

Perceived Needs for Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services in Youthreach, Community Training Workshops and Senior Traveller Training Centres

A survey conducted by the National Co-ordinator YOUTHREACH (Department of Education & Science) and the National Co-ordinator YOUTHREACH (FÁS)

Data analysis and report: National Centre for Guidance in Education

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RESEARCH SUMMARY

A questionnaire was sent to all YOUTHREACH Co-ordinators, and Managers of Community Training Workshops and Senior Traveller Training centres (133 in number) as part of the consultative process in the allocation of additional guidance resources to these centres, arising out of the mid-term review of EU structural funds 1994-1999. The questionnaire, designed by the National Co-ordinators of Youthreach was sent in early March 1998 from the Curriculum Development Unit. Sixty-five questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of **49%**. The sample of respondents was made up of thirty-four Youthreach centres, eighteen Community Training Workshops and thirteen Senior Traveller Centres.

The following common themes emerged throughout the analysis of the perceived needs for guidance, counselling and psychological services, the desired responses to those needs, and current responses to those needs:

- Need for counselling – access to a centre counsellor, frontline guidance and counselling training for staff;
- Need for adequate and efficient referral to psychological services;
- Need for vocational guidance

These themes were reiterated in the suggestions for a new service and how it should be integrated with existing provision.

Almost 90% of respondents reported the need for the provision of counselling for trainees. Two-thirds of respondents reported the need for referral to psychological services and just over one-third the need for the provision of vocational guidance. At present responses to these needs include: centre staff '*doing their best*' by falling back on limited resources (32% of respondents); providing access to a counsellor (29%); and using referral to psychological services (41%). Experience of referral to psychological services is mixed, lack of access being the main problem. One fifth of the centres reported not having access to any guidance, counselling or psychological services. These centres do not have access to guidance, counselling or psychological services to address the personal needs of trainees; they lack access to either an Advocate, Mentor or any other career-oriented guidance or counselling service; and they do not have any staff qualified or trained in the guidance or counselling area.

The same overall guidance, counselling and psychological service requirements emerged from respondents views on the desirable provision to respond to trainee needs – access to referral services, access to a centre-based/full-time counsellor, and need for training. The most frequently reported method of response is the provision of an efficient and reliable psychological service available by referral to all trainees who require it (45% of respondents).

Suggestions for a new service recommended that counselling, referral to psychological services and vocational guidance be provided in an integrated approach to addressing the needs of trainees in Youthreach, CTW's and STT's. The importance of easily accessible referral services was again stressed as crucial to the operation of any new service. It was proposed that the new service should incorporate adequate referral to psychological services, training in frontline guidance for existing staff, and on-site access to a counsellor in the form of a locally provided shared facility.

The results of the research clearly show a number of elements are necessary to establish a systematic response to trainee needs. Most important of these and most prevalent throughout respondents' answers was access to professional psychological and other specialist services. This access must be available to all trainees when required. Referral needs to be immediate and professional services must endeavour to see trainees within a limited timeframe. Of about equal importance are (i) the need for staff training in front-line guidance and counselling skills and (ii) the need for access to an onsite qualified counsellor, ideally full-time but possibly shared between centres. The combination of these two elements (i & ii) would begin to respond to the needs of trainees as expressed by nearly 90% of respondents. Trainees also require vocational guidance to prepare them for 'life after Youthreach'. These elements should be provided in a locally based integrated approach based on collaboration between clusters of Youthreach centres.

1. INTRODUCTION

Arising from the mid-term review of EU structural funds 1994-1999, a provision of £0.987m has been made available over the period 1998-1999 for the development of guidance, counselling and psychological services for early school leavers. The provision was to cater for trainees participating in the YOUTHREACH programme in both VEC centres and Community Training Workshops and in Senior Traveller Training Centres. A Task Force representing the relevant government departments and agencies was convened in February 1998. The Task Force report outlined five general principles on the provision of Guidance, Counselling, and Psychological Services: partnership, complementarity, continuity, district approach, and client focus, for the allocation of funds.

