational psychologist.   The objectives of the measure should be to improve attendance, decrease dropping out, build learners' confidence and ambition, enhance each learner's personal and social development, hold and help learners with the most challenging of problems (e.g. addictions, criminal involvement, mental health issues, significant disabilities) and achieve successful transitions for all learners out of the centre. Centres that have the SEN Initiative need to retain the flexibility the resources initially gave them if they are to continue to be responsive and creative in relation to the needs of learners.

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[2] The professional services support or 'contain' the centre workers who in turn 'contain' the learners

- Encouragement of other centres to use the WebWheel

Elements of the WebWheel can be introduced into centres without any additional resources by redeploying funds from elsewhere in the programmes and this is recommended for learners with the most pressing needs and those at most risk of dropping out. Centres introducing mentoring on a voluntary basis will have access to training and consultation. They must avail of case supervision and staff support from a properly qualified practitioner, which they can pay for out of their guidance, counselling and psychological services budget.

- Improving practice

Support for all centres will continue to be provided through the systematic introduction of suitable materials, tools, programmes and methodologies for facilitating development or addressing areas of difficulty, in areas such as literacy, guidance, mental health and physical fitness. Such programmes may need to be accompanied by training for staff in their use.

- Research

It is recommended that the Department commission research to evaluate the short, medium and longer term outcomes for learners of the SEN Initiative, with a view to understanding how to maximise the effectiveness of the model for achieving learner outcomes. Instruments and processes for identifying, teaching, measuring and recording 'soft' learning outcomes in the areas of life and employability skills should be developed internally and provided to centres.

3. The special educational needs of Youthreach learners

3.1 Sociological location of Youthreach participants

Youthreach is one of the Department of Education and Science's measures for addressing social exclusion. Participation in the programme, by definition, is limited to young people who are considered to be at a particular disadvantage by virtue of having Priority Group 1 status (i.e. they are unemployed, aged between 15 and 20 years of age and have no or incomplete qualifications from Junior Cycle) or Priority Group 2 status (e.g. they are lone parents, drug court participants or young persons released from detention). The normal channels of recruitment to Youthreach include referral from schools, the Health Service Executive, youth services, Gárda Siochána and others, with Education Welfare Officers becoming increasingly involved in placements since the establishment of the NEWB. In summary, "the target group for the Youthreach programme as those who are alienated from the formal system, economically disadvantaged, socially vulnerable and at risk of long-term unemployment." (Department of Education and Science, 2008)

The sociological and education literature indicate that there is a significant association between childhood poverty and early school leaving, and in turn between early school leaving and future unemployment or insecure, badly paid work. It is one of the key indicators of educational disadvantage and likewise of social and economic disadvantage (Department of Education and Science, 2008). Disadvantage and early school leaving are widely accepted to be risk factors in a variety of areas, including poor levels of literacy and maths (Morgan, Hickey and Kelleghan, 1997; Department of Education and Science, 2005); problematic alcohol and drug use (Mayock, 2000), youth offending (O'Mahony, 1997), lone parenting (Mahon, Conlon and Dillon, 1998; McCashin, 1997) and homelessness (Mayock, Corr and O'Sullivan, 2008).

3.2 Identification by stakeholders of learner needs

Learners' needs were the subject of a series of consultative regional meetings that took place around the country in 2005 (Gordon, 2007). The key stakeholders[3] in the three Youthreach programmes considered the nature and extent of the learners' needs and problems and identified the practices and resources that were currently working well in centres to support them.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchical framework (Maslow, 1943) was used to describe the range of learner needs. The lowest, and most pressing, need is for *survival* and involves the meeting of various physiological needs, such as oxygen, food, heat, rest, exercise and avoidance of pain. For centres the main issues here were access to services (e.g. transport, childcare, housing, health), a healthy lifestyle (e.g. good diets, physical health

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[3] The stakeholders included centre coordinators and staff members, learners, VEC and FÁS management representatives and guidance, counselling and psychological service providers

and exercise) and resilience factors (i.e. the life skills that allow people to cope with adversity and to have the necessary flexibility and information to manage their lives effectively).

Safety and security needs are concerned with finding safe circumstances, stability and protection from harm. In Youthreach these were met through providing learners with an absence of threat and a sense of being cared about. The centre needed to be experienced as a safe environment, where the learners could trust others and make personal progress. Routine, consistency and continuity were applied within a flexible framework and boundaries were clear. Teachers were accountable, as well as students, and knew what they are doing.

Love and *belonging* needs show in a desire for affectionate relationships with family members, friends and romantic or sexual partners and also in a sense of community. These needs were met through the careful creation of an accepting environment, where students experienced a sense of belonging and received individual and responsive attention. Opportunities for interaction and for forming relationships with peers were provided and the learner also had the experience of being given personal attention.

Esteem needs have aspects that are both external and internal to the learner. External aspects consist of respect, status, recognition, attention, dignity and some measure of authority and control in one's dealings with others. Internal aspects include a desire for self-respect, confidence and a sense of competence, achievement and independence. Esteem needs required that learners be respected and accepted as individuals, as members of their cultural community and as students. Practices in centres that promoted esteem as students included provision by staff of positive affirmation and feedback and the creation of opportunities for achievement.

The highest need is for *self-actualisation*. This was supported in learners usually by their achievement of academic / vocational and personal development goals. The encouragement of motivation and hope for the future and the development, and ongoing refinement of, personal goals were central to this process. Because personal goals varied they needed to be identified so that the centre was working on goals that were motivating and recognisable as self-actualising for their learners.

3.3   Identification by stakeholders of learner difficulties

The regional meetings also identified the kinds of problems experienced by learners under three general headings: a) educational development; b) personal development and c) practical factors. Each general heading was subdivided into a number of factor areas – there were a total of 16 factors in all. This categorisation system is based on the sixteen factors of the Profiling Wheel – these are italicised in the following three subsections.

3.3.1   *Difficulties associated with educational development*

Attendance and participation, along with the achievement of basic, life and other skills were considered here. Problems that were considered to impact on *attendance* included a

personal (and sometimes a family) history of chronic absenteeism from school and difficulty adapting to structures or organisational demands, e.g. getting up on time in the morning. There were also practical difficulties for some in relation to transport. The ability to *participate* in education was deemed to be adversely affected by being out of school for a long time and / or by failure to transfer from primary to post-primary school. Difficulties with focusing and maintaining attention, having little interest in vocational or academic learning were also thought to impact negatively on participation by learners attending centres.

Low *achievements*, and particularly in the *basic skill* areas of literacy and numeracy, were described as very common. These were thought to be due in some cases to a learning disability such as a mild general learning disability, dyslexia or a deficit in concentration and attentional focus. Learning difficulties could lead in some cases to a lack of *life skills*, to a degree of "helplessness" or an inability to take responsibility for oneself. Low achievement could also result simply from the lack of having an opportunity to learn (e.g. by non-attendance at school).

3.3.2   Difficulties associated with personal development

These problems were considered under *aspirations and motivation, identity, physical health, emotional well-being* and *social skills*. For communities with a history of dependence on social welfare and an experience of discrimination and lack of progression options, there might be little *motivation* to acquire vocational or academic skills. Low expectations, whether originating in the home or internalised personally, were said to be a significant feature of many learners, who presented as lacking goals or targets for themselves and as having little hope for the future, particularly in relation to employment. Experiences of racism, social abuse, isolation and marginalisation were considered to affect learners' *identity* and their ability to see themselves as successful. *Physical health* issues were said to be significant for many of the learners, with a number having poor general health and suffering from chronic illnesses or having problems with eyesight, dental health, hygiene or nutrition. A poor diet could lead to hunger (and an attendant inability to concentrate), lack of strength, poor stamina or obesity. There could be a lack of awareness in relation to sexual health, leading to crisis pregnancy and contraction of sexually transmitted infections. Sexual abuse, or its consequences, was considered to be an issue for some learners. Engagement in a range of recreational risk taking behaviours, including joy-riding, drug and alcohol abuse and risky sexual activity, was described as common and could result in injury or harm.

For a significant number of learners *emotional well-being* was lacking. This could be expressed in mental health conditions such as eating disorders, irrational fears or depression. Linked to depression was attempted suicide or suicidal ideation. A poor level of emotional well-being was also associated with the stress and worries arising from life experiences, including a myriad of practical problems and a higher than normal incidence of bereavement and loss. Past experiences of emotional, physical or sexual abuse could frequently have long term emotional consequences even if the learner was now safe. Low self-esteem, lack of resilience, absence of hope in the future and

engagement in self-harming activities or disempowering social relationships were said to be some of the effects of poor emotional well-being.

Stakeholders described difficulties with social interaction as being not uncommon, affecting the learners' *relationships with the staff and other learners* in the centre. These could manifest themselves in a range of ways, including acting out and aggressive behaviours, bullying, poor anger management and trouble with boundaries. For others the difficulties might be expressed in chronic shyness, isolation, anxiety about not fitting in and lack of assertiveness. Sometimes the poor social skills derived not from any lack of social ability but simply from a lack of knowledge of social codes in particular contexts.

3.3.3 *Difficulties associated with practical factors*
Practical difficulties associated with the learners' lives outside the centre were considered to frequently act as a barrier to their being able to participate fully in the programme and to benefit from their time spent in the centre. These practical matters included home and community factors, problems with housing or income and issues associated with substance misuse or criminal offending.

Home factors which were said to cause difficulties for particular participants included abusive or unsupportive parents, parents who wanted them to bring in an income, families where children have spent time in care, domestic violence, chaotic families, families with substance abuse or mental health difficulties, families engaged in feuding or with negative reputations in their communities and those where the learner has an inappropriate degree of responsibility for care of other family members.

Community factors cited included those associated with a learner's culture, which might not be construed as problematic within the community but which run counter to the values and objectives of the programmes. Examples of these were traditional attitudes towards formal education (e.g. seeing it as irrelevant or unnecessary), a prioritisation of family commitments (such as childcare, extended funeral and wedding celebrations, early marriage) and a lack of expectation of engaging in paid employment. Some of these factors however might derive less from cultural values than from community marginalisation and unsatisfactory educational experiences in the past due to prejudice, discrimination or racism.

Homelessness or the threat of homelessness by being put out of the family home, evicted from rental accommodation or, in the case of Travellers, moved on was described as a serious problem for some learners. Insufficient *income* and worries about money affected a significant number. In relation to *substance use* stakeholders made a distinction between a normal use of alcohol and drugs by participants and a degree of use and dependence which was causing problems, although there would be different perceptions about where the dividing lines fell on this. Addictions might be to cigarettes, legal and illegal drugs, alcohol, gambling or computer games. A severe addiction would undermine most other areas of a learner's life and would be likely to lead to criminal activity. Community tolerance for *offending or criminal behaviours*, and therefore the

extent to which they were viewed as problematic, would vary depending on the culture of the community and the nature of the offences.

3.4   Inspectorate report

The Inspectorate in their review of Youthreach (Department of Education and Science, in press) remarked on the wide and varied mix of individual learning needs they had observed in the learners enrolled in the twenty-five centres that were the subject of whole centre evaluations since 2006. *"It was clear to inspectors that many of these young people had learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties, often exacerbated by family problems and mental health issues. In discussions with learners, some outlined the emotional pressures that they had experienced in life so far. Learners regularly described, for example, the rejection they felt as a result of being *put out of mainstream education*. Inspectors were also made aware of other factors affecting the learners, particularly relating to dysfunctional households, violent behaviours and personal isolation."*

Their evaluations suggested that Youthreach simply did not work for a significant minority of learners, and that the quality of the educational experience for others was poor. Significant numbers of learners failed to engage with the programme, as was evidenced by the high rates of absenteeism in centres. They identified gaps in the development of literacy and numeracy skills, health education and the application of individual learner plans. They noted the limited linkage with national agencies because the National Educational and Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) had no brief in relation to Youthreach. They expressed the view that this lack of linkage to national agencies was a serious gap in the service offered to learners. They also noted the substantial range of preventative and supportive measures in place in post-primary schools that were not available to Youthreach learners, despite the significant problems in behaviour, motivation, special education needs and early leaving that they manifested.

3.5   The incidence of disability among learners in Youthreach

Research findings in a limited number of centres, supported by widespread anecdotal evidence, indicate that a significant number of learners in Youthreach centres have special educational needs, as defined under the provisions of the Education for Persons with Special Needs (EPSEN) Act (Government of Ireland, 2004). Internal investigations by Further Education Section and research by the City of Dublin Psychological Service (Smith, 2002) and others (e.g. McKernan, 1998) suggest that the prevalence of disability is significantly higher than that found in mainstream education. Many learners show evidence of specific or mild general learning difficulties – it is estimated that the incidence of learning disability is at least 70% – and of emotional and behavioural difficulties. Under the terms of various National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and Department of Education circulars and guidelines, these disabilities would entitle them to additional resource support if they were attending a mainstream post-primary school.

3.5.1 *Provision for SEN*

Following the enactment of the EPSEN Act (Government of Ireland, 2004) and the formal establishment of the NCSE in 2005 students in primary and post-primary schools have an automatic entitlement to provision for special educational needs. In the decade following the mid-nineties investment in special education in schools rose exponentially. It doubled between 2004 and 2007, when €900 million was made available and 17000 special education staff, mostly teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs), employed. By October 2008 expenditure had increased again and there were now 19000 teachers and SNAs working in schools to support children with SEN[4].

School students who have been diagnosed as having a disability thus have access to a range of additional resources and supports, including resource teachers, special needs assistants, visiting teacher services and grants for purchasing special equipment. Schools also have access to a number of support services, including learning support teachers, guidance counsellors, the curriculum support services provided through the Teacher Education Section and the services of the NCSE, the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

While the staff : learner ratio in Youthreach is generally more favourable than that found in schools, Youthreach centres have to provide for their learners without the benefit of the measures listed above. Up until 2006 there was no dedicated provision of any kind for SEN in Youthreach. In 2006 €2 million was provided and has been invested annually since then. In the first year this paid for a training programme on Special Educational Needs for all staff working in Youthreach, Senior Traveller and Community Training centres. Since 2007 it has been used to fund the SEN Initiative in twenty Youthreach centres

3.6   Focus on learner strengths

It would be a mistake to employ an exclusively problematic discourse about the learners attending centres and to describe them in terms of difficulties and needs alone, however. Much of the success of Youthreach lies in the emphasis that it places on the learners as resilient and resourceful people. The philosophy is one of empowerment, of helping learners to support themselves, in recognition that they are active agents in their own learning and lifestyle decisions. They are attending centres for education and training by choice and not because there is something wrong with them. For this reason the Department decided to approach the issue of special needs among learners in Youthreach in a different manner to that operating in mainstream post-primary education.

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[4] This information is taken from the speeches by Ministers for Education and Science in response to the announcement of the 2008 and 2009 budgets on 6 Dec 07 and 15 Oct 08 respectively (www.education.ie).

4. Research literature and theoretical influences

4.1   Theoretical influences on the SEN Initiative
The form of the SEN Initiative and the approach used in it – the WebWheel model – was strongly influenced by four distinct areas of study and thought. These are
- Youth work
- Guidance
- Special education
- Developmental psychology

4.2   Youth work
As one of the three methodological strands influencing Youthreach practice (along with education and training), youth work has had a significant impact. Characteristic of youth work interventions are their flexibility and informality. Unlike formal education, youth work relies on the voluntary engagement of young people and takes into account their social context and the difficulties that result from disadvantage and marginalisation.

Among the key dimensions of youth work practice are the emphases on voluntary participation; positive, meaningful relationships; the building of trust; friendliness and informality; a concern with the welfare and education of young people; and a focus on values and beliefs (Harland et al, 2005). In general youth workers carry out their work in the community, even on the streets, and are therefore familiar with youth culture and aware of the activities, attitudes, problems and concerns of the young people they are dealing with.

Morgan, Morgan and O'Kelly (2007) see youth work as having something to offer the educational system for young people who have disengaged from learning.

4.2.1   Mentoring
Mentoring has become a popular tool in social inclusion initiatives and particularly in programmes dealing with 'disaffected youth' (Clarke et al, 2007).   Quoting Roberts (2000), they describe mentoring as "a *formalised process* that builds a *supportive relationship* between mentor and mentee in order to *help* the mentee *learn and reflect*".

Much of the literature on mentoring presents the process as a linear series of steps starting with building trust and ending with goal setting and attainment. However, Newburn and Shiner (2005) see mentoring as a cyclical or iterative process, i.e. the same steps are repeated over and over again but with increasing depth, as in Gerard Egan's skilled helper model (Egan, 1998). In the UK, learning mentors known as personal advisors were introduced in 1999 through the Connexions Service. They work with out of school young people and with learners in schools and colleges who are considered to be at risk. Their function is to address barriers to learning and to provide a bridge across

academic and pastoral support roles. The Connexions Service has come under considerable criticism however (e.g. Watts, 2001) and there now appears to be some doubt about its future. The fact that personal advisors have very large case-loads[5] and work in the community rather than being embedded in settings where young people spend time may hinder their ability to work effectively as mentors.

4.3   Guidance
The focus in guidance is on identity and the orientation is towards the future rather than the past.

The National Guidance Forum defined guidance as follows:
> *Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society.*

The Forum carried out research on current guidance provision in Ireland and identified a number of gaps that would need to be addressed if an integrated strategy for lifelong guidance were to be developed. It found that the level of service in different sectors was inconsistent, "with a particular deficit in guidance for early school leavers" (National Guidance Forum, 2008: 41).

4.3.1   Guidance and social exclusion
National and EU policy associates guidance with tackling educational disadvantage and social exclusion as well as promoting lifelong learning and economic prosperity. Reviewing the relationship between career guidance and social exclusion in young people, Anthony Watts (2001) identified two roles: preventive and reintegrative. However, if guidance practitioners are to be effective in relation to either role they need to be able to address the reality of the lifestyles of the young people and to understand their phenomenological perspective. This includes recognising the household, communal and hidden economies that operate in disadvantaged communities and the alternative careers they give rise to, such as the domestic and home-centred, the informal and the criminal.

