

**SHARP
SIX MONTHLY REPORT
'RIGHT 2 RESPECT'**

INTRODUCTION

The 'Right 2 Respect' project has now successfully expanded due to the Phase Two funding across a wider area of Wrexham. We now have six active action research groups including 2 in rural communities, 1 in a Communities First area and 1 in an Urban II community.

The focus for the last six months has been the production of a young women focused community profile within each action research area. This profile has included discussion work, art-work and young women's photography of their community. The participants have also begun to formulate their ideas for the action project, which has been generated in the main from the work of the action research community profile.

The next step is for the community profiles to be completed and presented within their community and then for the action research groups to continue development of a community project or initiative that will address an identified issue.

Progress to date has been extremely positive but obviously we are working with a wide group of young women many who have busy school, work and social lives. Therefore timetables and progress of some of the projects has had to be adjusted accordingly.

TIMETABLE

The timetable has been used as a working document to guide progress effectively, and to promote growth and development within the project.

'Right 2 Respect' is very pleased with the success and continuing development of various elements of the project. All aspects are progressing positively and have been welcomed by all young women who have participated. For many of the young women we are now accessing this is the first time that they have had time to take part

in activities that are led by themselves as young women and focused on meeting their needs. This has for many been a liberating experience.

However for some groups of young women apathy is a big problem. On a number of occasions activities such as motor activities have been arranged for new groups to access only for them to withdraw at the last minute due to a wide range of reasons including fear of the unknown, apathy and peer pressure. As a staff team we have then had to re engage with the group and their youth workers to encourage them to participate. So far this has worked in the majority of cases. When it hasn't worked we have offered a new approach or some simpler activities to build confidence in their group before offering the activity again.

Young women involved in the project have indicated that a flexible approach is the most effective way to progress and pointed out the need to balance the demands of the action research led work and more generalised group activities. At times other community events took precedence – for example other activities in the area such as parties and Christmas events meant that the action research group would be on hold for a couple of weeks. Sometimes it was necessary to organise a completely unrelated activity to re-ignite enthusiasm and ensure group cohesion was maintained. These activities also made sure that the relationship between the 'Right 2 Respect' workers and the young women was maintained and the power balance was equal.

The key point that has to be accepted by action researchers – particularly those working with young people- is that it must be enjoyable, relevant and led by the group. For the young people involved in 'Right 2 Respect' a lot of their time is organised by timetables at school, home and in part time or full time jobs. They therefore do not want to be led by any form of timetable when they are voluntarily contributing to a project. They do on the whole accept that the work has to be moving somewhere to be worthwhile and indeed they wish for this to be the case however they also believe that the priority is the enjoyment and skills they gain from an activity.

CONTINUING CONTRIBUTION

The 'Right 2 Respect' project has built on its strong partnership working base and has extended its multi-agency working to a wide variety of sectors. The small projects that have been created from 'Right 2 Respect' such as the parenting skills course and the journalism project have enabled other professionals to share in the project and access resources and offer skills. We have links to midwives, health visitors, Youth Offending Service workers and a range of youth and community workers who work for other organisations within the Wrexham area.

We also should not underestimate the links developed within Wrexham Youth Service. The Youth Service is a large organisation and as such work with and have contact with a large group of young people, their families and other community members. We have worked hard as a project to ensure that Wrexham Youth Service workers and volunteers can access 'Right 2 Respect' or ask for support and guidance in their work with young women. This means that a much larger group of young women are able to access high quality support than purely those directly connected to 'Right 2 Respect'.

One of the latest ways that we have promoted partnership working is via the Wrexham ASSYST scheme. This is Wrexham Youth Service's own inspection process to ensure the quality of work we offer as an organisation remains high and continues to improve. The inspection team includes youth workers and young people. Members of a 'Right 2 Respect' action research group have attended the training from ASSYST and have now begun to be part of the inspection team and have inspected a number of centres already. The next step is for ASSYST and 'Right 2 Respect' to work in partnership with young women from a range of centres - and including representatives from the action research groups - to design a set of criteria that a centre or project can be judged against to ensure that they are positive places for young women to be. This may include for example - sanitary bins in the female toilets, a young women's notice board, a system in place that ensures that both genders have equal access to resources etc.

This set of criteria will then become a part of the ASSYST inspection process with a number of young women trained specifically to judge whether the centre or project has reached the criteria. Successful centres and projects will be awarded a Young

Women's Mark of Excellence that they will be able to display in their centre or project. The aim is to encourage youth centres and staff to consider the gender balance in their centres or project and work positively towards making it a better balance.

