

SHARP PHASE TWO

SECOND 6 MONTH REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR THE SECOND SIX-MONTH PERIOD OF THE PROJECT (JANUARY – JUNE 2003)

From January to June 2003 the SHARP ‘Right 2 Respect’(R2R) project has been going through a phase of stabilisation. The project is now at the stage where most of the new work has been initiated and with the end of the project in sight it has become a stage when the project as a whole has focused its efforts on the ongoing work and ensuring that the project can produce interesting and valuable evidence on the work we have produced so far and will continue to the end of the project.

It has been an interesting time for the project because of this stabilisation. For so long we have felt like a new project that was setting up and working with young women to establish innovative approaches to positive work with young women. The project is well embedded within the infrastructure of Wrexham Youth Service. We now have the opportunity to reflect upon what we have achieved. It is sometimes difficult when immersed in the excitement and creativity of a new project, especially something as exciting and innovative as the SHARP programme, to take the time to look beyond the immediate activity.

During January to June the aim has been to consider each part of the jigsaw that makes up R2R and how we can best explain and disseminate the main findings from the work. This has led to a closer relationship with the North Wales Research and Development Support Service, who have been invaluable in supporting the R2R team.

The increased emphasis on analysis and dissemination has meant that the R2R team has had to change its focus slightly. The R2R project workers have taken more responsibility for the day-to-day work, face-to-face work and maintaining the projects, whilst the project co-ordinator’s work balance has swung more towards the role of writer, observer, collator and disseminator. This has been a natural progression and will mean that in the next few months (July – December 2003) there will be a number of papers submitted for publication. These will reflect the varied elements of R2R and the work achieved.

The first two of these papers are in progress. It is important to note that both of these focus on project ideas initially proposed by the first Action Research Group in phase one of R2R. Without the Action Research Groups input the projects may not have been implemented. The first paper is about the use and role of the baby simulators within the R2R project. We suggest that we can augment the debate about the role of virtual babies and the agendas behind their use. This is particularly pertinent given the statistically high rates of teenage pregnancy in Wrexham.

The second paper in progress relates to substance misuse education for young women and the role of the Sirens project in addressing this issue. The first step of Sirens is the ‘Whilst u were sleeping’ initiative which is focused on the issue of drug assisted assault (spiking). This project encompasses a range of issues including the power,

control and victimisation of women whilst socialising and the way that we can best support young women to stay safe and not be overwhelmed by fear, misinformation and lack of knowledge.

The research team will continue to consider elements of the project that could be disseminated in both peer review and practice journals. The findings from the work will be relevant to policy makers, youth workers, community development workers, action researchers and local and national organisations. There is scope to produce papers relating both to the outcomes of the work and to the methodological issues related to action research.

The R2R project has continued to: facilitate six Action Research Groups, support a range of other groups working with young women and to deliver and manage a number of R2R led projects.

2. PROGRESS TO DATE AGAINST THE TIMETABLE / MILESTONE SET OUT IN YOUR PHASE TWO SHARP PROJECT PROPOSAL (INCLUDING ANY ISSUES WHICH MAY HAVE PREVENTED PROGRESS OR REQUIRED AMENDMENTS TO THE WORK PLAN)

The original timetable we produced was a useful and flexible framework to guide the activity. As might be expected with an action research project, there have been some amendments to the plan. This does not imply any lack of progress but reflects the responsive nature of the work and the influence that the young participants have had on the process.

Each Action Research Group has become more individualised and differentiated than anticipated. Some Action Research Groups have developed incredibly quickly and identified three *actions* to take forward, whilst others have found the idea of being so active in decision-making quite intimidating. We have also found that two of the Action Research Groups are less well developed, due mainly to changes in the staff team. The new staff member working with these two groups has therefore had to take this into account and work hard to ensure action is promoted.

The new projects developed by the R2R team have all been initiated but some have progressed further than others.

Please see attached Appendix for progress updates on all of the projects. .

Please see the effective / ineffective practice for details of why and how some projects have not progressed as effectively etc.

3. BRIEF COMMENT ON CONTINUING CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROJECT TO THE OVERALL AIMS OF THE SHARP INITIATIVE

▪ PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Partnership has always been the biggest strength of R2R. As a project we have been determined that we would not be a short-term, discrete project that disappeared without sight when the funding ended. We were determined that the values and aims of SHARP and R2R would be connected to a range of work. This will mean that

positive work with young women will continue to be a priority within Wrexham Youth Service and other agencies working with young people in the Wrexham area. Since the end of May 2003, R2R has become part of the Health, Information and Participation team (HIP) within Wrexham Youth Service. The HIP team is made up of R2R, the Youth Forum project and Contact Information and Advice Shop for young people. The HIP team has a dedicated manager and this has helped to bring the aims of the three projects closer together and will mean that R2R and the action research approach will have a natural path of development within the HIP team.