Watts recommended the adoption of a partnership approach between formal guidance services and the youth and community services that have contact with young people and that have credibility as a result of working within their frames of reference. The alliance of the 'formal knowledge' of the careers service with the 'street knowledge' of the community services can lead to a number of practical strategies for increasing the access of these young people to guidance support. These strategies include referral at local level to formal services, formal practitioners working alongside community services and the building of the capacity of the community services to deliver non-formal guidance directly (Watts, ibid.).   Research suggests that building the capacity of the voluntary and

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[5] The case-load per personal advisor consists of 10 – 12 young people with multiple problems, 250 young people in need of in-depth guidance or more than 800 young people who just require a guidance interview (Watts, 2001).

community sector to provide information, advice and guidance to hard-to-reach communities and individuals can have a number of benefits (e.g. Barker, Watts, Sharpe and Edwards, 2005).

The OECD and European Commission (2004) challenged policy makers "to make sure that career guidance is part of community-based services that are targeted at early school leavers. These services need to be designed so that users can identify with the staff that work in them and feel at home in them". They ask about the training and competencies that career guidance workers need in order to work with early school leavers and at risk youth and the type of guidance that should be provided in second-chance programmes for early school leavers. "How is guidance integrated into such programmes? What should the content be? How should it be delivered and by whom and when?" (OECD / EC, 2004:17-18).

In fact the issue of guidance for early school leavers and for learners in Youthreach has been addressed in quite an extensive fashion by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) and under the EU-funded Youthstart projects (NCGE, 2002). These pioneered training for Youthreach staff in non-formal guidance skills (Ryan, 2000) and the development of a model for guidance practice known as MAGIC (Stokes, 2000). MAGIC is an acronym for Mentoring, Advocacy, Guidance, Information and Counselling and describes the range of activities that can be used in assisting young people to make the transition from dependence to independence, from adolescence to adulthood and from education to work. Described as "a dynamic concept of guidance", MAGIC links the formal and informal and sets out to develop personal pathways for participants in a way that involves them in the process as partners rather than as clients (Stokes, ibid.).

Watts (2002), in reflecting on the experience of European YOUTHSTART projects, noted the importance of young people "having access to a trusted adult who understands their needs and demonstrates genuine care and concern". This person might be a guidance counsellor but need not be. Watts also proposed a "space where their needs and hopes can be articulated and addressed". The low staff : trainee ratios in Youthreach made this possible but "more training and support are still needed to equip staff to carry out this role and deal effectively with the complex and stressful situations with which they are often confronted." (Watts, 2002: 9-10).

4.4   Special Education
The term special education is being used here to refer broadly to the body of educational theory that deals with learning difficulties, whether they derive from educational disadvantage and social factors or disability and within-child factors. In Ireland an administrative distinction is made between support for students with special educational needs that are considered to derive from within-child factors, such as disabilities, and those needs that are provided for under social inclusion measures.

Under the EPSEN Act (Government of Ireland, 2004), the meaning of the term *special educational needs* is restricted to diagnosed disabilities and so excludes the needs of learners who are socially disadvantaged, those from minority backgrounds and those who are different by virtue of being gifted. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which was established under this Act, provides resources for students under 18 years in primary and post-primary school if they have a diagnosed disability. The most common form of resource support provided is additional teaching, with some children also receiving help from an SNA. Assistive technologies and transport are among the other possible resources available.

Disabilities tend to be defined in medical or quasi-medical terms and can be grouped under a number of headings: Those described as general learning (or intellectual) disabilities vary in severity from Borderline, through Mild and Moderate to Severe and Profound. The term specific learning disability is used for difficulties that do not implicate intellectual ability or general reasoning. Some bodies (e.g. the National Learning Network) use this term loosely to include, for example, problems with literacy (Dyslexia), motor coordination (Dyspraxia) and attentional focus (ADHD). Language disorders cover difficulties with speech, phonology, syntax, meaning or use of oral language. Autistic spectrum disorders include both high (Asperger's Syndrome) and low-functioning forms of autism. Hardest of all to define, probably, are the (social,) emotional and behavioural disorders or (S)EBDs. There are also various physical disabilities, sensory impairments, medical conditions and rare genetic syndromes that can interfere with learning for one reason or another. Milder forms of disability that tend to occur more frequently in the population (like borderline or mild general learning disabilities and Dyslexia) are known as 'high incidence' disabilities, while the rarer – but usually more disabling – ones (such as moderate learning disability or Asperger's Syndrome) are known as 'low incidence' disabilities.

The need to diagnose disability before a student can receive special educational support is viewed as highly problematic by many commentators (e.g. Ainscow, 1999), because of the possibility that the diagnostic label will do more harm than good and lead to stigma and exclusion. Thomas (2005) and Davies (2005), for example, claim that the effect of labelling children with EBD of itself gives rise to additional relationship-difficulties with teachers and peers. Dyson (1994, 2001) argues for a broader definition of special educational needs, one that can incorporate organic, experiential or cultural causes. He recommends the development of practices that encourage structures that are responsive and flexible to the individual needs of learners, regardless of what has caused them. Ainscow and Booth (2002) suggest an approach that seeks to eliminate whatever barriers get in the way of learning rather than to base supports on categorisation or diagnosis of disability. In the US, a *responsiveness to intervention* approach is being increasingly used as an alternative to differential diagnosis for identifying students with certain types of learning and behavioural difficulties (Gresham, 2001; Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006). The logic behind this approach is that the best way to differentiate students with disabilities from those that have not yet learned or mastered skills is to provide them with instructional or behavioural interventions and then to evaluate their response to them. The emphasis is on putting multilayered prevention and treatment interventions in place

for children who are struggling, rather than on establishing the existence of a disability or need, and so diagnosis emerges more as an informational outcome rather than as the primary focus of attention.

4.4.1   Good practice in provision for SEN in Europe
The European Agency for the Development of Special Needs Education (EADSNE) identified the following as currently representing the features of best practice in Europe in relation to support provision for special educational needs (EADSNE, 2003):

- Inclusion of learners with special needs within mainstream provision through supporting mechanisms such as in-service training for teachers, supplementary staff, extra equipment and materials.
- Flexible, decentralised and adequate funding of special education needs.
- Direction of funds towards the creation of an inclusive environment rather than allocation to particular learners.
- Time devoted by practitioners to identifying and understanding learner needs.
- Child centred planning including the joint development of a plan of action by practitioners, learners and their families, which is reviewed and modified over time. This process should encourage learners to discover their own skills and competencies.
- Provision of training, guidance and supports to practitioners.
- Official recognition (e.g. time, budgets) for specific practice and co-ordination tasks required by other services to support learners with special needs.
- Close working relationships between education providers and the labour market in order to facilitate work experience for learners and a successful transition to work.
- Having one person acting as an advocate or reference person for the learner to facilitate the transition process.

4.4.2   (Social) Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
Because Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties or Disorders (SEBDs) cannot be diagnosed in the same way as, say, a hearing impairment, this is considered by some researchers to be a problematic classification. Thomas (2005), for example, questions it as a construct altogether, claiming that "the mélange of disparate metaphor and theory around which understanding of people's behaviour is popularly constructed – in both lay and professional circles – rests in the reification of what is little more than tentative psychological theory" (Thomas, 2005: 59). He questions the location of EBD in the schoolchild, regardless of whether it is described as a *disability* or a *need*, rather than in the school's requirement for calm and order. He claims that the psychological and psychiatric vocabularies induced by the label 'EBD' discourage a move towards more creative responses. Rather than interventions and policies that focus on individual children, he proposes an emphasis on the creation of a more "humane" environment for them (e.g. by ensuring fair systems, avoiding situations that lead to problems and intervening when adults behave unfairly).

Visser (2005), drawing on his own school-based practice and research and his review of the EBD literature, identifies what he calls the 'eternal verities' – the features that are found in all effective educational approaches to EBD. These verities include the importance of relationships and a caring, warm ethos, the need for consistent boundaries

and structures, the dual role of care and challenge, the holding of high expectations, the modelling of desirable behaviour by teachers, good quality teaching and positive evaluative feedback systems.   Rogers (2005) claims that, at the end of the day, the factor that is most likely to bring about change in behaviour in students with EBD is the quality of the ongoing relationships between them and their teachers.

4.4.3   Psychopathology and mental health problems
The view that there is a connection between particular kinds of negative experience, especially in early life, and subsequent psychopathology or mental health problems is found in much of the clinical literature. For example, Rutter (2002), reviewing research on the effects of nature, nurture and developmental processes on both normal and abnormal psychological functioning, found that psychopathological risks were consistently associated with discord and focused negativity directed towards a child, with a lack of individualised personal caregiving, with the absence of reciprocal conversation and play and with a negative social ethos fostering maladaptive behaviour of one kind or another. While the role of poverty as a direct risk factor was limited, it was important as a distal risk factor that made cohesive and harmonious family functioning more difficult. The same seemed to apply to inner city life, which was found to be statistically related to increased rates of child psychiatric disorder. However, Rutter concluded that these risks were mediated not by the effects of city life directly on children but rather through their effects on family functioning and their associations with less positive school experiences.

The co-incidence of mental health difficulties and poor social-emotional functioning with specific learning difficulties, mild general learning disability and emotional and behavioural disorders is examined by Murray and Pianta (2007). They discuss how students with high incidence disabilities such as these frequently had problems adjusting to classroom and school environments and were "more likely than students without disabilities to experience depression, anxiety, conduct disorders, delinquency, school drop out, incarceration and poor post-high school outcomes". They cite research findings which suggest that the quality of teacher-student relationships affected students' emotional and behavioural engagement with school, socio-emotional adjustment, delinquency, anxiety and conduct. Also found to be of benefit to students were classroom structures, rules, routines and activities that conveyed a sense of community and continuity; an authoritative teaching style that was both warm and demanding; opportunities for one-on-one interactions with teachers; and explicit teaching of emotional and social skills.

4.4.4   Teaching social and emotional competence
Izard (2002) reviewed educational programmes designed to enhance socio-emotional competence and prevent the emergence of behavioural problems and psychopathology in children. He evaluated them against a number of key principles in healthy emotional development:
- The activation of the positive emotions of interest and joy and their variants have many therapeutic and preventive effects, e.g. motivating learning and exploration, the development of social bonds, and activities that counter the stress of sustained negative emotions

- Certain kinds of negative emotions, such as sadness over the plight of another or guilt over one's unfair acts, have a value in providing a basis for the development of empathy and prosocial behavior
- The modulation, rather than the stopping or suppression, of intense emotions such as anger and shame is beneficial as it redirects but maintains the energy and motivation associated with these emotions
- Emotions can be activated or sustained by different processes (e.g. unconscious, temperamental, biogenetic or cognitive) and therefore may require different regulatory techniques
- Emotions tend to co-occur in meaningful non-random patterns that require to be dealt with as complex motivational conditions (e.g. interest and joy; sadness and anger; guilt and fear; anger, disgust, and contempt)
- Emotional deprivation in early life results in dysfunctional emotion systems and the development of socioemotional competence depends on opportunities for the appropriate expression of both positive and negative emotions in the context of interpersonal exchanges
- The relatively independent emotion and cognitive systems require the fostering of emotion-cognition relations and intersystem connections, by helping children achieve socioemotional competence and specific skills for recognizing, labeling, modulating and utilising emotions in various contexts and in every day interactions.

4.4.5 The student's voice

The importance of giving students a voice in their own education is increasingly being recognised in policy and legislation (e.g. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) and the National Children's Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2000). The value of doing so in the context of special education also features in legislation (Government of Ireland, 2004) and policy (e.g. National Council for Special Education, 2006) and in the research literature. Gersch (1996) suggests that pupil involvement in assessment procedures and planning related to their learning increases self confidence. By providing feedback to teachers it also has the capacity to have a significant impact upon the quality of their teaching.

This view is strongly endorsed by other researchers in relation to marginalised students (e.g. Rose and Shevlin, 2004) and those with EBD (e.g. Groom and Rose, 2005; Davies, 2005). It has long been a feature of Youthreach practice and is enshrined in the quality assurance processes used by centres (Stokes, O'Connell and Griffin, 2000; O'Brien, 2005b, 2005c).

4.5 Developmental psychology

Developmental psychology is a wide and heterogeneous area within psychology. For the purposes of this review the principal focus will be on theories influenced by biological, ecological, systemic and psychodynamic thinking.

4.5.1 Ecological development theory

Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological, or ecobiological, theory locates the developing person firmly in a social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 2005). His theory seeks to provide a unified but highly differentiated conceptual scheme for describing the interrelated structures and processes operating in a person's immediate and also in their more remote environments as they shape the course of development throughout their life span.

The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls:
1. The microsystem is the complex of relations between the person and their environment in their immediate settings e.g. home, school, community.
2. The mesosystem comprises the interrelations among major settings containing the person e.g. the relationship between home and school
3. The exosystem embraces other specific social structures, both formal and informal, that impinge upon the immediate settings in which the person is to be found and which can influence, delimit or even determine what goes on in them, e.g. the parents' workplace, the mass media, agencies of government
4. The macrosystem refers to the overarching patterns of culture or subculture such as the economic, social, educational, legal and political systems.

(Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1979)

Over the life course human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between the individual and the persons, objects and symbols in their immediate external environment. These enduring forms of interaction are referred to as *proximal processes* (e.g. feeding or comforting a baby, playing with a child, child-child activities, reading, learning new skills, athletic activities, working).

Like other developmental theorists who focus on the child's early emotional and social experience, Bronfenbrenner discusses the form that proximal processes need to take in the microsystem for optimal development in infancy, emphasising in particular the importance of strong, mutual emotional attachments with one or more people who are committed to the child's well-being. However, for Bronfenbrenner, these processes never exist in a vacuum but are embedded in the larger social structures of family, community, society, economics and politics and need to be actively supported within the microsystem and through the inpacts of the wider nested meso-, exo- and macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Because of his location of personal development in this wider context, he was acutely interested in the formation of a link between scientific research and public policy, for example making a critical contribution to the creation of Head Start, the programme of preschool education for children in disadvantaged communities in the US that has been responsible for increasing longer term protective and resilience factors in participants.

4.5.2 Attachment and psychodynamic theories

Attachment and psychodynamic theories focus closely on the nature of interaction within Bronfenbrenner's microsystem and especially on the dyadic relationship between the

infant and their primary caregiver. Attachment theory was first described by John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and further developed in the work of Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues (Ainsworth, 1969, 1982; Ainsworth and Wittig, 1969; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall, 1978).

Bowlby placed intimate relationships at the centre of developmental psychology, postulating the idea of attachment as the primary form of instinctive behaviour in humans. Attachment follows a recognisable pattern and predictable course in everyone, serves a survival function because of its adaptive nature and occurs, of necessity, within a social context.

Marrone (1998) summarises the key elements of Bowlby's theory as follows:
1. The primary status and biological function of intimate emotional bonds between individuals (particularly in the parent – child relationship but also throughout the life cycle), the making and maintaining of which is achieved and controlled by a cybernetic system situated within the central nervous system.
2. The powerful influence that early attachment relationships have in personality development and – in some cases – in the origins of psychopathology.

Attachment theory draws on the concept of 'developmental pathways'. Bowlby saw the child's development as proceeding along one of a number of possible pathways, with the one taken being determined by the interaction between them and their environment. The child's temperament plays a role here but the most important factor is the way they are treated by their parents or main caregivers, not only during infancy but throughout childhood and adolescence as well. Other relationships are important particularly as the individual grows older, such as relationships with grandparents and other relatives, with siblings, with teachers and other significant adults, and with their peers.

A child who grows in conditions of emotional security and stability is likely to follow an optimal pathway. Resilience in the face of adverse conditions appears to be due to (1) having had a solid and satisfactory foundation in earlier life; or (2) having secondary attachment figures that provide some support and stability.

Ainsworth's research work centred on the interactional conditions affecting developmental pathways and it was her conclusion that what mattered most was the caregiver's sensitive responsiveness. "In infancy, the parent's sensitiveness includes noticing signals from the baby, interpreting them accurately, and responding appropriately and fairly promptly. Later, throughout life, sensitive responsiveness plays an important role in evoking a sense of self-integration and self-worth as well as in eliciting loving co-operative and reciprocal responses" (Marrone, 1989: 42). This idea is also found in Donald Winnicott's (1953) description of the optimal conditions for maturation and growth that takes place through the care of the 'good enough mother'. This care gives rise to a feeling of security in the child and a sense of subjective omnipotence. The mother provides a *holding environment*, a psychical and physical space within which the infant is protected. The experience of safety and of having their

needs met when they cry leads the child to trust in the availability and predictability of adults. This in turn leads to them having a sense of self-efficacy or power.

In childhood and adolescence, a major characteristic of sensitive responsiveness is the parent's capacity to see the child as a separate human being and to allow them freedom. The child develops a healthy sense of independence and this encourages mental activity, learning and active engagement in the world. The gradual nature of the transition between close and more distant levels of care allows the child to retain their sense of self-efficacy, while also forcing them to be less narcissistic and self-centred.

The patterns of interaction that the child experiences growing up come to be internalised through a process of representation and they develop into 'internal working models' of themselves and others. The child builds working models of their main caregivers and their ways of communicating and behaving towards them. They continue to build working models during the years of childhood and adolescence, and during this period the models become firmly established as influential cognitive structures.

Children who have experienced poor levels of care by their primary caregivers (that are not supplemented by other key figures in their life) or who have experienced neglect or abuse will carry negative working models with them. They will frequently display anxiety and present as disruptive and confrontational, preoccupied and distressed or withdrawn and inaccessible. The source of anxiety may be a concrete threat, not to their biological survival, but to their psychological survival and their sense of 'self'. This has a significant impact on their ability to find a place in the world.

A related idea is found in the work of Erik Erikson who described development in terms of a series of eight psychosocial stages (Erikson, 1963). Failure to negotiate the childhood stages in an optimum way would result in an adolescent who is characterised by mistrust, shame, doubt, guilt and a sense of inferiority.

4.5.3   Programmes applying Attachment Theory
A resurgence of interest in Attachment Theory in the last couple of decades has led to the application of the theory in a wide range of educational and other settings. These include primary schools (e.g. Bennathan and Boxall, 2000; Geddes, 2003, 2005) and postprimary schools (e.g. Patton et al, 2000; Soares, Lemos and Almeida, 2005; Bartick-Ericson, 2006; Murray and Pianta, 2007), in social work (e.g. Schofield and Brown, 1999) and in residential treatment units (e.g. Moses, 2000). For example, Murray and Pianta (2007), discussing support for students with high incidence disabilities in secondary schools, posit that ongoing warmth and trust coupled with open communication, instructional support and positive involvement assist children in developing relationships with teachers that "resembled secure caregiver-child attachments".