Estyn – Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Youth Service's has just undertaken an inspection of Wrexham Youth Service from the 24 to the 28th February 2003. 'Right 2 Respect' was inspected as part of this process and was identified as a project with outstanding features. Estyn will publish a full report, which will be available across Wales. These inspection reports are used by youth service's across Wales to learn about good practice and innovative approaches to working with young people. Estyn have indicated that the 'Right 2 Respect' project will be featured within the report as an example of good practice.

Community development work has also continued effectively. 'Right 2 Respect' has been asked to contribute to community wide open days, and community groups in action research areas have shown considerable support and interest in the work. As a whole communities across Wrexham have supported the work and welcomed constructive work with young women.

The community profile work has allowed community members to see young women in their community taking photographs of local areas and talking about issues that bother them. This has in some cases provoked wider discussion and positive interaction with young women and members from the community.

Effective practice

As a project we have found expressive arts activities to be effective in engaging young women and encouraging young women to actively participate not only in the action research community profile but also actively contribute to their community. One of the action research groups have developed a community mural within their youth centre and have contributed a large amount of time to complete the piece. This work has been a key thread in maintaining the action research group and has been a positive way of seeing a young women led impact within their community.

We have also found that photography is a useful way of engaging a wide group of young women. It was seen as very empowering by young women to be trusted with cameras and asked to record what they see within their community. The key point with photography as identified by the participants is that the photographer is in control of the process and there is also a fairly quick turnaround from taking the photographs to seeing the results. It was also seen as fairly liberating as young women who were not confident at talking, writing or drawing felt that they were on a level playing field when using photography.

We have found the community profile focus to be an effective way to focus the work of the young women's action research group. It has also generated a range of mini projects which will develop in the next six months. Here are two examples of work generated from the community profiles:-

- One action research group have continued to offer peer dance activities to other youth centres across Wrexham and hope to continue work with these groups of young women to enable them to enter a Wrexham and regional dance competition in 2004. It is hoped by supporting and evaluating this project it will be able to be encouraged and promoted in a number of other areas where dance has strong traditions. The peer dance has been a positive way of breaking down barriers between groups of young women and enabling them to focus on supporting each other and celebrating their successes.
- A rural action research group have been welcomed whole-heartedly by their community and the meeting room which is based in a community centre now holds a storage cupboard and display board dedicated to the young women's group. This may seem like a small achievement but it is actually a big step forward for community relations between young people and the wider community. The group have identified community safety as a major issue which has been reflected in their community profile. Therefore the group are planning to design and produce a range of 'funky' and young women focused reflectors, key-rings and bags that will enable them to remain safe whilst walking along narrow

country roads. They are also hoping to talk to the strategic groups in their community about improving lighting and hang out areas for young people.

Training issues

The 'Right 2 Respect' team have found that it is harder than expected to find quality sessional workers to enable us to deliver work around confidence, dance etc. We have therefore had to book specialist organisations to deliver such work to a number of groups. In order to enhance the capabilities of the project we are currently exploring a range of different training opportunities that would raise the capacity within the 'Right 2 Respect' team.

This would be particularly useful for the ongoing rolling programme of work offered to young women in youth centres across Wrexham. By offering a wider variety of more challenging activities we would not only raise the profile of young women's work higher but we would also engage with a wider group of young women. We are looking to undertake specialist training in a range of potential areas including; art, self-defence and football. This will enable young women to participate in activities facilitated by female workers who are not only skilled but aware of the action research methodology that is central to the project and the voluntarism and inclusion that underpins all positive youth work.

We are also looking to engage young women who have particular skills in the training part of the project. This has happened to some extent with the peer dance education work that has been initiated but we would like to expand it further in the next year.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

It is anticipated that the project timetable will need to be revised in partnership with the young women we are working with to reflect more effectively the flexibility required by young women in Wrexham accessing the project.

The updated timetables will be forwarded to SHARP as soon as they have been revised.

We also anticipate using the sessional worker budget more effectively by purchasing units of time from experienced organisations with expertise in areas identified by young women such as music and dance.

The evaluation plans so far have been effective in guiding and improving the work of 'Right 2 Respect'. We however have noted that the most effective way of monitoring and evaluating the work of the project is through reflection as a staff team and reflection discussions with the groups of young women involved in the various elements of the projects have found that the action research group members are becoming more confident and offer more insightful and honest reflections on activities which have enabled the staff team to modify work in partnership with them.