“A team approach at local level to address the needs of early school leavers is regarded as the most effective. This implies strong multi-actor networks and mechanisms for co-operation. It is understood that YOUTHREACH is not the only solution to early school leaving, and should operate in a local and regional continuum of provision, arrangements, partnerships and services. Active information and referral links both into and out of YOUTHREACH are essential”

(Report of Focus Group to Guidance Task Force, 1998)

The following research was conducted as part of a consultative process to identify the different kinds of guidance, counselling and psychological services, which already operate in the programmes, and the ways in which new arrangements might be put in place. In reality, no new service emanated as a result of Task Force deliberations; it was decided to allocate funds based on proposals from clusters of centres. These proposals were guided by the five principles set out above.

The data, however, reflects the needs, responses and desired responses of the Youthreach programme, as expressed by centre co-ordinators and managers. It is also useful in that it gives us a picture of the present situation – existing resources within centres and access to those outside.

2. METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire (see appendix A for copy of questionnaire) was posted to all YOUTHREACH Co-ordinators and Managers of Community Training Workshops and Senior Traveller Training centres (133 questionnaires sent) in early March 1998. Sixty-five questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of **49%**. This rate compares favourably with those of other postal questionnaires where, in certain situations, a response of 15% is often considered good (Harper, 1971:21). Table 1 shows the response rates of the different types of respondents: Youthreach co-ordinators, Community Training Workshop managers and Senior Traveller Training Centre managers. Though the response rates differ, the difference is not significant ($\chi^2 = 2.2776$ $df=2$ $p<.9$), and therefore will not skew the answers in any way.

Table 1 Response Rate by category of respondent

	Questionnaires sent	Questionnaires returned	Response Rate
Youthreach	67	34	51%
Community Training Workshop	47	18	38%
Senior Traveller Centre	24	13	54%

Quantitative responses were then analysed using the software package SNAP for windows, while open-ended questions were analysed qualitatively to see what themes and insights emerged.

3. PERCEIVED NEEDS FOR GUIDANCE, COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Respondents were asked to describe the need for guidance, counselling and psychological services for their early school leaver clients, in general and with particular reference to the last two years.

3.1 Types of Counselling Required

Just over half the respondents¹ (51%) mentioned counselling for trainees in general, in their responses when asked to describe the need for guidance, counselling and psychological services for their early school leaver clients (please refer to appendix A for exact wording of questions). A further 37% of respondents referred to a specific type of counselling or specific trainee issues or problems that required counselling:

- *Substance abuse counselling, addiction counselling, drugs misuse(all aspects e.g. waiting results of HIV test, drug related deaths)* (28%)
- *Dysfunctional family backgrounds, severe domestic problems, lack of adequate support system in the home, traumatic home life* (23%)
- *Teenage pregnancy, crisis pregnancy, lone parents and increased teenage sexuality* (9%)
- *Coping with learning difficulties* (9%)
- *Deficits in personal, interpersonal & social skills, social competence and self-esteem* (8%)
- *Personal relationship counselling* (3%)
- *Bereavement counselling* (3%)²

In all 88% of respondents referred to the need for some sort of counselling for trainees, whether counselling in general or counselling for a specific type of problem, for their early school leaver clients.

¹ Not all respondents answered every question. For the purpose of comparability, unless otherwise stated, all percentages are based on the full sample of 65

² Percentages sum to more than 37% because some respondents mentioned more than one type of counselling.

3.2 Need for Psychological Services

Just under two-thirds (66%) of respondents mentioned the need for psychological services. 32% mentioned the need for psychological services generally; the remaining 34% referred to it in relation to specific trainee issues:

- *Professional help for trainees with severe emotional/ behavioural difficulties, offending behaviour problems, aggressive, threatening and violent behaviour, anti-social behaviour, behaviour malfunction* (25%)
- *Psychological services for clients who have suffered physical, sexual & emotional abuse* (11%)
- *Suicide attempts and severe depression* (8%).

3.3 Need for Vocational Guidance

The need for Vocational Guidance for early-school leaver clients emerged in 35% of responses. Once more respondents referred to this requirement both generally and specifically. 29% referred to vocational guidance in a broad sense; specific requirements of the early school leaver client group were expressed by 6%. These included:

- *Ongoing need for vocational guidance particularly in the booming economy where trainees can easily get jobs, but may not retain them, and come looking for other opportunities;*
- *Guidance for young travellers who are willing and able to go into employment outside of their community;*
- *There is a great need to have a Guidance Counsellor. This need is borne out by the fact that trainees are of mixed ability and it is important to match the needs of the trainee with the needs of the employer.*

3.4 Overview of Needs

26% of respondents mentioned all three main categories of need (counselling, guidance and psychological services), 43% mentioned two categories and 25% mentioned only one. Over three-quarters of those who mentioned two categories named the needs for counselling and the need for psychological services, the remainder referring to the need for both counselling and vocational guidance.