Programmes and approaches derived from Attachment Theory use the concept of *secondary attachment figures* as a means of changing young people's negative working models. They consciously establish a holding environment where the young people can feel secure and where they experience sensitively responsive interactions to them. These

attempts at creating the conditions of 'good enough parenting' allow the young people to experience a degree of subjective omnipotence with a reliable, caring adult who does not reject or exploit them. They begin to trust in the availability and predictability of support and to develop a sense of self-efficacy and power. As with the young child, it is this experience of self-efficacy that allows them to begin to take account of the nature of reality and of the feelings and needs of others, leading to a greater capacity for self-regulation, for learning and for cooperation with others.

This can be seen as an attempt to address retrospectively the central conflicts associated with the earlier psychosocial stages of Erikson's developmental model (Erikson, 1963) and to move the young people from feelings of mistrust, shame, guilt and inferiority towards a greater sense of trust, autonomy, initiative and industry. In this way they can achieve *ego identity*, a term which Erikson uses to denote "certain comprehensive gains which the individual, at the end of adolescence, must have derived from all of his pre-adult experience in order to be ready for the tasks of adulthood" (Erikson, 1956: 56). Ego identity allows them the possibility of experiencing intimacy, generativity and ego integrity in their future lives instead of isolation, stagnation and despair.

Returning to Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), development also involves a person's conception of their ecological environment and their active relation to it. "The development of the child's fantasy world underscores the fact that his emerging perceptions and activities are not merely a reflection of what he sees but have an active, creative aspect. To use Piaget's apt term, the child's evolving phenomenological world is truly a "construction of reality" rather than a mere representation of it… gradually he becomes capable of adapting his imagination to the constraints of objective reality and even of refashioning the environment so that it is more compatible with his abilities, needs, and desires. It is this growing capacity to remould reality in accordance with human requirements and aspirations that, from an ecological perspective, represents the highest expression of development." (Bronfenbrenner, ibid.: 10).

4.6   Recent research with Irish adolescents
A clinical study by Nevin et al. (2005) into the factors that relate to well-being in Irish adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18 years found that high subjective well-being (SWB) was associated with fewer family and personal stressful life events and more task-focused rather than emotion-focused coping styles. Adolescents with high SWB were more likely than those with moderate or low SWB to have personal resources such as problem-solving skills, an optimistic attributional style and self-esteem and to perceive themselves as having greater social resources such as social support and a functionally adaptive family. The researchers claim that their findings point to the importance of interventions for distressed adolescents that enhance both these forms of resources. For adolescents with psychological problems, they recommend individually focused interventions and multi-systemic programmes that aim to address deficits in their personal and social resources in a way that is tailored to suit each young person's unique profile. Likewise, they suggest that the critical question with regard to policies that affect adolescents in areas such as education, recreation and prevention of physical and mental

health problems is the extent to which they will enhance adolescents' personal and social resources.

Finally, a very recent survey of young people's mental health in Ireland by Headstrong (Bates et al, 2009) found that just 38% of young people described themselves as being able to cope with the problems they face. Over one third (36%) reported that they did not have an adult with whom they could talk through their problems on a regular basis, while 47% said they had been bullied at some point in their life and 10% considered that they had serious problems but had not sought professional help. The authors of the report identified mental health as the single biggest issue for young Irish people and recommended the weaving together of supports and services in local communities to enhance well-being and the development of services that were more accessible, youth-friendly, integrated and engaging for young people.

5.   The WebWheel model

5.1   Key themes from the literature

A number of common themes emerged from the four academic and research traditions examined in the previous section, the most striking of which is the emphasis on relationship. All stress the centrality of personal engagement, while the psychological literature analyses the actual mechanisms for developmental growth and maturation that underpin personal interaction and gives it its power. Crucial is the creation of a secure base or holding environment which allows the young person to move towards a sense of self-integration and self-efficacy. From there they can begin to find ways to co-exist with others and live effective lives in an environment that can meet their needs.

Another emphasis found in the foregoing review is the need to understand and take into account the social and economic environments of young people. Structures and processes that are most likely to be successful are those which start from an awareness of contextual factors and which allow engagement to take place on the basis of the learners' lived experiences rather than on the basis of an agenda or curriculum that is set elsewhere.

The long-term effects of negative early and ongoing experiences can be very serious in terms of mental health and societal issues. Among the practical structures and processes that the literature suggests can be successful are those that encourage:
- flexibility and a sensitive responsiveness that is tailored to the unique situation of the individual learner
- the listening to the learners' voice and understanding of their phenomenological perspective
- good quality teaching and a secure, ordered environment
- the deliberate promotion of emotional and social competencies
- the augmentation of professional support services with informal and non-formal approaches
- the provision of training, guidance and support for staff.

The WebWheel model took as its starting point the analysis of the full range of learner needs that was described in Section 2 and the close examination of the most pertinent findings from the review of the research literature outlined in the previous section and summarised above. The model was developed to be a set of structures, systems and practices for supporting learners in Youthreach and in other centres for education and training such as Senior Traveller Training Centres and Community Training Centres.

5.2   Overview of the WebWheel model

The focus of the WebWheel model is on increasing the capacity of the centre to provide for the needs of the learners, with learner support being integrated into the core work of the centre. Key features of the model are the adoption of a developmental approach over time, attention to the social ethos and context of the centre and involvement of the

learners in their own assessment and plan development. Members of staff show flexibility and responsiveness to the individual needs of their learners by engaging in mentoring, profiling and individual programme planning processes with them and interagency liaison on their behalf.

This model incorporates a whole centre approach and includes both learner and staff intervention elements with the objective of increasing the capacity of the centre to meet the needs of its learners in a holistic and effective manner. Every learner is allocated a member of staff to act as their key worker. Mentoring techniques are employed to develop an effective one-to-one relationship between the key worker and learner and to allow issues to be addressed.

Stage 1: 'What's going on? Telling their story, describing what their life is like for them and rating it.

Stage 2: 'What do you want instead? Thinking about how else it might be, developing new preferred scenarios and identifying goals.

Stage 3: 'How might you get to what you want? Thinking about what they will do (with the help of the centre) to achieve these goals and what will go into their plan.

Figure 5.1   Skilled helper 3-stage process (Egan, 1998)

It is important to emphasise that mentoring is not counselling. The skills needed to mentor are the skills gained by ordinary living rather than specific training. The assistance that is being offered is more akin to the kind of support provided by an older relative or sibling to a younger one. It assumes that an adult has learned something about coping and is wiser for being older rather than for having any kind of formal professional expertise. The quality of the relationship is crucial. If the learner does not feel liked and respected by the key worker it won't work. Not everyone has the inclination or personality for mentoring and so it is important that only those members of staff that are comfortable with the role would take it on. It is also essential that staff engaging in mentoring are supported in this work.

5.3   The mentoring process

The mentoring process is structured by the Wheel profiling instrument and uses Gerard Egan's *skilled helper* approach (Egan, 1998). It is a frontline guidance process involving reflection, goal-setting and planning. Mentoring is primarily about listening. The assessment of need that takes place in the session starts from the premise that it is not only useful but necessary to listen to the learners' views and to get their take on their situation and values. In mentoring the key worker is offering themselves as a concerned adult who wishes the learner well and who is interested in getting to know them and to hearing what they have to say. They do not interrogate or push the learners into saying more than they want to say. The function of the key worker is to manage the process in a gentle and unintrusive way, facilitating the learner to develop a sense of who they are and where they want to go.

The *skilled helper* approach involves three steps or stages: First, the key worker issues an invitation to the learner to reflect on one of the factors of the Wheel i.e. an aspect of themselves and their life as they are at present and to give it a rating (from a five-point scale) on the basis of how happy they are with the way this aspect of their life is going. Second, the key worker asks them to consider how else they would like things to be and what goals they might have for themselves. In the third step the key worker and learner make a plan together for what both the learner and the centre will do to help the learner to realise these goals.

☺	**5:** if they feel happy about the situation under consideration or it is an area of positive strength for them (e.g. if they say they are very happy with their accommodation; their attendance is excellent; they feel perfectly fit and strong)
☺	**4:** if they feel they have no particular problem in this factor area (e.g. they get drunk at weekends but it is social and not out of control; they just have the allowance but can manage on it; they get on fine with most people in the centre)
☹	**3:** if they feel they have a bit of a problem in this area (e.g. they are bored where they live and have nothing to do at weekends; they don't really know what they want to do when they leave the centre but have another year to think about it; they tend to get lost whenever they go into town)
☹	**2:** if they feel that they have quite a big problem with some or all aspects of the situation under consideration (e.g. they can't really read; they regularly feel very depressed; they have to be constantly vigilant when they are out because of the likelihood of racist attacks)
☹	**1:** if they recognise that they have a very serious problem or feel that they are not coping generally in their life (e.g. they have been charged with a serious offence and may go to gaol; they are at significant risk of physical abuse; they have effectively dropped out of the centre).

Figure 5.2   Profiling Wheel 5-point rating scale

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5.3.1 The Profiling Wheel

Assessment using the Wheel is an intervention in its own right rather than just a precursor to intervention. It invites the learner to reflect on their situation and to make an assessment of it. In this way it facilitates reflection and self-awareness.

The Wheel was adapted from the Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR) framework developed for the Connexions Service in Britain (see GRG Research, 2002). The adaptation involved making some changes to the content to better suit the Irish context and to the methodology by placing the learner at the centre of the profiling and planning process.

The Wheel contains 16 factor areas grouped under three headings – educational development, personal development and practical barriers. Some of the factors are directly relevant to academic or vocational learning while others are more concerned with personal and social growth. In the third category are factors which are not strictly the business of the centre but which have the capacity to impinge on some learners' ability to attend or to participate effectively in the programme. Over time, the key worker explores with the learner their perception of their situation in relation to each of the factor areas.
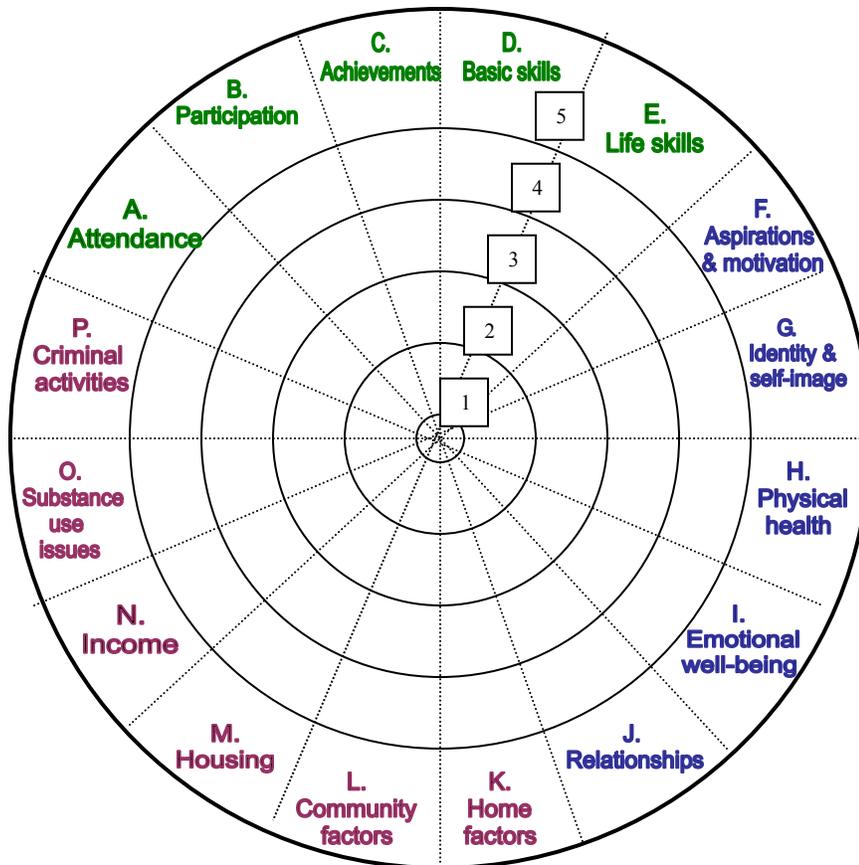

Fig. 5.3   Profiling Wheel

5.3.2   The individual action plan (IAP)[6]

The profiling is following by the development of an individual action plan (IAP) by the learner and key-worker working together. The IAP identifies the interventions that are required and the supports that will be provided. The action plan covers vocational training, work experience, transition, social, personal and health education, literacy and numeracy instruction, social skills training and life skills development, as well as any additional supports that will be provided by the centre (e.g. counselling) or that will be sought from other agencies and service providers to address factors that are acting as barriers to learning and progression.

The plan is owned by the learner. It is based on their own agenda, rather than that of the staff, and so is more motivating and meaningful to them. The purpose of planning is to encourage the learner to think about the future and to connect with the possibilities that engaging in the Youthreach programme can provide. The plan as it develops during the mentoring sessions is shared by the key worker with the other members of staff as responsibility for implementing it belongs to the centre staff team as a whole. Subsequent mentoring sessions will consider other factor areas and will continuously review the progress of the plan, making alternations or additions as desired.
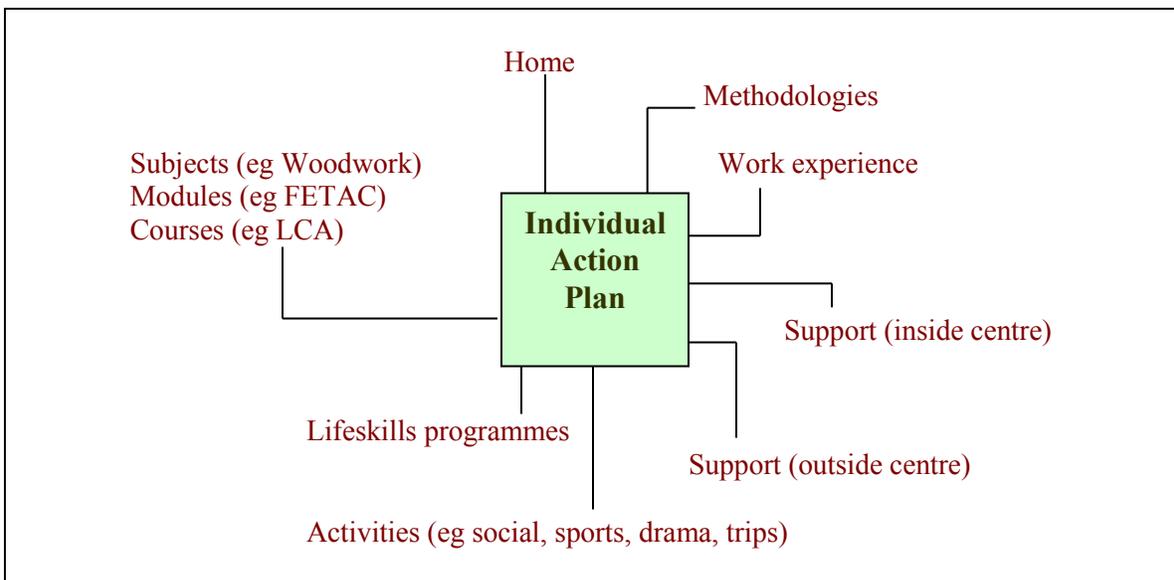
Fig. 5.4   Content areas of an IAP

The action plan can contain a variety of possible interventions. The most straightforward will be the modules and subject areas that are already being provided in the centre e.g. LCA subjects or FETAC modules in woodwork, communications, catering, hairdressing, etc. A learner who has identified an occupational goal during mentoring (e.g. to be a hairdresser, to get a Leaving Cert.) will put the achieving of the relevant accreditation into their action plan. Likewise, the plan might detail the kind of work experience they

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[6] See Appendix D for an IAP template

would like to do. The plan might also include interventions relating to health or social development (e.g. programmes for smoking cessation, to increase fitness, to manage conflict, to develop assertiveness skills) or activities (e.g. engagement in drama, joining a football team, organising a foreign trip). For a learner with literacy or numeracy difficulties the plan might include one-to-one literacy classes. If areas of personal difficulty emerge during mentoring the key worker and learner might identify a series of sessions with the centre counsellor as an action for the plan.

5.3.3 Inter-agency working
Given the nature of the difficulties that many of the young people in Youthreach face, the centre will not be in a position to address all of the issues that are likely to arise during mentoring. In these cases, the job of the key worker will be to identify the appropriate community service or agency and to support the learner in making contact with it. Inter-agency liaison and collaborative working is therefore a key element of the WebWheel model. There are several levels of engagement with services and agencies – from their identification in the local area, to finding out the liaison and referral pathways to them, to building relationships with the personnel working in them, to the development of joint projects and inter-agency arrangements for particular groups of young people and individuals.

5.4   Staff development features
The staff development aspects of the model are vital. They comprise two main elements:
   a) staff training
   b) case supervision and staff support

5.4.1 Staff training
The whole centre needs to be introduced to the rationale for the model and the processes involved and key working staff need explicit training in mentoring skills. The *sensitive responsiveness* that the model is promoting means that there is a need for staff to develop knowledge, skills and competences on an ongoing basis to equip them to offer the kinds of tailored support that would benefit their learners. A provision for additional staff training is what is required here as it is a local matter for staff to identify the precise skill sets that would benefit their particular learners and the gaps they have in them. These skills sets may include some areas of formal accredited expertise but may equally involve knowledge and competencies that are based on experience and informal learning or on areas of interest or hobbies that they are willing to share with learners (e.g. hill-walking, photography). Also important – but less capable of addressing through training – are the contributions staff make to the work of centres through their personal qualities (e.g. energy, kindness, good humour, tolerance, acceptance).

5.4.2 Case supervision
If staff with no specific training in counselling or psychotherapy are to engage safely in mentoring work with learners who may have very serious or complex problems, they must receive case supervision. The function of case supervision is both to provide a protection for students and to create an opportunity for the centre team to increase their

professional understanding and expertise in relation to mentoring. When done on a group basis case supervision maximises the amount of learning by the team. The objective in case supervision is to assist in the management of difficult cases, to talk about the presenting issues, to consider possible underlying factors (including mental illness), to minimise risks, to resolve dilemmas and to determine the most effective approaches to use.