Each of the Action Research Groups relies on positive partnership work with part-time youth workers based in youth centres in each of the targeted areas. Their support and help is invaluable to the project and enables the young women and the R2R project workers to have a steady base and to continue progressing.

Each new project within R2R is a partnership. (Attached in the Appendix is a brief update on each of the individual projects for information)

- The young women's journalism project is a partnership project relying on youth centre staff, projects working with young women who do not attend youth centres.
- The Sirens... project is specifically a partnership project between RESPONSE the Youth Services substance misuse team and R2R. This partnership is essential to the success of Sirens... and will ensure that Sirens... will continue to develop and thrive after R2R in its present form ends.
- The Bringing up Baby project has been successful in building partnerships with schools across the County to deliver the project to young women in a variety of ways.

- **SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

R2R has had a number of roles in community development strategies and the development of services for young women in general.

The Action Research Groups have been key to our role in development work with young women and the wider community. A brief update on each of the Action Research Groups follow below.

Glyn Ceiriog (a rural community)

- The Action Research Group in Glyn Ceiriog has been received very positively by the wider community and has had a role in bridging the gap between the community and young people. The acceptance of the young women's group has provided an opportunity for older community members and community members with decision making powers and influence to see the positive contribution that young people can have. The young women have been provided space in the community centre and when this venue was temporarily unavailable the community found them a suitable alternative venue by providing the use of a separate room within the local pub. The R2R worker has also been involved in community work via detached work advertising the work of R2R and inviting other young women to become actively involved. The youth worker based in the Glyn Ceiriog area has been supportive and active in enabling young women who are spread across quite a wide geographical area to get together, share ideas and put them into action.

- The young women have chosen to design and produce road safety accessories as part of the action research work as they identified a road safety issue within their community. They feel that the majority of the current merchandise and campaigns are focused on younger children. In a rural community young people have little choice but to walk along poorly lit roads, with narrow or non-existent pavements. This work has the potential to be sold as a community development idea to groups of young women – and indeed young people – across the Wrexham area.

Gresford (a semi rural area approx. three miles from the town centre)

- The Action Research Group in Gresford is based within a busy village youth centre and has been accepted whole heartedly by the staff team that work within the centre. The young women within the centre have taken the action research idea and become very active through it.
- The young women have activated two action cycles to date. Firstly they identified a need for young women in the area to be more aware of issues around sex and sexual health. They contacted Juici a FPA initiative and took part in a course of sexual health education, which they found very rewarding as a group. They have then decided that they would like to take the idea further and become peer educators on sexual health and are currently exploring how they can do this.
- The second cycle is related to an identified room that has been allocated to R2R in the centre. Initially this was a room upstairs which the girls volunteered a significant amount of time to repainting. There was some debate about the suitability of this room and after some negotiation the girls have taken ownership of a basement room that has not been used to its full potential for some time. They are currently planning a sleep over in order to renovate the room whilst spending time together. This new room has access onto a small barbecue area and garden and the group plan to explore the potential of this area over the next few months. The ultimate aim is to make this room a young women friendly room that can be used for meetings, mini conferences and workshops for young women across the Wrexham area. It is also hoped that this room will inspire other centres with a number of rooms to allocate one to young women so that they can have a dedicated project room.
- The Gresford young women have also been involved in a number of other empowering activities that have impacted on their youth centres and the wider community and Youth Service. Some of the girls have become peer inspectors as part of the Wrexham Youth Service ASSYST programme. ASSYST is Wrexham Youth Service's approach to maintaining quality and promoting development across Wrexham and the girls have participated in training which means that they can be part of the team which inspects centres.
- The young women have also taken over a wall in their centre and designed a mural. They volunteered their time to carry out the drawing and painting to a high standard.

Cefn Mawr (a semi rural area approx. seven miles from Wrexham town centre and adjacent to the Plas Madoc estate which is a Communities First area)

- The Cefn Mawr group has been through a period of transition where the core group of older young women have moved on and attend on a less regular basis and a new group of younger girls are becoming more involved.
- The group have had a lot of disruption due to changes in venue that were out of the control of the R2R team and other youth workers in the area. They have been using a room in a community centre but have found this difficult as young men use it as a focus point for socialising and have harassed the Action Research Group intermittently.
- However, the group have continued to develop and have decided to use their main hobby and method of self-expression – dancing- to develop their action project. The young women in Cefn have been key to the peer dance education work R2R has initiated and they have now decided to take this a step further and produce dance sacks. This idea is building on the ‘story sacks’ idea common in primary schools but taking it into a dance project. Each bag will contain a CD or tape of music, a set of written instructions, a set of easy to follow visual dance instructions and hopefully a video or CD ROM showing the young women performing the dance with hints and tips.
- It is hoped that this idea will be popular in centres where there is little dance work taking place and may encourage more young women and young men across Wrexham to take part in dance activities. The sack will also contain information on health and in particular young women’s health.