5.4.3   Staff support

Provision of mentoring involves a high level of personal engagement and commitment and it is to be expected that key workers will be emotionally affected by this. To take account of the emotional toll on staff of working in this way, provision of formal staff support is an essential element of the WebWheel. The main function of this kind of professional support is to establish clear boundaries around what is – and what is not – the responsibility of the key workers and the staff team and to help them deal with the anxiety and sadness that this work can induce.

5.4.4   Qualifications of case supervision and staff support providers

Because of the skills and responsibilities involved in good case supervision and staff support it is necessary that this work be done by suitably qualified personnel.

6.   Establishment of the SEN Initiative

6.1   Introduction of the SEN Initiative

In November 2006 Ministers Hanafin and DeValera announced the introduction of an Initiative to address the special educational needs of students enrolled in the Youthreach programme, initially in twenty centres but with a view to extending it to all Youthreach centres following an evaluation. The initiative was to provide an automatic entitlement of 1,500 additional hours to cater, through a team approach, for the needs of the learners in the centres.

The effect of the Initiative was to be two fold. Firstly it would allow the centres to introduce practices such as profiling and assessment, to develop individual plans, establish a mentoring system and engage in inter-agency work. In parallel, training and professional support would be made available to the Youthreach staff to take account of the demands placed on them dealing with the diverse nature of the students' special educational needs.

€2 million was provided for the initiative in 2007.   The purposes of the initiative were:
1. To allow for a measured systematic development of professional practice in the area of special educational needs support.
2. To introduce the practices of profiling and assessment into each Centre, development of individual plans for each student, establishment of a mentoring support system and engagement in inter-agency work as required for each student.

Twenty centres were chosen to be representative of centres nationally, having a variety of sizes, locations and special features.

6.2   Financial allocation

Table 6.1 SEN financial allocation

	Staffing	**Staff support**	**Staff training**	**Total**
Jan to Dec 2007 allocation to 20 centres	€1,415,400	€107,840	€53,920	€1,577,160
Jan to Jun 2008 allocation to 20 centres	€769,690	€58,640	€14,660	€842,990[7]

The financial allocation for each centre was based on a unit of 25 learners but applied on a per capita basis. The total per unit was €58,500, with a staffing allocation of €52,500[8];

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[7] The reason why this is over half of the previous year's total allocation is because a number of centres increased their learner places in January 2008 and were resourced accordingly.
[8] This is equivalent to the cost of one teacher at a middle incremental point on the Teachers' Common Basic Salary Scale

a staff support / case supervision allocation of €4,000 and a staff training allocation of €2,000 per year. In the first year the Department retained half of the training component to cover the two centrally organised programmes (on mentoring and on identifying and responding to learning difficulties). The other half was given to the centres. Table 5.1 shows the total allocation for the 20 centres involved in the SEN pilot. Allocations per centre ranged from €34,500 for the smallest (e.g. Kilrush) to €172,500 for the largest (Limerick city).

Payments were made to the relevant VEC responsible for each Youthreach centre and were paid out when the Youthreach centre had submitted an implementation plan that received Department approval. There were delays in the full implementation of the SEN Initiative by some centres, particularly in the first year. This was due to difficulties with the appointment of new staff in some cases and in others with a reluctance to begin mentoring before full staff training had taken place. Centres that had money remaining at the end of the first year or the full pilot period had deductions of that amount made in their next allocation.

It was decided to allocate funding on a general allocation basis rather than to tie payments to individual learners because this seemed to be more effective and less bureaucratic way of using limited funds. This general allocation approach was influenced by recent changes in the way children with high incidence disabilities were being catered for in primary schools.

6.3   Structures

During the initial phases of the design of the SEN Initiative, the Department consulted with the NCSE. As the design progressed, an advisory committee was established to support the senior psychologist in Further Education Section in overseeing the development and implementation during the pilot phase. This committee was comprised of the Senior Psychologist, the National Coordinator for the Youthreach Programme, the Assistant Principal and AO of the Further Education Section, the manager of the Quality Framework Initiative, two participating Youthreach centre co-ordinators nominated by the National Association of Youthreach Coordinators, two VEC representatives nominated by the Chief Executive and Education Officers Association and a VEC representative of the Adult Education Officers' Association (see Appendix A).

In addition to the regular Advisory Committee meetings, the senior psychologist organised six general meetings in the Department in Dublin for centre coordinators and VEC staff. These meetings were used to keep all stakeholders informed of developments, to clarify issues or concerns as they emerged and to give staff the opportunity to share ideas and solutions. The Senior Psychologist linked closely with coordinators and VECs issuing regular emails, designing planning and reporting templates, issuing guidelines and other documentation and providing training and review meetings. The pilot was envisaged as an action research project (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) giving participants at all levels an opportunity to influence developments and to learn from the implementation process. As the Initiative became more integrated into the

core work of the centres and as staff implemented the model more fully with their learners there was an opportunity to develop, refine and review the processes and procedures involved.

6.4   The portfolio project and the training facilitator group
In 2003, the Senior Psychologist had invited a group of people to work with her in the development of assessment and other materials for centres. Known as the Portfolio Project, this group included educational psychologists, guidance practitioners, adult literacy specialists, staff members from centres and national programme co-ordinators. A major output of the group has been the development of the Wheel profiling tool. The group reviewed profiling tools used elsewhere and decided to adapt the Assessment, Implementation, Planning & Review Framework developed in the UK by the Connexions Service. Other materials developed by the Portfolio Project included guidelines for interventions in response to a range of learner problems, information on training sources and resources, guidelines on frontline career guidance, exercises for group work and notes on youth mental health. These materials and other relevant reports and documentation are published on a subsection of the Youthreach website, which was launched by Minister Haughey in November 2007. This is known as the WebWheel section and is available on www.youthreach.ie/webwheel. Some subsections of this are restricted by password to staff who have had some training in the model – Level B to all Youthreach, Senior Traveller and Community Training centres and Level C to the twenty centres involved in the SEN Initiative. The members of the Portfolio Project are listed in Appendix B.

A training facilitation team was established in 2005 to work on the design and delivery of training programmes for centres in relation to SEN support and the Wheel process. In 2006 all Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training and Community Training Centres were offered an introductory 2-day training programme on SEN provision, which introduced them to the Wheel profiling system, individual programme planning and inter-agency working.   This team also delivered training to the twenty SEN Initiative centres in 2007. Its members are listed in Appendix C.

6.5   Training
A two-day programme in mentoring skills training was developed and rolled out to the co-ordinators and those members of staff who had agreed to take up the role of key workers in all of the SEN pilot centres. This course covered motivational theory, goal-setting, mentoring skills, profiling and planning strategies, child protection considerations, practical organisational issues for centres and staff support mechanisms.

In addition, the National Learning Network was contracted by the Department to deliver three additional days' training to all members of staff in the twenty centres. This programme was on the theme of identifying and responding to learning difficulties and covered information processing, learning styles, the features of various specific and mild general learning disabilities, teaching differentiation and learner supports. It was designed to equip staff with assessment and pedagogical skills in relation to both high and low

incidence learning difficulties (i.e. Borderline and Mild General Learning Disability, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD and Asperger Syndrome).

6.6   Staff support and case supervision

Centres were responsible for organising their own staff support and case supervision provision. The requirements of a practitioner included accreditation in psychotherapy or psychology with relevant experience, a minimum of three years supervised clinical practice themselves and experience of supervising others and membership of an appropriate professional body (e.g. the Psychological Society of Ireland or British Psychological Society, the Irish Council for Psychotherapy, the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, the Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy). A relevant third level qualification in health, education or social care and a reasonable knowledge and understanding of marginalised and disaffected young people were considered desirable.

In recognition that centre coordinators have responsibility for managing and leading the work in their centres it was considered that they would benefit from support in relation to these specific roles. Part of the staff support budget could therefore be used by the coordinator to locate assistance if they so desired. Suitable personnel for providing this form of professional support were considered to include those in managerial or supervisory roles, management consultants, more experienced peers, organisational psychologists and psychotherapists with experience in this area.

6.7   Action research

The short time between the first announcement of the Initiative (November 2006) and its commencement (January 2007) meant that it was not possible to complete all the preparatory work in time to allow the Initiative measures to be introduced immediately in all centres. Explicit and detailed guidelines were not ready for centres and the training programme in mentoring skills had yet to be finalised and made available. In the first year, this led to a delay by many centres in the full implementation of the SEN Initiative.

The action research nature of the pilot (Reason and Bradbury, 2001), however, meant that the focus of the pilot phase was on maximising the learning from the implementation of the new measures in centres. Action research seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of concern to people. "A primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives. A wider purpose … is to contribute through this practical knowledge to the increased well-being – economic, political, psychological, spiritual – of human persons and communities…" (Reason and Bradbury, ibid.: 1-2). The perceptions of the practitioners who are operating in the research context are of the utmost importance and the knowledge that is gained is built upon their participation, experience and what they see as relevant. "Action research takes its cues – its questions, puzzles, and problems – from the perceptions of practitioners within particular, local practice contexts… It builds descriptions and theories within the

practice of the context itself, and tests them there through intervention experiments …"
(Argyris and Schön, 1991: 86)

The experiences of staff and the feedback they were receiving from their learners
therefore provided crucial information to the leadership of the project. They also had
considerable freedom to try out different approaches to the introduction of the key
elements of the Initiative: e.g. to decide how often and for how long the mentoring
sessions would take place, the terms of employing new staff, how the key worker/learner
pairings would be determined, the nature of the new interventions to be introduced for
learners, etc. In this way the model of support evolved over the course of the pilot period
and participants at all levels had a role in developing practice.

6.8   External evaluation of first phase of pilot

An external evaluation of the early implementation phase of the pilot was carried out by
Eustace Patterson Ltd (Clarke et al, 2007). Their report was received in October 2007.

The overall stated aim of the evaluation was to calculate the impact of the Initiative and
to indicate any amendments that should be made before it was extended to other centres.
The terms of reference of the external evaluation were to:
- Measure the increase in capacity of the Centres, through their staff, to respond
  effectively to the needs of all their learners.
- Assess the impact of the provision on the learners, taking into account the range of
  special educational needs found amongst them.
- Verify if the additional supports put in place are meeting the needs of learners with
  disabilities.
- Indicate delivery mechanisms that show the greatest efficiency and value for money.
- Produce data that can be used to account for the additional funds spent.
- Produce valid comparisons between this measure and other measures to support
  learners with special educational needs operating within mainstream and further
  education programmes.
- Describe an effective approach to support provision for the special educational needs
  of learners for duplication in other Youthreach Centres.

The methodology included a review of international literature, national policy and
legislation and consultations with key stakeholders including the Department of
Education & Science, the Advisory Group established under the SEN pilot initiative and
the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Youthreach Centres took part in
interviews and focus groups with staff and learners, case studies, surveys and workshops.

6.7.1   Evaluation findings

The report noted that the SEN Initiative was the first programme to specifically resource
special educational needs within Youthreach and that the NCSE was aware of the
Initiative and broadly supported the approach being adopted. Because the evaluation
took place at such an early stage in the pilot phase it was not in a position to assess the

outcome of the Initiative on learners. However, the evaluators concluded that the model accorded with much of the international good practice identified in the research literature on effective approaches and avoided narrow legislative definitions and medical models of special needs.

They believed the holistic and integrated approach being used fitted with the original concept for Youthreach and its Quality Framework and reflected the OECD prediction of greater personalisation of education and the growing awareness that a 'one size fits all' education system was poorly adapted to meet individual needs and the development of the modern knowledge economy. The SEN Initiative was also said to mirror a more general trend in social inclusion provision towards more holistic, integrated and networked approaches.

On the question of cost, the report concluded that the SEN Initiative compared favourably on a value for money basis with other support systems in place in the education system in Ireland. The total allocation per group of 25 learners under the SEN initiative of €58,500[9], or €2,340 per learner, was equivalent to the salaries of two inexperienced SNAs[10] *or* one experienced teacher[11] in the mainstream school system.

Table 6.2: Comparison with SEN Provision Allocated to Post-Primary School under the terms of Circular 08/02

Number and percentage of Youthreach learners with a disability per group of 25		Number of resource hours due to a learner by disability type	Total number of resource hours due	Likely number of Special Needs Assistants allocated
Borderline, mild, specific learning disability	15 (60%)	2.5	37.5	-
Emotional, behavioural, ADHD	5 (20%)	5.0	25.0	2.0
Speech, language, sensory, physical	1 (4%)	4.0 or 5.0	4.0	1.0
Moderate general learning disability	1 (4%)	3.5	3.5	-
Total	c.20[12] (c.80%)		70.0 (This is equivalent to 3 Resource Teachers[13])	2 SNAs

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[9] This is the total allocation including staffing, staff training and staff support/supervision.

[10] A SNA's salary starts at €23,232 and rises to a maximum of €37,650.

[11] A teacher's salary starts at €31,232 and rises to a maximum of €62,635

[12] Estimate of total number of learners with a disability allowing for instances of multiple disability in some cases.

Citing previous research as indicating that at least 60% of Youthreach learners had borderline, mild or specific learning disabilities and that it could be estimated that at least one-fifth would have severe emotional, behavioural or personality disorders, 4% a speech and language disorder or a sensory or physical disability and another 4% a moderate general learning disability, the level of funding available under the SEN Initiative was considerably less than what would be available in a post-primary school. They concluded that the Youthreach WebWheel model represented very good value for money when compared to this alternative.

However, the evaluators noted differences in the ways the Initiative was being implemented in centres and suggested that some approaches were most in line with the research literature and appeared to be more effective than others. They recommended that clearer guidelines be given to centres. They were also concerned that centres were at different stages of implementation and recommended an extension of the pilot period by another six months in order to allow the Initiative more time to "bed in".

These recommendations were accepted by the Department. The pilot phase was extended for another six months to the end of June 2008. By now it was possible to develop, refine and review the processes and procedures involved and to arrive at more detailed conclusions about the approaches that appeared to have the biggest impact on learner development. At the end of the full pilot phase the centre coordinators were asked to write a report of the implementation of the Initiative in their centres during this 18-month period. They were given a template to help with structuring their account.

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[13] At 22 hours per week per Resource Teacher and allowing for instances of multiple disability in some cases.

7.   Centre reports on the implementation

7.1   Centre reports

This section will describe the implementation of the SEN Initiative in centres during the pilot phase from January 2007 to June 2008 and is based on the information provided by coordinators in their centre reports. The centre reports were written to a template which, following a logic model, requested information on the situation of learner needs and staff skills, the inputs available to the centre to address these needs (the additional budget provided by the Department for staffing and increasing staff capacity through training and support), the activities engaged in to implement the key elements of the Initiative, the form of centre outputs (in particular how the staffing and staff capacity building resources were used) and the outcomes in terms of learning and development made by the learners.   Because of problems in one centre, which led to a significant reduction in its operation for much of the pilot period and to staff changes, there was no one in a position to write an account and so no report was sought. This section, then, is based on nineteen centre reports.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Funding for additional - staff hours - staff training - staff support	Engage in - provision of mentoring - responding to identified needs of learners - interagency work - staff capacity building	Timetabled - mentoring sessions - support interventions - learning interventions - staff training events - staff support sessions - interagency arrangements and actions	Positive changes in learners in - basic skills - life skills - academic skills - vocational skills - effectiveness - socio-emotional development - resilience and mental health - ability to receive help

Fig. 7.1   SEN Initiative logic model

Because the SEN Initiative integrates learner support into the main work of a centre it was difficult at times for coordinators to distinguish what was added by the Initiative to what was already being done in their centres – after all, centres have always attempted to respond to their learners' needs. Under the terms of the Initiative centres were given considerable discretion in how they used their additional resources and this could have led to 'more of the same' rather than to anything that was appreciably different from what had gone before. However, the Initiative imposed one key imperative on centres. This was to establish for each learner a regular mentoring session with a member of staff acting as their key worker, during which a particular assessment and planning procedure

would be engaged in (the 'Wheel'). Training was provided to mentoring staff in the processes involved in the Wheel and engagement in a formal staff support and case supervision measure, with a suitably qualified supervisor, was made compulsory for mentoring staff. The only other directive given to centres was that they should use the additional resources they had received to develop support and learning interventions that were responsive to the issues identified in the mentoring and the plans devised by the learners. For learners who had problems that required support from services and agencies based outside the centre this meant the centre would engage in the necessary referral or interagency work to ensure that these problems were addressed.

7.2   Learner difficulties
The coordinators gave a summary description of the needs they had identified in their learner cohort in relation to: a) Education and training; b) Personal and social development; and c) Barriers to participation and progress in the programme. As these were very similar to those previously identified at the regional consultative meetings and outlined in section 1.2 and 1.3 above, they will not be repeated here.

7.3   Audit of staff skills
Each coordinator carried out an audit of the skills and competences already possessed by the staff team to address learner needs in their centres. They reported the following:

a) Skills that are formal and accredited, involving a particular area of expertise. The coordinators reported that their tutors had qualifications in education and/or teaching and in individual subject areas, IT, cookery, literacy, art, youth work, social work, qualifications in community arts, counselling skills, education, art and craft subject areas, social, personal and health education (SPHE, CSPE) and in learning disabilities/ difficulties.

b) Knowledge and competencies that are based on experience and informal learning or short inservice courses. Examples of these were sport, outdoor pursuits, ICT skills, safety awareness, literacy programmes, drug awareness, positive communication skills, listening skills, knowledge of the local area, families and social networks, ability to engage meaningfully with learners and their families, classroom management and development of lesson planning skills, time management, phonics, anger management, knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses and how this impacts on their ability to work effectively with the young people, conflict resolutions skills and ability to challenge effectively

c) Areas of interest or hobbies that the staff are willing to share with learners. They identified health and fitness awareness, ability to cook, bake, play music, swim and play chess, skills in the use of alternative therapies, ability to use imagination, skills in the use of puppets and art, knowledge of modern languages, experience in writing, performing and T.V. work

d) Contributions that derive from staff members' personal qualities. Listed here were listening ability, empathy, patience, fairness, respect, consistency, dependability, trustworthiness, creativity, communication skills, personal and interpersonal skills, energy, commitment, a non-judgemental approach, motivation to achieve goals, sense of humour and goodwill towards learners.

Coordinators were also asked to identify gaps in skills or competences that the centre currently lacked that they believed they needed to address their learners' needs. The intention of the Initiative was to fill any gaps by making new staff appointments, by locating a suitable service in the community or by training existing staff. However, not all gaps could necessarily be filled, despite the budgets for staffing and staff training, when appropriately qualified staff or suitable training courses were not available in an area. Examples given by coordinators of the skill sets they continued to lack by the end of the pilot period were career guidance, skilled part-time staff in literacy, administrative supports, a cleaner for the centre, a family support unit linked to, but separate from the centre, substance misuse support services aimed specifically at the centre's age group and training for tutors in policy development, suicide prevention, drug use prevention, anger management and classroom management for dealing with challenging behaviour.

7.4 Inputs

The total cost of funding the SEN Initiative over the 18-month pilot period is recorded in the table below. The reason the total figure for the 6-month period in 2008 is not half the total for the first year is because some of the centres expanded the number of their places in 2008 and this resulted in a per capita increase in the funding they received.

Table 6.1 SEN financial allocation

	Staffing	**Staff support**	**Staff training**	**Total**
Jan to Dec 2007 allocation to 20 centres	€1,415,400	€107,840	€53,920	€1,577,160
Jan to Jun 2008 allocation to 20 centres	€769,690	€58,640	€14,660	€842,990

7.5   SEN Initiative practices

By the end of the pilot period all coordinators reported that the following key practices were fully in place for each learner:
a) An assigned key worker who mentored the learner
b) Systematic profiling of the learner using the Wheel
c) The development of an individual action plan out of this process
d) Engagement in inter-agency work if required by the learner

7.6   SEN Initiative outputs

Centre outputs included all the arrangements and structures put in place as a result of the SEN Initiative.

7.6.1 The number and caseload of mentoring staff

The average number of people mentoring in each centre was 6, with a range of between 3 and 14. As the size of centres varied considerably (from 94 to15 places) an average figure is not very meaningful. In general however the larger centres had a larger pool to draw on and therefore more people mentoring.

7.6.2 How mentoring sessions were timetabled

Learners received a mentoring session once a week in the majority of centres, with four doing it on a fortnightly basis. Most coordinators described the arrangement as having a degree of flexibility in order to accommodate poor attenders or to be able to provide support in times of crisis. Sessions generally lasted between 20 and 45 minutes, but again this was flexible and could vary according to the wishes of the learner.

7.6.3 How other mentoring related work was timetabled

IAP's were generally written up during the session with the learner, with additional notes being added immediately after the session by key workers as their aides memoire. Follow up work was frequently the responsibility of a particular member of staff who was allocated hours specifically to co-ordinate the mentoring programme and to carry out on any actions identified as needed by the mentoring team. This would usually include contacting other agencies. Liaison with other members of staff was occasionally done informally in the staff room but was mostly done through staff meetings. The learners' individual action plans were shared with all staff members as the implementation of the plans was the responsibility of the whole centre team. Where appropriate, learners were given responsibility for liaising with staff members themselves.

Other activities were initiated that had the effect of backing up and supporting pastoral care systems and mentoring. For example, some centres liaised closely with parents and invited them to the centre in groups or individually. Home visits also took place or contact via the telephone as issues arose. A Breakfast Club was set up in a number of centres to increase informal social interaction, supervision and the building of pastoral care relationships, as well as providing healthy food and encouraging attendance and punctuality.

In many of the centres student councils met regularly and the issues raised in these, along with possible solutions suggested by the students, were brought to monthly meetings with the coordinator by representatives of the learners. In some cases issues that might have come up for individuals during their mentoring sessions were brought to student council meetings leading to the introduction of interventions and actions for groups of learners.

7.6.4 Specific teaching interventions introduced

New teaching interventions were introduced into centres. These were designed to address the learning needs of particular learners and took place in small groups or one-to-

one settings. In one centre support for learning was provided in the form of a Trainee Support Tutor who helped individuals with the completion of modules and other classroom work in a number of subject areas.

a) Basic education
- Literacy (including literacy programmes like Fast ForWord and Touch Type Read Spell and activities like publishing a centre magazine)
- Team-teaching literacy integrated into practical subjects (Woodwork, Metal work, Construction Studies, Woodcraft, Engineering & Art)
- Numeracy

> *Through literacy and numeracy assessments we have been able to identify difficulties and explain them both to the students and to staff. Students were very relieved to gain insight and also to realise that they would be helped to manage problem areas, and this reduced their anxiety. We evaluated our literacy and numeracy supports with them and they said they had found both really helpful.[14]*

b) Life skills
- Driving theory
- Road safety
- Safe pass
- Team building
- Life Savers / Steer Clear (programmes dealing with driving safety)
- Occupational first aid
- Money management (given by MABS)
- Entitlements (given by the Citizens Information Bureau)

c) Academic accreditation
- Adult Basic Education Programme (FETAC Level 2)
- Social Science for Leaving Cert
- CSPE Programme for Junior Cert

d) Social, personal and health education (SPHE)
- ADEPT programme (development of leadership skills, development of healthy lifestyles, reduced levels of self-harm, reduced abuse of alcohol / drugs)
- SPHE & life skills programme (communication, self awareness, hygiene, anger and conflict management, drug awareness & sexual health, alcohol and drug abuse etc)
- Sumo wrestling
- Visits to the gym
- Bowling
- Karting

e) Arts education
- Film or video production

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[14] The boxed texts throughout this report are from the individual centre reports of the SEN Initiative

- TV & Film Recording
- Drama (creating and recording a self written play)
- Set design
- Fashion design
- DJ workshop
- Drumming

> *Fishing Futures Project: The main aim was to help young people explore alternative options to crime and substance abuse. A group of trainees went to Corkagh Park in Dublin to fish for carp, however the majority of trips were made to a local beach in Arklow. The trainees learned a variety of casting techniques and some of the trainees have taken up this sport as part of their recreational pursuits. Trainees participated in preparing and sampling fish dishes.*

7.6.5 Specific support interventions introduced
The specific support interventions that were provided to particular learners, and which usually occurred in small groups or one-to-one settings, were:
- Mentoring
- Career guidance with the FAS Advocate
- One-to one counselling
- Holistic therapies
- Relaxation
- Acupuncture
- Programmes in smoking cessation, health access, sexual health, anger management
- Programmes for eating disorders
- Peer support

> *Peer support was encouraged in the centre. Examples are when trainees supported and assisted each other to complete FETAC modules, in the spelling groups, when seeking work experience or encouraged others to attend counselling or urged them to engage and utilise supports such as mentoring and literacy in the centre.*

7.6.6 Work experience placements, their preparation and review
Work experience is a requirement of both the LCA programme and the FETAC major awards at levels 4 and 5, while work orientation is required for FETAC level 3.

Preparation for students engaging in work experience was provided through the vocational preparation and guidance classes, from Advocates and guidance teachers, from key workers and from other members of staff. In some centres the actual organisation of placements was the responsibility of a particular member of staff but more often several members of staff had some role in successful work experience. Examples given of how preparation was done included practice interviews in advance of initial meetings with prospective employers, devising CVs and job-seeking skills such as the scanning

newspapers weekly to find jobs and employment placement opportunities. Sessions were given on employer requirements for successful completion of work experience, on health and safety in the workplace, on safe pass training, on consideration of child protection issues, on contracts and insurance conditions and on completing a work experience timesheet.

> *As a result of needs identified by the learners in the vocational skills area of the Wheel, a local managing director visited the centre and gave a presentation on employer needs and employee skills required for employment in the service industry.*

Depending on the nature of the work they would be doing they might receive specific training for the job as well as guidance on general workplace conditions and issues. Some centres also helped learners to deal with feelings or anxieties they might be having and to anticipate with them how they would deal with issues that might come up about such matters as their working hours and possible requests to work weekends, etc. In the mentoring particular emphasis was placed on the identification of suitable work placements that would meet the expressed career and vocational goals of the learners.

> *A phenomenon we noticed in our review sessions was the reluctance of students to do work they perceived as menial. On further reflection the staff drew the conclusion that the reason for this was bound up with their self-esteem/self concept and that they equated this sort of work with society's perception of them.*

During the actual placement regular contact was maintained with the students and employers and support provided as necessary.

At the conclusion of the work experience placement the staff conducted a review of how it had gone with the students and extracted the learning from the experience. In many centres the students maintained a work journal of the whole process.

7.6.7 *The mechanisms used to identify and measure distance travelled in 'soft' skill areas*
Coordinators were asked to say how they measured progress in the hard to pin down aspects of learning and change that are not accredited but occur in learners during their time in the centre. They listed the following:
- Feedback from the Department Inspectorate following whole centre evaluation
- Staff meetings on student development and progress with inputs from key workers, counsellor, tutors, literacy and numeracy staff and staff supporting informal options e.g. yoga, meditation
- Regular (e.g. once a term) formal student evaluations by staff team – both of group and individual learning
- Progress made in relation to learners' IAPs – achievement of identified short/medium /long term goals identified by key workers and other members of staff team
- Focused observations by staff on group-wide changes e.g. of level of misbehaviour and group dynamics in the centre

- Feedback from parents
- Monthly group case supervision meetings with psychotherapist or psychologist to review the mentoring sessions and discuss learners' difficulties
- Feedback from staff in outside agencies e.g. Ables, Foroige, National Youth projects.
- Observations of learners about a peer's progress
- IAP and group record sheets.

7.6.8 Local services and agencies liaised with for information and advice

The following table outlines the agencies and services that centres had some level of contact with during the pilot period.

Table 7.2 Local services liaised with by centres

Health and social services	HSE Primary Care Units Springboard Local GPs, dentists etc Child guidance, clinical, psychiatric and counselling services Social Workers Health Promotion Unit Environmental Health Promotion Section
Education	Local schools Basic Adult Education Service NALA National Learning Network SPHE Support Service VTOS School Completion Programme National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) Out of School Committee Education course providers Universities
Community development organisations	Community Enterprise Local community action groups PAUL Partnership
Local services	Community addictions team Counselling Services MABS Local banks and financial services e.g. Credit Union Public library Drugs Task Force Lone parents Community Welfare Officer Parents Alone Local sports partnership

Law	Gardaí
	Probationary services
	Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO)
Youth	Youth service
	Sphere 17
	Teen Parent Support Programme
	Sláinte (Drug and Alcohol awareness programme)
	Youth Advocacy Programme
Employment	Local FAS office
	Local employment service
Voluntary	Irish Wheelchair Association
	St Vincent de Paul
	Samaritans
	Aware
	Barnardos
Other	Department of Social Welfare
	Co. Council
	Theatre and local arts groups
	FCA

7.6.9 Local agencies with whom collaborative actions were put in place in respect of particular learners

Many of the agencies and services listed above were also involved in specific collaborative projects with centres, either for training or to put interventions in place for particular learners or groups. Examples of interagency work include:

- Work with social workers in relation to parenting and disciplinary issues leading to support for learners and information and advice for relevant staff members
- Informing parents about the community welfare service and the back to school clothing and footwear allowance available to them
- Inter-agency work with child and family services

> *The Clarecare family support and adolescent worker service was important in supporting a particular learner in carrying out aspects of their plan as identified by the Wheel. Interagency meetings and phone contact ensured that the plan was in place and the goals achieved. The learner and their parents were involved in part of this process. The collaborative action involved the adolescent service engaging in one to one work focusing on sexual health and hygiene.*

- Provision of training to learners on money management by MABS
- Provision of training to staff on suicide awareness by the HSE
- Collaboration between the Garda Youth Diversion Programme, school principal and centre coordinator to support the successful transfer of a learner to Youthreach from mainstream education
- Inviting visitors from the locality, including local artists, bank officials and elderly members of the community, to come to the centre and speak to the learners.

7.6.10 Use of staffing budget by interventions and actions
Table 7.3 below gives an overview of the uses to which the staffing budgets were put by centres in terms of the interventions and actions implemented into the centres.

Table 7.3 Use of staffing budget

Intervention or action	Jan – Dec 2007		Jan – Jun 2008	
	% of total	No. of centres[15]	% of total	No. of centres
Mentoring provision	41.1	17	37.9	17
Additional literacy support	10.1	13	11.0	15
Additional numeracy support	4.1	10	3.8	12
Additional counselling	12.1	8	8.6	10
Additional career guidance and/or organisation of work experience	1.4	5	1.5	7
Additional provision in some other support area (e.g. health or fitness work)	2.9	4	4.7	6
Personal development programmes*	4.7	8	4.1	13
Health education programmes*	1.9	6	2.6	9
Additional academic or vocational subjects/courses*	1.2	8	2.4	8
Alternative therapies*	1.0	4	1.8	6
Outdoor activities, including sports, leisure and travel*	1.6	6	4.3	12
Breakfast club	1.1	6	1.5	6
Administrative coordination of SEN Initiative in centre	4.8	9	3.2	10
Liaison with local services and agencies	0.9	5	0.5	4
Staff meetings – buying additional hours to cover for staff engaging in meetings	0.7	6	0.8	5
Other interventions or activities*	5.3	7	6.4	12
Materials (e.g. books, software, programme manuals, etc.)	5.2	13	4.8	12
Total spent	100.1	19	99.9	19

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[15] The maximum number of centres possible is 19 as one centre did not provide a report
* For a breakdown of the specific programmes and activities introduced see Appendix E

7.7   Staff training

Half the SEN Initiative staff training budget in 2007 was held back to finance two centrally organised training programmes: the frontline skills or mentoring programme and the NLN learning difficulties programme. The rest of the funding for staff training was used by centres to finance a very broad range of courses, seminars and sessions. The choice of content was entirely a matter for the centres and VECs. The training that was done reflects the perceived gaps in skill sets that were identified by centres.

7.7.1   *Training for the whole centre team*

- Youth justice
- Working with special needs
- ADHD management and teaching strategies
- Rational Emotional Therapy training
- Communications
- Literacy tutor training programme
- Assist suicide intervention education
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Duty of care in practice
- Teaching methodologies

- Integrating literacy and assessment
- Introduction to mentoring
- Team building
- Anger management
- Programme planning
- Restorative practice
- NLN training (catering)
- First aid
- Workshop on self harm
- Workshop on eating disorders
- Relationships and bullying

7.7.2   *Training for a sub-group of the staff*

- Literacy and numeracy certificate
- Integrating literacy across the centre curriculum
- Rational Emotional Therapy
- Suicide awareness courses and workshops
- First aid training
- Investment in excellence
- STEPS
- Breakthrough
- Copping on programme
- Building a culture of equality training

- WRAT 4 literacy testing
- DIABRA literacy testing
- NLN training
- Child protection
- Touch Type Read Spell literacy programme
- Fast Forward literacy programme
- Brief solution focused therapy
- Listening, responding and goal setting
- Drug awareness
- Equality training
- Creative arts

7.7.3   *Training for an individual member of the staff*

- Career guidance
- Higher Cert. in Literacy Development /WIT
- BSc Education

- Post Grad. in Special Needs
- Integrated literacy training
- Counselling course
- Hill walking training

- LCA and Junior cert inservice
- Managing suicidal ideation in schools
- SPHE in-service
- P.E. in-service

- CSPE in-service
- Copping on
- Geography in-service
- Legal issues in counselling
- Be Real

7.7.4 Summary of use of staff training budget
How centres used their staff training budgets is outlined in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4   Use of staff training budget

Training days, programmes, courses or seminars	Jan – Dec 2007		Jan – Jun 2008	
	%	No. of centres	%	No. of centres
Training for full staff team*	22.3	11	19.1	10
Training for subset of staff team**	57.3	8	28.7	13
Training for individual members of staff***	7.3	4	32.2	9
Supplementation of nationally organised training (eg for venue, catering, T&S)	13.0	7	20.0	6
Total spent	99.9	15	100.0	18

7.8   Staff support and case supervision measures
Attendance at staff support and case supervision sessions was compulsory for staff engaging in mentoring. Although serving different functions (the former protects the staff and the latter the learners) both forms of support could be provided together by a skillful professional supervisor. In order to increase the opportunity for learning as a staff team, group sessions were recommended but it was up to coordinators to arrange this measure. They could therefore organise support/supervision as separate sessions if that is what the staff preferred or as group sessions augmented at times with individual sessions where a key worker sought this. The location of a suitably qualified practitioner took time for some centres.

> *We are more detached in our dealing with the issues that arise now. We are becoming educated by the change in approach, and therefore the whole centre changes for us all. We are realising that we, as providers of a service to young people, have to constantly evolve and grow ourselves.*

The crucial requirement was the level of qualification and skill of the support / supervision providers. Coordinators were asked to provide this information about the person they had appointed to this role and in all cases they met this criterion. Other

elements of staff support were not obligatory. Table 4.6 outlines the forms of support that were organised by centres for their staff under the SEN Initiative.

7.8.1 Summary of use of staff support and case supervision budget
The distribution of the staff budget in terms of different possible forms of staff support is presented in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5 Use of staff support budget

Form of support	Jan – Dec 2007		Jan – Jun 2008	
	%	No. of centres	%	No. of centres
Group case supervision and / or staff support session	66.8	13	68.0	19
Individual support /supervision session	9.8	6	11.7	8
Coordinator management support session	7.4	7	5.7	6
Team development session	16.1	6	14.6	8
Total spent	100.1	14	100.0	19

7.9   Learner outcomes
The information provided by coordinators in the following section is largely, but not exclusively, qualitative in form. It should be remembered that because the SEN Initiative was integrated into the core work of the Youthreach programme in centres it is not possible to say what outcomes were specifically due to the Initiative. Ultimately the purpose of the SEN Initiative was to increase the capacity of the centres to do their core work. Which of the following descriptors were due to the Initiative and which would have taken place anyway may not be distinguishable but it will be enough if there has been a sufficiently significant improvement across the range of outcomes in comparison to previous years. As baseline data of these kinds were not collected in advance of the implementation of the Initiative only the claims made by coordinators in respect of the changes they observed can be reported. These claims are aggregated in the section below.