Brynteg (an urban village approx. three miles from Wrexham which is a Communities First area and also part of the Urban II initiative)

- The Brynteg Action Research Group is based within a traditional housing estate within the village of Brynteg. The project has been fully supported by the workers in the centre who see the R2R as a positive addition to their work.
- The Brynteg Action Research Group is a dichotomy of development. On one hand there are a number of young women who are quite advanced in their role as action researchers and empowered young women within their community. These young women have taken on opportunities to interview youth workers joining the R2R team and have displayed maturity and a breadth of understanding whilst doing this.
- On the other hand, the group as a whole become easily distracted and the group often revolves around pressing issues for the young women including severe alcohol use, fighting and depression.
- The change of staff in this group also detracted from the progress. However, the group has now bonded with their new project worker and positive development is taking place. They have decided as a project to redecorate their youth centre toilets and to develop some workshops on their experiences as young women. It is hoped these will be developed into packages that can be delivered across the Youth Service and give the young women from Brynteg an opportunity to voice their experiences to a wider audience.
- The youth centre in Brynteg has been through a period of upheaval due to vandalism. The young women involved in R2R have grappled with the difficulties with the venue. It is a particular tribute to them that they have maintained interest and been vocal in their disapproval of the vandalism done to their youth centre and were eager to move forward.

Llay (an urban village approx 3 /4 miles from Wrexham town centre. An URBAN 11 community)

- Llay is a big sprawling community with a large number of young women.
- The Llay group is interesting as the youth centre within Llay has been knocked down as it was unsuitable for use and is being replaced by a Life Long Learning Centre. The Centre is being funded as part of the URBAN II programme. This has meant that most contact with the young women in the last few months has been through detached work as the temporary youth centre is not used as well by the young women. However, the group are very excited about the new developments in their area and are keen to become involved in offering ideas to the development of the new project. They are currently planning to develop some art work using 2D and 3D methods to be incorporated in the building. The group are also very keen to become involved in the ASSYST inspection team and other ways of having their voices heard.
- The Llay group are very keen to have their ideas heard and have requested that they pilot the Journalism project so that they can evaluate its role and possibly take the idea further by producing a regular Llay newsletter.
- The Llay area has recently had a full time development worker appointed and R2R aim to work in partnership with him to take the work of the Action Research Group into the new centre and to continue to develop in the future.

Holt (a rural village approx. 5 miles from Wrexham)

- The Holt R2R group are perhaps our most unusual group in that they are completely different from every other R2R group. The young women in Holt live in quite an insular community and are fairly fearful of anything or anyone from outside the community. For example, the Holt group find it very stressful to visit other groups or participate in events or trips. This has meant that the project worker has had to do a lot of work in partnership with the youth centre to build up the confidence of the young women, their families and the wider community. This hard work has begun to pay dividends with the group displaying more confidence and interest in spreading their wings.
- The groups have decided that they would like to give something back to their local community and show that young women can contribute positively. They have therefore decided to work in partnership with their local primary school, to put together a transition pack for young women in the top year so that they can join the local youth centre (at the age of eleven) and actually know what to expect and have links with the staff there and the activities.
- R2R believes this will be an interesting piece of work as the young women from the R2R group will have to deliver the transition activities in the form of a workshop and this will be a big developmental step for them. R2R also suggests there is potential for this to be a useful model for other schools and youth centres to copy. It may mean that young women will be more confident in accessing youth services and the support structures that the youth service can provide.

Other Community Development

General girls work:-

R2R have taken on board the need for a wide range of young women to have access to positive young women's work. As a staff team we have therefore aimed to support as many centres across Wrexham as possible. To date we have offered continual support to all the centres within Wrexham Youth Service and are encouraging female members of staff to take on the development of this work. In addition we have offered support to the Venture project and the Caia Park Partnership which are both Voluntary agencies based in the Caia Park estate which is also a Communities First area.

Men's work:-

The R2R project has been partly responsible for the development and rise in profile of young men's work. The youth service is now actively planning to implement young men's work and to use the model of work that R2R have developed. The experiences gained by the R2R work will help to ensure that the young men's work is a success. A number of groups of young men, particularly in areas where R2R is active, have requested specialised time for them,

In order to take this idea forward R2R is working in partnership with a male member of the Youth Service team to organise a training day for the entire Youth Service staff group. The aim of the day is to ensure that all staff, particularly youth centre based staff, have ideas and activities that will support them in delivering effective young men's and young women's work in a variety of contexts. It is also hoped that this day will provide a forum for all Youth Service staff to discuss issues, confusions, concerns and ideas about gender development work. This day, which will take place in September, will be workshop based and R2R will provide an evaluative report of the day. .

Consultation work:-

The R2R Action Research Groups have been involved in sharing their knowledge and ideas with a number of other groups. Most of this is done informally and often involved community volunteers interested in the ideas behind action research. However, in June the Gresford Action Research Group met with The Wrexham CBC's Young People's Unit, which is a strategic body looking at bringing work with young people across the County together, and offered support and ideas in the planning of a consultation day for young people across Wrexham.

▪ EFFECTIVE/ INEFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Effective:-

We have found that the development of a community profile within each action research area has worked very effectively. This focus on local needs is very useful in generating ideas for action cycles and is also an interesting snapshot of a community from a young woman's perspective.

We have found that detached work (youth work on the streets) has been extremely effective in engaging girls and young women and encouraging them to become involved.

R2R have found our most effective practice occurs when we work in partnership. It is important that a project such as R2R is challenged and stretched by looking, observing, exploring and debating different agendas, ideas and needs. It would be easy to become insular and miss out on the opportunity to develop the project further.

As a staff team we have found having Keele University involved in the project incredibly useful. It has encouraged us to *sell* our achievements and be honest about our flaws and the mistakes we have made along the way. We think the effect of Keele University's input will be felt until the end of the project.

Ineffective practice:-

R2R have found the development of a young women's forum has struggled to take off so far. However, with the new impetus in the Youth Forum project and the stabilisation within the R2R project, we suggest that the young women's forum will now develop more effectively and will become a meaningful body within Wrexham. The young women's forum will be linked in with the Wrexham youth forum project which will offer a wider voice for the young women from R2R.

There have been some circumstances beyond the control of R2R that have affected our timetables.

In a number of areas, lack of venues, buildings renovations and building vandalism have had a significant effect. This has demonstrated the importance of a dedicated space for the Action Research Groups to meet and the important role community buildings can play in supporting positive community development.

R2R have found it surprisingly difficult to recruit a journalism project worker. This is a .4 funded position funded by the European Social Fund. R2R can only conclude that because the job would involve some level of I T competency and literacy that it is deterring female workers interested in expanded their experiences.

▪ TRAINING ISSUES (TO INCLUDE CAPACITY BUILDING WITHIN THE WIDER COMMUNITY)

There are a number of training issues that have been identified over the last few months that are relevant to R2R, Wrexham Youth Service and SHARP.

- As a project we have found that the young women who make up the Action Research Groups are ever-changing and although there is normally a central core of members for a lengthy period of time, the group still changes organically. Some training in how to best support this change over within Action Research Groups would be very useful to us.
- R2R also have identified a need to ensure that female workers are able to use I T competently and confidently. This is currently being addressed by Wrexham Youth Service as a wider training issue and therefore hopefully more female workers will be willing to use IT in their work.
- As a staff team we have identified a need to become more aware of cultural and race issues and how these can be explored via action research.
- As a staff team we have also identified the need to democratise the team and ensure that each worker feels a valuable part of the team. To date this has been

achieved by having regular staff meetings which every member has a turn to chair and each worker is encouraged to take ownership of a particular part of the project. This has led us to look at the impact of R2R on us as a staff team. Our conclusion is that we also represent a mini action cycle and it is our intention to produce an paper on the way action research has an effect on professionals as well as the young people we are working with.

4. ANTICIPATED CHANGES TO THE WORK PLAN INCLUDING THE EVALUATION PLAN

See attached appendix

5. PROGRESS WITH WEB SITE DEVELOPMENT

The website is in the process of being developed and we are hoping to launch the site in early autumn 2003. The website is going to have three distinct parts.

- The first part will be focused on the young women's achievements who have been a part of R2R. There will be information on each of the Action Research Groups and the work they have done to date. There will also be information on each of the projects initiated via R2R, covering their aims and how young women accessing the site can find out more.
There will also be places for young women across Wrexham to have their ideas, artwork and comments published on the site.
- The second part of the site will be dedicated to the research work of R2R. This part will be more focused on the needs of action researchers, youth and community workers and other professionals interested in the work of the project. There will be an explanation of the role of SHARP within the Welsh Assembly Government and the impact it has had on services across Wales. All articles, reports and findings from the R2R project will be published or references there.
- The third part will be a number of generic young people's pages outlining R2R's place within the Youth Service and the other services that young women and young men can have access to. It will also contain information on the Welsh Assembly Governments Extending Entitlement document, the Curriculum Statement for Youth Work in Wales and Wrexham's quality assurance plans that have been developed to ensure young people in Wrexham have a high quality service.