7.9.1 How many learners attended the centre for any part of the pilot period?
The total figure for the number of learners who passed through the twenty centres during the pilot period was 981. By the end of the pilot period, of these learners
- 458 were still attending a centre
- 157 had progressed successfully to further training
- 134 had progressed successfully to employment
- 107 had dropped out of the centre
- 125 had moved, been expelled or completed the programme without yet progressing to further training or work

7.9.2 The development of basic skills
[The SEN Initiative supported the development of basic skills by increasing staff sensitivity to learners' difficulties with literacy, numeracy and oral communication through a centrally organised staff training programme (NLN); provision of additional teaching and material resources to address poor literacy and numeracy skills; and the opportunity for the development of expressive and receptive language competences through the oral communication nature of the mentoring process.]

Improvement in literacy and numeracy skills. There was more of a focus in centres on literacy and numeracy. Learner assessments showed significant improvement in the acquisition of skills. Students had more interest in reading, made less mistakes in written work, developed an interest in word games (scrabble, boggle), helped each other with spellings and had more confidence in their abilities, e.g. now reading rather than using the voiceover in the driver theory test.

> *Last year we had a student with literacy difficulties in the Leaving Certificate Applied class and collectively we identified the areas she was having difficulty with and addressed these through extra help and she obtained the Leaving Certificate.*

Increased competence in IT. Learners showed greater confidence in using IT. They learned to type, email, use powerpoint, do presentations, present projects and assignments, make videos and edit. They were able to show staff new IT skills.

Acquisition of oral communication skills. Learners became better at talking and listening to others, both socially and in class. Gains included improvement in listening skills, more assertive communication and enlarged vocabulary. The fact that the mentoring sessions involved oral communication led to an increase in learners' capacity to talk about themselves and to make their own use of the language and concepts that were introduced in the mentoring sessions.

> *We learned that young people need to hear words and sentences, a language that speaks of moving forward, and to begin to use those words, sentences and concepts themselves. The mentoring has meant that we now have a culture of talking about issues with the young people and with the staff.*

7.9.3 The development of life skills (i.e. the practical knowledge and competencies needed to live in Ireland in 21st century)
[The SEN Initiative supported this by increasing staff sensitivity to the existence of learning difficulties, to recognising when learners had difficulties and to respond appropriately to their needs as a result of a centrally organised staff training programme (NLN); by the identification of practical goals and the actions to achieve them during mentoring; and the emphasis on increasing learners' life skills through SPHE and other personal and social development programmes.]

Practical knowledge and skills in accessing facilities and services. Learners showed an improved awareness of services and more confidence in using them. They could now fill in forms, write letters, budget and manage their finances and apply for a medical card, passport, driving license or grant. They had learned how to source employment, apply for a job, and prepare a CV. They were comfortable using modern technology e.g. to access the internet; use bank machines and banking facilities. They showed greater ease when dealing with adults, service providers and people in authority.

Increase in personal confidence, competence and self-care. There was an increase in the level of personal maturity on the part of learners. Self-confidence was more evident. Learners started to take more care of themselves. There was a decrease in the levels of smoking and increased awareness of substance abuse (although this did not necessarily have any immediate effect on their actual use of drugs). They showed an improved ability to accept consequences and responsibility for their actions. They were better able to set practical goals and review them, make decisions and balance issues within their personal and learning environments. They were more willing to address personal issues (e.g. health and hygiene).

A broadening of learners' understanding of life. The learners developed knowledge and experience of a wider world and of their possible place within it. There was more thinking about the future in relation to progression and health issues. An increase in confidence about their own future was expressed by their wish to take state examinations. Work experience led to greater learning about the world outside of the centre. Learners became more aware of issues in their own lives and the vocational choices that were available to them. They also became more aware of the skills needed to progress not just in Youthreach but also in the world outside of schooling e.g. SPHE and CSPE and what it means to be a good citizen. They grew to be more tolerant towards others and aware of rights and issues of equality.

> *Learners have more confidence to source the solutions to their own needs and become more independent. These skills were practised leading to students learning how to source employment, apply for a job, medical card, passport, driving license, grant and many other necessary items. They also experienced several day trips and a 3-day foreign trip. These experiences significantly improved the social skills of learners and taught them how to interact in a socially acceptable manner when outside the Centre and also in foreign countries.*

7.9.4 The acquisition of academic skills (e.g. FETAC, LCA)
[The SEN Initiative supported this through provision of a staffing resource to support some additional teaching interventions; the focusing on future goals in individual action plans; and the increase in interest in achievement when practical problems were addressed and resolved in mentoring.]

Increase in learning and accreditation. Coordinators reported an increase in the number of awards successfully achieved by learners, e.g. in the number of FETAC portfolios

presented for assessment, and in the achievements of distinctions and merits in the LCA. Students become more focused on their goals and deadlines and sought support if they needed it. Staff reported seeing an improved capacity within the students to engage in and produce work. Attendance levels within centres have improved, enhancing the participation levels and success of students in completing programmes. Noticeable improvements in learners' class management skills, LCA assignments and task completion were evident.

Table 7.6   Levels of certification across 20 centres during pilot phase

Certification	No. of learners achieving	
Junior Cert 1- 3 subjects	10	
Junior Cert 4 - 6 subjects	27	
Junior Cert 7 - 9 subjects	65	
Leaving Cert Applied 1 – 3 subjects		
Leaving Cert Applied 4 - 6 subjects	23	
Leaving Cert Applied 7 - 9 subjects	56	
General Leaving Cert subjects	25	
FETAC NFQ	Major award	Minor award[16]
Level 1		
Level 2	3	
Level 3	58	440
Level 4	25	153
Level 5	6	109

Increase in academic ambition. Increased ambition was demonstrated by a greater interest in and engagement with certification. Trainees showed more interest in progressing to higher levels in FETAC and Leaving Cert. There were improvements in motivation and ambition towards certification, with many learners actively working towards Major Awards. As their literacy levels improved so did their aspirations for the future and students started to engage unexpectedly well in academic classes. Their interests became wider e.g. during a student evaluation in one centre classes in history and anatomy were requested.

> *More learners have submitted for certification since the implementation of the SEN than in previous years… We had higher retention in the LCA class – with a view to further education. We would definitely have lost students from last year's LCA class if extra help was not available. More students are attempting FETAC modules and we feel that this can be attributed to the fact that the students now know that extra help is available and this gives them more confidence to give modules a try.*

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[16] Because of the large numbers in this column it is suspected that coordinators may have been recording the number of *awards* achieved at levels 3, 4 and 5 rather than the number of *learners* who received an award at these levels.

Increased progression to further education. Some coordinators reported that there has been an increase in learners from their centre progressing to PLCs and other courses (e.g. business, childcare, hairdressing, beauty, joinery, plumbing etc.). Some students have successfully gone into the workplace (e.g. hairdressing, childcare).

7.9.5 The acquisition of vocational skills (e.g. hairdressing, woodwork, computer)
[The SEN Initiative supported this through the focusing on future goals during action planning; and the linking of goals to work experience placement; and the acquisition of useful skills as a way of solving practical problems.]

More vocational learning in centres. There was an increased interest in vocational subjects and development of skills. The students became more involved in subjects that could directly improve their quality of life and developed skills in a range of areas such as childcare, hairdressing, I.T., catering, community care, and retail sales. For example, they had a better understanding about food and nutrition and could cook meals for themselves).

More relevant work experience. There was more of a link made between work experience placements and learners' vocational areas of interest. They engaged in work experience or took up part-time work in jobs that interested them, and had the chance to develop their skills further. They became more confident in organising appropriate work experience placements for themselves.

Greater focus on future employment. Learners became more focused on progression and thinking about what they would like to do when they left the centre. They were more motivated to achieve their full certification for vocational reasons e.g. to pursue an apprenticeship. They were more open to the support the Advocate could provide and noted that some activities that they enjoyed could provide an opportunity for future employment (e.g., photography, sports coaching and cookery). Some learners that completed the programme were successful in gaining employment. Learners looked at areas they wanted to work in and set out to achieve goals that would make them desirable applicants among potential employers. They had more realistic job expectations and knowledge of the job market and career paths. They showed an interest in CV and cover letter writing and job research skills. They were more positive and goal orientated regarding their future career choice.

> *We have done media production through their Personal Development programme. This helped certain students to see if they would like to pursue this further and consequently one of our students is doing a Media PLC in Galway.*

Additional vocationally useful accreditation was achieved. Learners pursued short courses besides FETAC and State exams in a number of subjects. These are listed in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7   Additional subjects in which accreditation was achieved

ECDL
First Aid
Safe Pass
Driving Theory Test
FIT
E-Citizen
Steer Clear
Hair Care
Nail Care
Video Production
Guarding Skills

7.9.6 *Increased effectiveness in work and learning settings (e.g. study skills, time management, working with people)*

[The SEN Initiative supported this through a focusing on learner goals during mentoring; review of learner progress using their individual plans; and preparation for and review of work experience.]

Improvements in behaviour. Relationships between tutors and learners were markedly enhanced as a result of the mentoring, leading to better rapport between staff and learners in the classroom as well as in the mentoring setting. Behaviour in general improved. Those who had demonstrated very challenging behaviour in the past over time moderated their behaviour and began to engage in centre activities and learning. Good manners were more evident.

Increased participation and engagement with learning. Attendance and time keeping got better. There was a reduction in inability to focus, poor concentration and misbehaviour and an increase in engagement with work – even with young people who were assessed as having learning difficulties. Assignments were completed and task deadlines met. Preparation for exams was more thorough. Students worked better with each other and with staff and were more focused and interested as what they were doing as it fitted with their individual action plan. Learners developed the skills to work on their own initiative and as part of a team. They were able to review their own progress in their learning, mentoring and work placements. Their ability to plan and prioritise increased and they showed improvements in willingness to learn and in self-direction. In one centre two young people voluntarily brought home work in order to prepare for FETAC and the Junior Cert.

Better ability to manage relationships with others. Learners became more adept at dealing with people and social situations. They learned how to interact in a socially acceptable manner inside and outside the centre, and in foreign countries. They became more confident and could use assertiveness skills appropriately when handling difficult situations.

Work placements went better. More trainees than before obtained and had successful work experience placements. There was a marked improvement in terms of the number of days they attended and their generally more positive and willing attitude towards work. There were improved reports from employers after work experience. Some students got part-time jobs from it and some were subsequently taken on as apprentices. Some coordinators reported that the employers were very good tutors to their learners, giving them helpful advice and managing work and social boundary issues.

> *All the level four and five students, seventy in total, participated in the work experience programme. In general the feedback from employers was very positive. However there were issues such as failure to turn up or arriving late. These issues were resolved with the learner and employer in all but two cases.*

7.9.7 *Socio-emotional development (i.e. ability to manage emotions and relationships)*
[The SEN Initiative supported this by fostering improved staff–learner relationships in the centre through the mentoring skills training programme; through specific SPHE initiatives and personal and social development programmes; and through social, sporting and other out of centre activities.]

Reduction in expression of negative emotion. The SEN Initiative has had a calming effect on centres. There were fewer outbursts of emotion and reactions were less extreme i.e. the learners were not as quick to express irritation or anger or to act out. Conflict management skills were more in evidence. Learners appeared to be better able to cope with change and dealing with their own personal issues. They were more confident about asking for support. Improved relationships within the centres, at home and amongst peer groups were evident.

Greater self-regulation. Learners showed increased ability to manage strong feelings and to cope with anger, conflict and frustration. Their use of self-management skills improved and they showed a greater willingness to take personal responsibility for their actions. They were able to own their feelings and to take steps when they wanted to feel different.

Greater self-awareness. Learners were better able to recognise and express their feelings. They were more willing to say when things weren't going well for them and more skillful at articulating their feelings and emotions. Their understanding of their self esteem and self growth needs improved and they could reflect on what it was that was affecting them in the different areas of their lives. They demonstrated greater self-knowledge (e.g. about their opinions and strengths and weaknesses) and showed more confidence in sourcing solutions to their own needs and becoming more independent.

Increase in the skills of relating. They learned conversation skills, how to talk to and listen to each other. They improved their ability to interact with other learners in a social setting. One coordinator described this as a new skill for some of the young people. The increase in capacity to build and maintain positive relationships led to learners

participating more confidently in the programme and working with others e.g. in team exercises, drama and sporting events. They learned to work together using problem-solving and conflict resolution tools. In one centre the learners' capacity to work as a team was demonstrated during a highly successful over-night camping trip. Learners showed an increased capacity to consider the position and views of others while still being able to retain their own position and viewpoints.

More consideration for others. Learners showed an increase in their inclination to feel and express sympathy for others. They began to build relationships with each other which had care and kindness as a dimension to them. They were better able to listen. They showed more tolerance towards others and more awareness of other people's emotions. They were also more inclined than before to express affection (e.g. towards their key workers) and could be very caring towards the less mature and developed members of the centre.

7.9.8 Increased resilience and mental health (including confidence and self-esteem)
[The SEN Initiative supported this through the addressing of personal, family and mental health issues by the Wheel during mentoring; the implementation of action plans developed and owned by the learners; provision of additional support services in the centre (e.g. counselling); and supported referral to external services.]

Increased contentment. The learners were happier, less stressed and more able to enjoy themselves. Students were described as being more relaxed about themselves and their personal or family issues as they had a place to discuss these issues. They were happier within themselves and more willing to engage in centre and community activities.

> *Worry reduces and students clearly find their place and have a sense that they have space to be themselves. You can see happiness and contentment in them, and this is followed up by positive statements about the centre and the staff and also, most importantly, about themselves. They come with their work and tell us stories to show us what they are good at and feel good about in themselves. The increase in esteem and confidence means that humour and fun increase, and concentration and focus also increase as anxiety and worry reduces. There are fewer reactive emotional outbursts and an increased ability to recognise where others are having fun with them, and to be able to respond to this.*

Better ability to cope. Learners showed an increase in coping skills and more problem-solving behaviours. They had better tolerance of frustration and more awareness of and ability to manage their mental health. They successfully faced challenges and conquered fears e.g. on a camping trip. They built up skills of problem-solving and generally coped better with the demands of the centre. They expanded their ability to address their own personal issues and to make appropriate choices in relation to these. There has been a notable increase in confidence and self esteem.

More openness. Learners were more willing to consider new things, and were more hopeful and future-oriented. There has been improved behaviour and mood in the centre

and a more positive outlook in general. There is more looking to the future. The learners' rather negative level of self-belief and self-image was challenged with the successful completion of FETAC portfolios when the number of modules completed was more than they had initially hoped for. Topical issues such as racism were discussed in a more tolerant fashion and led to learners welcoming a student to the centre who was not Irish. There has been a shift to more open conversation and to a greater level of intimacy as a result of the mentoring. Students have also responded to counselling and therapy in a more positive way.

> *Last year we had one very obvious young person who was bullied very badly in school to such a degree that she had to leave due to illness. She had no self esteem or confidence. In the space of eighteen months she has finished Levels 3 & 4 FETAC, run sessions on the programme, appeared on Radio Kerry talking about her experiences on the programme and taken part in work placement. She has had the opportunity to transform her life and boost both her self esteem and self confidence.*

7.9.9 Increased ability to seek out and benefit from available support services within and outside the centre

[The SEN Initiative supported this through the provision of mentoring support; increasing the availability of additional supports in the centre (e.g. counselling, guidance); prioritising inter-agency liaison; and encouraging collaborative interventions with external agencies and services.]

More awareness of available supports. Learners had more information about local services and agencies. They became more proficient at form-filling and sourcing information. They acquired the ability to access appropriate support services in order to deal with negative relationships and issues in their lives

A greater willingness to accept help. Learners were increasingly happy to engage with services and activities that could help them. As their relationships with their key workers grew, mentoring created a safe place where they could seek support. There was an increased willingness to take part in activities specifically designed to develop their self-esteem and confidence. They showed less reluctance to involve family members or link in family issues with the counsellor.

> *Due to increased level of self confidence learners seemed more able to engage with the supports in place both in the centre and the community. One example of this is the level of engagement in literacy support. Learners can be quite resistant to the literacy support as they see needing help as meaning they are 'thick' and 'stupid'. One young man in particular was quite resistant at first but after taking a job in a local supermarket he realised that his poor literacy and numeracy was holding him back and he identified this during his mentoring session. He is now engaging very well with the literacy tutor and has made a great improvement.*

*Increase in active pursuit of support***.** Learners became more proactive about improving their lives and finding solutions to difficulties. They recognised when they needed help and looked for it. They showed an improved ability to implement coping strategies. They were more willing to name their difficulties in class and to look for help from peers and the teacher. They were more confident in dealing with problems that arose in the centre and willing to discuss issues with the appropriate staff e.g. Co-ordinator, Youth Counsellor. They began to take ownership of their problems and asked for particular supports to be put in place for them e.g. a smoking cessation programme. They asked for time out in class when they knew they needed it, which showed a capacity to reflect and make new choices. They created a climate where seeking support and asking for it was normal. They showed an increased ability to ask for and utilise interventions from outside agencies. As time went on they wanted to manage the support experiences and to be in more control of them themselves. They showed less embarrassment and shame in asking for help (e.g. in literacy or numeracy).

*Increase in interagency work by the centre***.** There was an increase in the amount of contact between centres and local community services. With greater interagency liaison the number of learners receiving support from other agencies increased.

7.10   Reflections by coordinators on their experience of the SEN Initiative
Finally, coordinators were asked to discuss the experience of implementing the SEN Initiative during the pilot period, describing both their successes and what they found difficult. They identified benefits to learners, to staff and to the work of the centres and also some of the challenges and difficulties they had faced. Some coordinators also gave their observations on the impact of the changes that had been introduced in their centres and the insights they had gained from them.

7.10.1 Benefits
The response of learners to the mentoring was unequivocally positive. They liked the sessions, enjoying being listened to and receiving support from their key workers.

> *The trainees stated that they felt that it was great that there was someone they could talk to, they felt they could talk about issues in a mentoring session that they could never discuss in a group situation… Learners were enthused by the idea that staff actually wanted to work specifically with them and this developed their self esteem… Mentees felt listened to and valued having the opportunity to influence their own educational development, for example in relation to their needs.*

Communication was facilitated by the mentoring.

> *Learners have had the opportunity to speak openly about their goals and ambitions as well as their fears and barriers to success… The open atmosphere in the centre led to students feeling that someone was always on hand to listen and communication became a valued part of centre life.*

Relationships between staff and learners improved.

> *Relationships between learners and staff are better… It is evident that students and staff have built relationships that would not be possible were it not for the SEN initiative.*

The improved relationship between staff and learners had a positive impact on centres, leading to greater engagement with the programme and reduction in misbehaviour.

> *The centre appears to me to have become a more mature place in the last year in particular and I feel the level of engagement and trust that has/is developing between parents, students and staff has contributed greatly to this… There has been a marked improvement in attendance levels of the learners and their response to overall programme evaluation has become more positive… There has being an improvement in general behaviour and participation in class.*

As learners participated better they engaged more with the academic programme and standards were raised.

> *We believe that the programme has given students more confidence and this is evident because more and more students are trying modules that previously they would not have attempted.*

The learners were more willing to seek support and it could be provided more easily and naturally.

> *Learners were encouraged by the fact that so many external agencies and services could be utilised within the process… The learners have been more inclined to highlight areas of concern and ask for help since the process started… The SEN Initiative has removed the stigma of extra help because most students are now getting extra help so nobody appears isolated or singled out.*

There were changes in centres' orientation. The focus on the learner increased.

> *The centre is more trainee-centred than ever before… Key Workers fully supported the 'holistic' approach to the learners and felt that it was now becoming more formalised. There was a feeling that many of these things were already happening informally in the centre, but not recorded… As a result of the SEN initiative, the programme has become more learner- centred and professional.*

Staff became more sensitive to issues of curriculum relevance and took more care to tailor their teaching to their learners.

> *The mentoring process has also afforded an opportunity to ensure the curriculum is meeting the needs of the learners and highlight where there is a need for increased provision… The project has also given the teachers greater flexibility in their teaching and they have not been constrained by exclusively teaching to the curriculum.*

Centres engaged in more interagency liaison.

> *The centre has created an extensive support network through contacts with a number of youth organisations both within and outside the community.*

There was a development in the capacity of centres to be responsive to the unique situations of each learner.

> *We can clearly identify young people who are focused, engaged, motivated, and those who may need to build up social skills, confidence, communication and interpersonal skills, and those with learning difficulties. Staff are mindful that the focus and direction that the centre will take will vary according to the needs, capacity, motivation, supports and issues happening in the lives of the young people in the centre.*

Coordinators were positive about the experience for staff of mentoring.

> *The experience of being a key worker has been enjoyable, challenging and has resulted in huge learning both on a professional and personal level.*

The staff found they developed more understanding and empathy for the learners and there was a change in staff skills and culture of work.

> *Our capacity to really support young people was increased not just by the mentoring itself, but by the understanding we are gaining through the opportunity to engage with and reflect on the lives of the young people who come to us. Our culture, our way of working and capacity for empathy, has changed. Our approach is different – we talk about action, consequence and outcomes now. We are challenging, but also know that we must support students in exploring the underlying issues. Challenge without support is not useful.*

Staff support through training and supervision led to the development of necessary skills.

> *There were inevitably initial difficulties. Sceptical staff, reluctant learners and suspicious parents all played a role here. However with the benefit of in-service, first hand experience and the development of appropriate strategies the staff are now operating competently, confidently and effectively… Staff are developing the skills and competencies to allow them to deal more effectively with learner difficulties.*

Staff training and support meant that boundaries were identified and clarified.

> *Staff training and development workshops have allowed staff to explore and identify clear boundaries in relation to their role as key worker. Safer and more professional services can now be offered to the learner.*

Staff training and support led to an increase in professionalism and good practice.

> *On-going case supervision, peer support and additional training have meant that the SEN team work together in a more professional manner… Staff felt more supported in coping with difficult behaviour, and in exploring, identifying and implementing best practice.*

7.10.2 Challenges

There were practical difficulties organising mentoring sessions – because of poor attendance in some cases and crises in others – and so a degree of flexibility was required around the allocation of time to this. Space was a problem in some centres. Because the SEN Initiative was spread out all over the country centres could feel quite isolated.

The use of an action research approach to the development of the Initiative meant the Initiative commenced before definitive guidelines had been put in place and all core staff training done and this resulted in some centres feeling adrift at first and unsure of how to proceed.

> *As was expected there were difficulties due to the pilot nature of the programme... Particular areas of difficulties arose from a lack of clear guidelines in relation to reporting and recording procedures at the initial stages of the SEN initiative… Additional support and training for key workers at the initial stage would have been beneficial, as many of the key workers would not have had experience of this system of work previously.*

When they were provided, clear guidelines from the Department were considered to be very helpful.

> *The development of clear guidelines in relation to referrals to outside support agencies and follow on support for the learner was an integral part of the success of this initiative.*

In some centres the SEN Initiative significantly increased the work of the coordinator and resource staff.

> *Another difficulty was that not all centre staff chose to take part in the SEN initiative. The impact of this was that extra pressure was placed on SEN staff...*

> *One area of particular difficulty was the extra workload on the co-ordinator who does receive secretarial assistance.*

Nervousness about mentoring was an issue for staff in some centres and took time to resolve.

> *I suppose the glaring difficulty of the programme was the tentativeness of the teachers regarding mentoring. There was a general unease amongst the staff about the possibility of getting into issues that they were quite simply not qualified to deal with. They were finding this somewhat difficult. Basically, they felt undertrained in the area. This was rectified greatly by the organisation of supervision for mentors. We feel that if this intervention had not take place, no mentoring would be taking place now… It wasn't until 2008 that there was a sufficient number of key workers willing to engage in mentoring.*

Difficulties experienced by staff included coming to terms with the very serious problems of some of the learners.

> *Dealing with difficult issues which have a serious impact on the life of the learner (e.g. rape, suicide, self-harm, substance/alcohol abuse, violence and homelessness) was hard for key workers… An issue that did arise was care of the self for staff. At times the issues that arose were difficult and it was important that we were in a position to identify when to seek help and also to mind ourselves.*

The seriousness of the level and nature of learners' difficulties made mentoring challenging because they required a high degree of support by centres.

> *Young people with generalised anxiety disorders, depression, drug use, drinking, stress, loss, etc., have a need for a high level of support and relationships with adults who can be there for them. Some young people simply were not able to engage and focus on education because there was so much happening internally. We had to adapt to this and often having a young person unable to engage in their education would start to reengage as they get the attention and support they need. The pattern of not being able to engage often repeated itself when a young person fell back on old coping mechanisms again when a crisis arose.*

Some learner problems were particularly intractable and solutions could not always be found.

> *We found that it is really difficult to make an impact on the culture of drinking and drug use, as young people regardless of where they are coming from are immersed in this culture and exposed to it. We found this culture had a big impact on some of the young people and they had serious difficulties with absorption and concentration as a result.*

The attendance of learners could be significantly undermined by home factors.

> *When attendance was explored, often young people did not have an adult at home to support them in attending or challenge them. There were a number of young people whose parents have mental health issues, addictions, are in crises, who have moved onto new family units, or who are having relationship difficulties themselves, special needs, culture of dependency in the family, illness, and ways of coping with challenge*

7.10.3 Observations and insights

There is a strong relationship between anxiety reduction and learning. Addressing anxiety led to improved engagement with the academic and vocational programme in the centres.

> *It was interesting to note that a reduction in the emotionally distressing aspects of a student's life, and the opportunity to process anxiety, worries and feelings, could greatly increase their capacity to concentrate and engage. The connection between processing experiences and emotions and capacity to engage in education became clearer… There is a clear link between emotional distress, loss and negative life experiences and young people's capacity to engage and focus. Improving their relationships, giving them an opportunity to process why they are having difficulty and support to reduce the level of difficulty helps them learn… We can already see young people who could not produce work at the start of last year, some of whom have been diagnosed with learning difficulties, now able to do work. Anxiety, stress, worry, lack of self-confidence and esteem clearly impact on their capacity to engage.*

It was important to develop a centre culture of inclusion and acceptance.

> *We emphasised the importance of being inclusive, and accepting of all. We gave a huge amount of energy to the dynamics in the centre, and it paid off. We make sure to praise acts of kindness and care, and we praised them for being them, and continuously fed them good feedback. We challenged actions and behaviour that were unkind and hurtful and explored these with them.*

The learners responded to the concern and care shown to them by the staff.

> *Students responded greatly to knowing that adults cared about them, regardless of what they did. When they were faced with new issues and dilemmas it was amazing how someone being concerned about them resettled them. The mentoring gave them a constant, which meant that they bounced back better and achieved stability more quickly again for a time. They learned that though life cannot be constant there are supports there to help them to deal with what does arise… The investment is in seeing the young people in a positive way, which is a*

> *new experience for many of them. We could not do this development work*
> *without our mentoring programme.*

It was useful for staff to be aware of the anxiety of the learners coming into the centre and to build up their trust and confidence.

> *We found that managed and supported entry into the centre and careful social*
> *integration was vital to the creation of a culture of trust and confidence. Students*
> *knew that the adults were there to deal with anything that would arise. We had*
> *underestimated just how traumatic it was for young people to come into a new*
> *environment, with their issues and learning difficulties, fears and anxieties, facing*
> *into unknown challenges, new faces, strange dynamics and expectations, etc.*

Attention needed to be paid in the centre to teaching learners how to develop and manage their relationships with others.

> *Students needed to have strong relationships with staff, and each other, and*
> *support in working through conflict, negotiating difference and dealing with*
> *boundaries such as rules, deadlines, attendance etc. We gave them the*
> *opportunity to tease these things out and also to explore the reasons why they can*
> *be so difficult to manage.*

There was a need for balance in the programme between support and challenge.

> *Young people needed to be given support but also to be challenged to look at*
> *areas that acted as a barrier to engagement. We learned that challenge with*
> *support were two things that the young people needed to engage in making*
> *change.*

Family circumstances impact significantly on learners and centres needed to take these into account and work with them. The path to progression for some learners would take longer than for others.

> *Some students come to us and it will take a year for them to be able to deliver that*
> *increase in effectiveness to themselves, and key to this will be emotional issues,*
> *their role in the home, the stability in the home etc. We see that clearly and*
> *establish a plan around the time they will need to work through barriers to their*
> *engaging e.g. not coming in as a parent was out drinking and did not come home,*
> *and they went out looking for them in the night. These kinds of realities can*
> *really impact on a young person, despite social services being involved, as they*
> *find themselves falling into coping patterns that prevent them from progressing*
> *themselves. It takes time to work through this. Therefore we establish if a young*
> *person needs one year at level 3 or two years, based on all the dimensions in their*
> *lives, and work towards building them up in these areas, whether they cannot*
> *read and write or have to substitute as a parent. and we see these as subsets of the*

> *overarching goals. Mentoring aims to create change based on the circumstance of the young person.*

For some learners the mentoring provided an opportunity to think about the future in a new way. This changed their attitude to education.

> *Not having a sense of self, and of capability, and of how education could connect them to a vision of themselves in the future made education seem irrelevant. This perception of education as something you have to do, but do not want to engage in, acted as a barrier to young people engaging in the programme. Students had not really truly spoken of, thought about or visualised their own path before. We learned that students needed support here, and we needed to talk about connecting the present to a future.*

The importance of having high expectations of the learners and conveying these to the learners so that they can see a concrete future for themselves was noted, although the difference in expectations between home and centre could make this difficult.

> *We have now changed our approach and are strongly communicating our expectations, and asking them to have those expectations of themselves also. We are helping them make the link between self expectation, commitment, choices and progression, while listening to the dilemmas that young people have in making responsible choices… Learning to explore how the expectations of home and family and how they can be at odds with the messages we give them. For example some young people were expected to mind adults who are not functioning, mind children, stay at home etc and were supported to stay at home if they did not feel like getting up.*

Language has an important role both in terms of naming difficulties and of constructing possible solutions or ways forward. Changing the way problems are talked about changes the culture in centres.

> *We learned that young people need to hear words and sentences, a language that speaks of moving forward, and to begin to use those words, sentences and concepts themselves…. We evaluated subjects with students and they told us what motivates them in terms of both approach and methodologies and used the word motivation themselves without our using that term. This is very exciting and use of that kind of language would stem from mentoring.*

For some coordinators the SEN Initiative meant that the Youthreach programme could now get back to doing what it was meant to do.

> *It means we can say that we are proud of what we are doing because we know we are providing a quality of service that has the potential to really develop young people in the areas that present the greatest need. We can do less fire fighting*

and more strategising, and this in itself as a shift takes time, as we have been so used to days on end spent multitasking, and managing the challenges of the environment in particular. Once student's needs are met and they are enjoying their environment, being together and their relationships with staff, we can then start to look at our service and how to really make improvement, and to evaluate and reflect on improving our provision, and it feels good when we know that we are getting to implement our goals. I think it lends a very exciting dimension to the programme.

8.   Achievements, learning and future directions

8.1 New ground
It is useful to acknowledge the pedigree of the SEN Initiative and to remember that it was built on and developed out of a considerable body of previous work addressing learner needs and how to respond to them.   These included
- The work that led to the initial establishment of the Youthreach programmes and subsequent development, e.g. Youthreach 2000 consultative process (Stokes, O'Connell and Griffin, 2000)
- The integration of non-formal guidance systems into the role of centres (Stokes, 2000; NCSE, 2002)
- The establishment of the Quality Framework Initiative (O'Brien, 2002, 2004, 2005a)
- Various studies into guidance, counselling and psychological support provision at both national and local levels (Gordon, 2004; Ryan, 1998; Walshe, 2000; Conboy, 2000; O'Sullivan, 2002; Friel and Coulter, 2004; Brown 2005)
- A regional consultative process to identify best support practice in centres (Gordon, 2007)
- Identification of the incidence and level of special needs among learners (Smith, 2002)

The SEN Initiative, however, was the first action to take account specifically of the special educational needs of the learners, as defined under the EPSEN Act, and to make provision for these.

The original and holistic approach to providing for SEN in this Initiative, however, has meant that needs other than those based on disability (e.g. those relating to life skills, mental well-being, physical fitness and health, substance use issues, etc.) are also being addressed by the action in a holistic, inclusive and non-discriminatory way. This makes it significantly different from the way learners with SEN in mainstream education have traditionally been provided for, where the model is one of individual assessment and diagnosis resulting in the allocation of a set teaching resource (and possibly also the help of a special needs assistant).   However, there appears to be a move away from this rather expensive, inflexible and bureaucratic procedure to more systemic resourcing approaches (e.g. the general allocation model now at primary level) and more nuanced and tailored interventions (NCSE, 2006; DES, 2007). In this context, the SEN Initiative approach may have some relevance to the mainstream sector.

Some of what was done under the Initiative was already being done to some extent in centres. However, while Youthreach staff understood the importance of relationship-building and attempted to fit in some one-to-one work, it was difficult to find time for this when the education programme was the focus of resource use. In addition staff knew that if they were to explore these issues with learners the possibility of offering an intervention was limited by the lack of dedicated resources for this purpose. Therefore it is possible to say that this kind of work was never implemented in any systematic way in

centres prior to the Initiative. The SEN Initiative validates the importance of developing relationships with learners, working on emotional and behaviour issues and using of resources for this purpose. It ensures that good quality support work is formalised and given space by the timetabling of mentoring sessions for learners and the allocation of staff, by the insertion of mentoring, reviewing and planning processes into the core work of centres, by the development of closer working relationships with other services and agencies in the community and by the development of staff capacity through dedicated training, case supervision and staff support. This represents an important development in the provision of formal, professional and effective services to Youthreach participants.

8.2   Achievements of the SEN Initiative

In twenty Youthreach centres a structure has been successfully introduced to provide support and guidance to the participants in a way that is flexible and responsive to their concerns and motivations. The procedures, processes and resources involved support the basic Youthreach programme and increase the capacity of centres to work effectively with their client populations.

8.2.1   Structures that support the Initiative nationally

- Universal support by VECs and centres for the measures contained in the Initiative
- Guidelines developed and disseminated on all aspects of practice
- A website containing detailed materials to support staff established
- Training programmes devised and a national team of facilitators trained to deliver them
- A system for providing feedback to the Department through the development of annual centre planning and reporting templates.

8.2.2   Supports provided to each learner

Almost 1000 learners attended participating centres during the 18-month pilot period and benefited to some extent from the following:

- A key worker assigned and regular timetabled mentoring sessions
- Engagement in a holistic assessment process leading to the development of a meaningful individual action plan
- The implementation of their plan in the centre, through provision of additional tailored teaching and support interventions
- Inter-agency liaison and, if needed, engagement by the centre staff in joint actions with community agencies and services

8.2.3   Gains made by learners

In the development of basic skills:

- Improvement in literacy and numeracy skills
- Increased competence in IT
- Acquisition of oral communication skills

In the development of life skills:

- Practical knowledge and skills in accessing facilities and services
- Increase in personal confidence, competence and self-care

- A broadening of learners' understanding of life

In the acquisition of academic skills (e.g. FETAC, LCA):
- Increase in learning and accreditation
- Increase in academic ambition
- Increased progression to further education

In the acquisition of vocational skills:
- More vocational learning in centres
- More relevant work experience
- Greater focus on future employment
- Achievement of additional vocationally useful accreditation

In effectiveness in work and learning settings (e.g. study skills, time management, working with people):
- Improvements in behaviour
- Increased participation and engagement with learning
- Better ability to manage relationships with others
- More successful work placements

In socio-emotional development (i.e. ability to manage emotions and relationships):
- Reduction in expression of negative emotion
- Greater self-regulation
- Greater self-awareness
- Increase in the skills of relating
- More consideration for others

In resilience and mental health (including confidence and self-esteem):
- Increased contentment
- Better ability to cope
- More openness

In ability to seek out and benefit from available support services within and outside the centre:
- More awareness of available supports
- A greater willingness to accept help
- Increase in active pursuit of support
- Increase in interagency work by the centre

8.2.4 Benefits for staff
- Greater clarity and guidance for staff about their role
- Support skills increased in a wide range of areas
- Staff training provided
  - All staff in twenty centres have done three days of training in how to identify and respond to learning difficulties

- o All key working staff have engaged in training in mentoring skills over a minimum of three days, including initial training, follow up sessions and reviews
  - o A range of further staff training has taken place in all centres on the basis of identified local needs
- Case supervision provided
  - o All staff engaging in key working availed, on a minimum basis of once a month, of professional supervision from an appropriately qualified psychologist or psychotherapist to discuss and clarify issues relating to their learners.
- Staff support provided
  - o All staff engaging in key working availed, on a minimum basis of once a month, of professional support from an appropriately qualified psychologist or psychotherapist who guided them in relation to the maintenance of professional boundaries and self-care

8.2.5 *Benefits for the Youthreach programme*
- Greater theoretical clarity about the central role and importance of engagement with learners and relationship-building
- Development of mechanisms and processes for implementing the programme aim of assisting learners in their personal and social development
- Improved effectiveness through the increase in flexibility and responsivity to the concerns and motivations of the young people themselves.
- Development of the staff skills and the capacity of centres to respond more effectively to the needs of early school leavers
- This initiative builds further on the QFI initiative and in particular on the development of a collaborative team approach to responding to learners' needs
- Development of a core team of training providers, many of whom also facilitate QFI processes, who are an important resource for the Youthreach programme in the absence of a dedicated support service
- Dissemination of the Cool Anger Management training programme to centres.

8.2.6 **Benefits for the Department**
- The development and implementation of a cost effective model for addressing SEN in the Youthreach setting
- The development of an innovative and creative approach to a challenging task that is founded on an extensive research base.
- The high level of accountability for the SEN Initiative investment that is provided by this report with its body of detailed data on
  - o the use of the budgets
  - o the nature of the interventions and
  - o the learner outcomes achieved.
- The decision of the European Commission to showcase the SEN Initiative as an example of creative and innovative practice for its European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 and to publish details about the Initiative on its website (http://create2009.europa.eu/).

8.3   Learning from the SEN Initiative

For this author, the main challenge of the pilot project was to find the most effective ways of leading and managing an ambitious systemic approach to support provision for SEN and the Initiative has resulted in a considerable body of professional, organisational and personal learning. The key lessons are outlined in this section.

8.3.1   Staff as the primary resource

A non-formal approach to special needs provision means that the knowledge, attitudes and skills of the staff are the most valuable assets available to their learners. This requires, as was provided for in the Initiative, a significant investment in capacity building through training and staff support measures. The goodwill and engagement of staff was essential to the success of this project as it depended on their willingness to take on a primary support role with the learners.

Increasing staff responsiveness to learners

Increasing staff responsiveness to learners cannot be achieved by giving precise instructions. Encouraging staff to trust in the Wheel process and to take the risk of listening to their learners was more influential than issuing directions. This was supported by training and the practising of mentoring skills.

For key workers who were initially nervous about mentoring it emerged that actually engaging in mentoring, becoming more experienced in using the skills and receiving case supervision / staff support made all the difference.

8.3.2   Modelling

For the author working with centres required many of the same approaches that the Initiative was promoting for use with learners, and mirrored the same processes. This meant respecting their experience and knowledge; accepting their anxieties (e.g. about mentoring) and working through them with training, staff supervision and consultation; modelling respect and responsiveness to individual centre circumstances and perspectives; sharing learning; trying things out; and making mistakes.

The ability of a centre to deal with whatever problems arose without panic and to model this to their learners helped the learners to deal with their problems. The ability of staff to contain rather than over-react to the learners' anxiety and powerful feelings conveyed to the learners the possibility that they could bear their own feelings and manage their anxiety. For the author to be responsive to the difficulties and anxieties of centres without panicking was also important. Modelling was a very powerful tool and applied at every level.

8.3.3   Challenge

The problems and issues that arose in centres during the pilot phase were challenging to the author but in addressing and seeking to resolve them there was great organisational learning.

The goodwill of coordinators and tutors was vital if real change at the level of the centre was to happen. Introducing change was a collaborative effort and could not be simply imposed. Centres continue to require support as new problems arise and as improving practice is a continuous process. It was also necessary at times to challenge centres and staff members as well as to support them. In general staff responded to the author's high expectations of what they should be seeking to achieve for their learners and their ambition and creativity grew over the pilot period.

The delay in the delivery of detailed guidelines to centres increased anxiety but also led to innovation. Innovation, creativity and flexibility are crucial as it is often not obvious how best to help a learner and many different interventions may need to be tried before there is any success. The close knowledge that the staff possess about their learners, along with their experience and professional skill, frequently mean that no other professional group has more relevant expertise than they have.

8.3.4 Differences between centres
There are differences between centres in their readiness for change and in their culture and orientation and these need to be recognised and respected. The introduction of change in centres is a process that takes time and the precise way it happens is specific to each centre as it is influenced by centre ethos, the leadership style of the coordinator, the relationship with VEC personnel, the personalities of staff members and the personalities, preoccupations and needs of the learners.

Differences between centres meant that their budgets were used differently and this was as it should have been. In some centres, provision for one-to-one numeracy or for a breakfast club was already in place and continued to be funded out of the general budget; the needs of learners varied (e.g. literacy was perceived to be more of a problem in some centres than others); the size of a centre and the ratio of resource staff to part-time staff had an impact; in bigger centres there was more specialisation (e.g. liaison with local agencies, admin of project); centres that already had highly developed learner support systems in place before the Initiative had to work out how to adapt them to integrate the new elements.

8.3.5 Action research
The action research methodology used in the Initiative meant that centres and VECs had scope to try out different approaches to the introduction of the key elements of the Initiative (e.g. to decide how often and for how long the mentoring sessions would take place, the terms of employing new staff, how the key worker/learner pairings would be determined, the nature of the new interventions to be introduced for learners, etc.). Mistakes were made and some actions worked better than others. This meant that participants at all levels had a role in developing the model and learning from its impact in centres.

8.3.6 Language
Mentoring encourages an increase in learners' ability to talk about themselves and to use the language of progression, self-knowledge and planning. The way language is used in

the centre both with staff and with learners is very important. It is useful to talk about and describe feelings and behaviour; to avoid labels that limit and reduce; to avoid blame and negativity (e.g. the language of criticism as opposed to feedback, of deficits as opposed to strengths, personal resources and resilience factors, of exclusion and the culture of jeering / bullying as opposed to acceptance, curiosity about difference and inclusiveness); to speak of choices and personal responsibility; and to repair mistakes and restore relationships.

8.3.7   *The core role of educational psychology in the SEN Initiative*
The SEN Initiative represented a novel way of applying educational psychological theory and practice. It did this through a combination of systematic analysis of learner needs and development of a model of support that was deeply informed by the research literature. For the author this was a challenging but ultimately very rewarding way of working for the Department as an educational psychologist.

8.4   Future directions
Youthreach participants are a particularly vulnerable group and are at risk of leading difficult and limited lives.   However, like all young people, they are also full of possibility. The SEN Initiative is an investment in this possibility.

8.4.1   *Gaps in services*
There is a considerable discrepancy between the budget for SEN in mainstream primary and post-primary education (over €900m per annum) and that available for all forms of support provision to learners with SEN in Youthreach (less than €3 million). Similarly, Youthreach has no access to the wide range of services that have been introduced to support schools and students since 1999 (NEPS, NCSE, NEWB, SESS, NBSS etc.).

The SEN Initiative provides an appropriate, effective and inexpensive response to high incidence special needs in Youthreach, including those associated with most EBDs. As soon as resources permit, it should be extended to all VEC Youthreach centres, along with all relevant education support bodies and services. Centres should have access to the full range of an educational psychology service, including support at general policy level, at whole-centre level and at the individual case level (in cases of low incidence disability or the presence of complex needs).

The additional funding the SEN Initiative provides is necessary to formalise and timetable the provision of mentoring on a regular basis for all learners. It is also necessary if centres are to be able to finance specific interventions that are tailored to the needs of particular learners. In many cases the interventions will be general or inexpensive but in some they will demand a significant outlay (e.g. a set of addiction counselling sessions, one to one literacy, private guitar lessons, membership of a gym). Centres need to be able, within reason, to try out actions that can make the difference between a learner dropping out of the centre or engaging in seriously risky behaviours and engaging and maintaining them successfully.

In any extension of the Initiative mentoring training for staff should occur in advance of introduction of the measure and guidance provided to coordinators and VECs, using the body of guidelines, templates and website materials that are now in place.

The question of provision for the relatively small number of learners in Youthreach who have low incidence special needs has not received any formal attention to date. Without access to NEPS and NCSE, these participants are not having their needs assessed or catered for and the staff working with them are not receiving any professional support. Equity between this group of learners and their peers in secondary schools requires that this matter be addressed as a matter of urgency and some form of support be introduced immediately for them.

8.4.2   Clinical services
The WebWheel model represents a non-formal approach to providing support to learners. The primary form of support is not based on the kinds of professional formal expertise found in psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy or guidance counselling but on the knowledge, attitudes and skills of ordinary staff members. The rationale for this is the almost universal agreement that relationships need to underpin support provision and the corollary that the best placed people to deliver assistance to learners in centres are the people they meet every day.

However, this does not imply that professional practitioners in guidance, counselling and clinical psychological or psychiatric services are not required. On the contrary, these services are even more necessary for a group whose problems are frequently of such a serious nature that it makes them among the most vulnerable in Irish society. The issue is one of mediation. By and large, the young people who attend Youthreach will not seek support from professional agencies of this kind and so are dependent on people they know acting as mediators for them. This means that professional services need to access learners by working with and through the centres rather than by maintaining entirely separate referral routes. Adding this kind of professional expertise to the professional expertise of Youthreach staff greatly increases the chances of treatment interventions being successful. They also need to be making their expertise available to the staff who are supporting the learners. This two- step or nested-container approach[17] can work very well and is an efficient use of scarce resources.

8.4.3   Continuation of SEN Initiative
The SEN Initiative should be maintained in the twenty Youthreach centres under the leadership and support of an educational psychologist.   This provides an opportunity for continued organisational learning, for ongoing refinement and improvement of the WebWheel model and for the achievement of increasingly ambitious targets. The objectives of the measure should be to
   o   Improve attendance
   o   Increase maintenance (i.e. reduce drop out rates)
   o   Build learners' confidence and ambition
   o   Enhance each learner's personal and social development

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[17] The professional services support or 'contain' the centre workers who in turn 'contain' the learners

- Hold and help learners with the most challenging of problems (e.g. addictions, criminal involvement, mental health issues, significant disabilities)
- Achieve successful transitions for all learners out of the centre

Centres that have the SEN Initiative in tandem with their VECs need to retain the flexibility the resources initially gave them and not allow them to become gobbled up or frozen into permanent teaching or support arrangements that are too specific and inflexible. The ability to be responsive and creative in relation to the needs of learners in the future requires ongoing flexibility.

Centres implementing SEN should conduct evaluations of their SEN work as part of the annual QFI/ ICE process. Criteria to facilitate this will be developed.

8.4.4 Encouragement of use of elements of the WebWheel model on a voluntary basis

There is no reason why elements of the WebWheel cannot be introduced in centres immediately as it is entirely consistent with the Youthreach programme as it stands. Without any additional resources to do so, however, they may have to forego an aspect of their current teaching provision. Coordinators, though, have a degree of discretion about how staffing and time resources are used and should consider introducing mentoring for learners with the most pressing needs and those at most risk of dropping out as it is likely to be a helpful intervention with them. Centres introducing mentoring on a voluntary basis will have access to training and consultation.

It is essential that centres doing mentoring with learners avail of case supervision and staff support from a properly qualified practitioner. They can pay for this using part of their guidance, counselling and psychological services budget.

8.4.5 Improving practice

Practice in all centres can be improved through the systematic introduction of suitable materials, tools programmes and methodologies for facilitating development or addressing areas of difficulty, such as literacy, guidance, mental health and physical health. These may need to be accompanied by training for staff in their correct use. The development and delivery of in-house training programmes in relevant subject or skill areas is likely to be the most cost-effective way of improving practice in the current economic context. Also valuable is the provision of opportunities for centres to share their learning with each other. The website is also a resource for providing information and sharing ideas.

8.4.6 Research

It is recommended that the Department commission research to evaluate the short, medium and longer term outcomes for learners of the SEN Initiative, with a view to understanding how to maximise the effectiveness of the model for achieving learner outcomes. Instruments and processes for identifying, teaching, measuring and recording 'soft' learning outcomes in the areas of life and employability skills should be developed internally and provided to centres.

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Appendix D   Individual Action Plan template

Name: _____

Personal long-term goals (from Wheel):

Personal	
Educational	
Vocational (career)	

Short-term goals and actions:

	Goals	Actions
Subjects for accreditation		
Subjects / programmes not for accreditation		
Sporting activities		
Social activities		
Other activities		
Work experience		

Methododologies:

Any specific teaching methodologies to be used

Supports:

	Goals	Actions
Within-centre supports		
External services		

Appendix E Breakdown of programmes and activities paid for under the staffing allocation

a) Personal or social development programmes	Total no. of hours	No. of learners attending
Traveller Support	48	7
Personal Effectiveness/ Support	36	29
Copping On	17	11
Residential personal development programme	7 days	30
Personal effectiveness programmes	132	60
Emotional intelligence programme	132	10
One World	12	20
SPHE	4 hours p.w.	35
Life coach	2	13
SPHE	150	75
Music and Drama	200	55
CSPE and Social Science	400	75
Safe pass programme	6	6
Career guidance	8	4
Anger Management	6	25
Stay focused workshops	10	23
Drama	20	30
Drama Workshops	2 p.w.	25
Breakthrough	8	24
DAP	18	24
Anti-bullying	6	35
Life Coaching /Counselling	3	25
Personal Development Group Meetings	3 p.w.	40
Personal Development	2 p.w.	25
Confidence Building	2 p.w.	25
Personal Care & Presentation	30	33
Personal Development FETAC	160	33

b) Health education programmes	Total no. of hours	No. of learners attending
Food and nutrition	650	75
P.E. (health related fitness, etc.)	600	75
SPHE	299	86
Full health screening	180	60
Drug and alcohol awareness programmes	70	144

Smoking Cessation Programme[18]	12	12
WII game for exercise	45	9
Healthy eating programme	40	13
Sexual health programmes	36	108
Relationships and sexuality	36	44
RSA	28	25
Yoga	27	28
Driver safety programmes	20	80
Meditation	12	10
Mind Link	7	44
Aware (mental health awareness)	6	25
Contraception	6	25

c) Additional academic or vocational subjects/courses	Total no. of hours	No. of learners attending
Preparation for Work Experience	50	29
Living in a Diverse Society	71	32
Safe Pass	6	10
Caring for Children	41	3
Maths sessions	16	27
Toe by toe literacy programme	440	30
GTI Open day	3	27
GMIT Open day	3	4
Custume Barracks Athlone	8	14
Dublin Courts	8	10
Safe Pass	14	7
Photography workshops x 2	24	19
History	30	1
Business Studies	30	1
Wood carving	25	10
Beauty Care	15	8
Maths Grinds	40	6
Photography	40	4
Hair Course	50	2
Steer Clear Course	40	12
Beautician Courses	50	2
Child Care Course	50	1
Mental health	8	24
Copping on programme	39	25
Video Expression	24	22
Creative writing	48	25
Basket-weaving	50	10

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[18] This programme was facilitated by the Community Addiction Team.

One to one numeracy	5 p.w.	20
One to one literacy	5 p.w.	20
Literacy and numeracy	3 p.w.	9
1:1 with one learner	8	3
Hair and Beauty	12	10-12
Parenting workshops	12	10-12
SIMS (Driving simulation)	10	3

d) Alternative therapies	Total no. of hours	No. of learners attending
Self Presentation	235	47
Acupuncture[19]	52	8
Acupuncture	88	20
Relaxation	110	60
Yoga	24	6
Meditation	12	10
Yoga	10	15
Chess Club	40	11
Relaxation Classes	8	15
Counselling	30	13
Behaviour modification therapy	20	2
Reflexology/Indian Head Massage/Massage/Meditation	160	18
Art therapy	6 p.w.	25 learners
Drumming	2	40
Yoga	12	15

e) Outdoor activities, including sports, leisure and travel	Total no. of hours	No. of learners benefiting
Fishing Futures	35	22
ADEPT Programme	64	35
Sports	316.4	94
Fitness training	130	40
Petersburg outdoor adventure centre (x3)	21	42
Arainn Islands	10	12
Curves memberships	36	6
Fitness sessions in local Sports Complex (15 miles away)	9.5	All learners
Horseriding	3	8
Pitch and Putt	6	16

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[19] This programme was facilitated by the Community Addiction Team.

Fishing	12	6
Swimming	6	16
Go-Karting	8	24
Ice-skating	10	20
Orienteering	10	All learners
Walking	20	All learners
Camping	32	15
Day trips out of centre	Monthly basis	All learners
Outdoor pursuits	18	25
Leisure activity and group building	27 in total, 3 per month	35
Going to gym	30	15
Dance Classes	20	3
Drumming and Guitar	16	2
Sports	10	8
Centre outings	6	13
Outdoor Pursuits	150	75
Excursions and Tours	200	75
Walking Club	100	23
Swimming Club	40	15
Sports and leisure activities	72	13 learners
Centre outings	110	13
Travel		
Trip to Holland/Germany/ Belgium (including European Parliament)	3 days	25
Trip to Athlone (swimming & bowling)	8	33
Sporting activities	77	25
Pudding hill centre paintball	6	13
Trip to wales Soccer tournament	18 5	10 9
Summer programme	100	22
Samba workshops	9	33
Soccer Skills	20 hours p.w.	25
Summer Programme	210	25
Soccer Coaching	2 p.w.	20
Leisure and Recreation & Outdoor Dev.	1 day p.w.	25
Recreational/Outdoor Development	1 day p.w. + 3 hrs p.w.	25
Planet (indoor, alternative sports)	2-3 hrs p.w.	25
Hiking	4 days	25
External sports	3 days	25
Horse Care	20	33
Outdoor Education	50	33

Adventure Centre 2 day (including one overnight) camping trip	32	15

f) **Other interventions or activities**	**Total no. of hours**	**No. of learners benefiting**
Driving Theory	34	17
Special Needs Assistant	305.8	18
Trainee Support Tutor	430.5	All
Team work	180.8	24
Drugs education	316.4	94
Big Ballott	7	44
Galway Mayor's Conference	7	8
Design and printing of greeting cards using local images	20	All learners
Design and production of G.Y.R. T-shirts	20	As above
Creating a C.D. in a local recording studio	7	4
Drama	6 in total	35
"Meeting Room"	240	13 learners
Action learning	24	22
Aware workshop	2	20
Counselling 1-1	108	25
Driver Theory	35	8
Safe Pass	8	10
Safe Pass		4
Educational and psychological assessments	2.5 p.w.	25
Team Teaching	3 p.w.	40
Once off activities e.g. cinema trip	20	25