Figure 1 – Perceived Needs for Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services

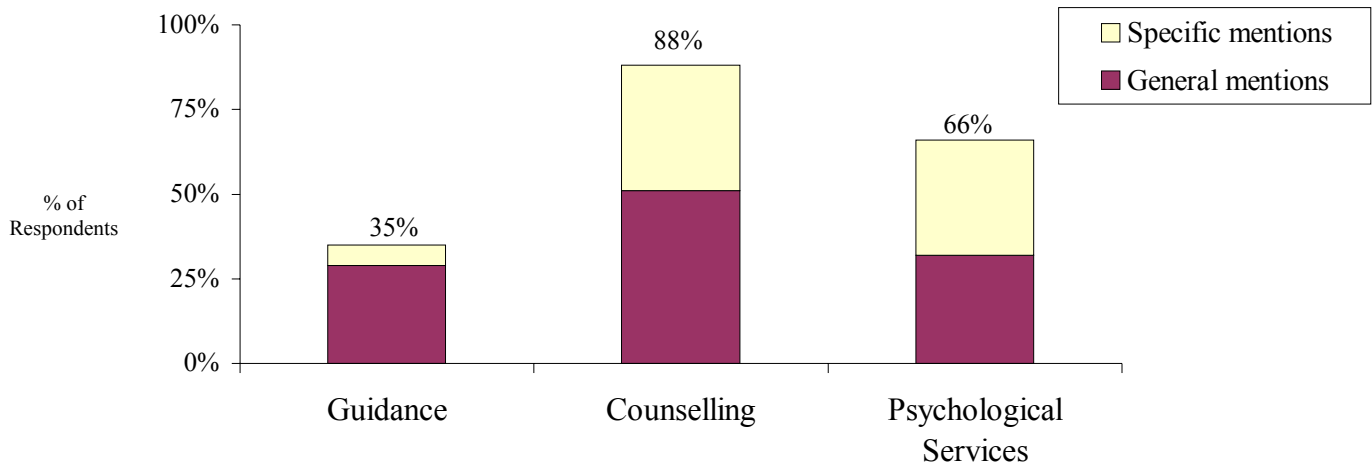


Figure 1 shows the needs expressed by respondents for guidance, counselling and psychological services. There is a clear need for counselling for trainees, with nearly 90% of respondents referring to it either generally or specifically. The levels of general mentions, may indicate a basic underlying need in Youthreach and similar programmes for guidance, counselling and psychological service – again the need for trainee counselling is most prevalent, with guidance and psychological services at about the same level. Specific mentions refer to particular forms of guidance, counselling or psychological services identified by the respondents (examples are cited in sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3).

4. DESIRED RESPONSES TO PERCEIVED NEEDS FOR GUIDANCE, COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Respondents were then asked how they **would like to have responded** to these needs. The responses can be divided into three broad categories – referral services, training for existing staff and access to a centre-based/full-time counsellor.

4.1 Psychological Referral Services

The need for an **improvement in the provision of psychological referral services for trainees** was evident in 45% of responses. Respondents would like to respond to trainees' needs by having real and easy access to professionals/experts in specialised areas. They could then refer trainees with more '*pronounced*', '*deep-seated*' and '*specialised*' problems and difficulties to such '*expert practitioners*'. A common issue in regard to referral was the need for prompt action by such a service:

- *We need access to immediate referral*
- *Need to be able to draw on professionals when required*
- *Existing services are difficult to access.*

Respondents also want to be involved in the process and to be provided with feedback and progress reports; they want '*official liaison and case conferences with the services regarding our trainees*'.

4.2 Training for Existing Staff

The need for **staff training in basic/frontline guidance and counselling skills** for those '*working on the ground in each centre*', was a favoured response to trainee needs for 35% of respondents. Respondents drew attention to their situation as '*first point of contact with the trainees on a daily basis*' which provides the ideal opportunity for '*recognising and dealing with problems that don't require professional help*'. Staff of YOUTHREACH centres also require '*sufficient training to recognise those most at risk*'. One respondent raised the more practical issue of providing relief workers to enable full-time workers to attend guidance and counselling training. As one respondent summed up:

'We need staff training so that individual staff members feel competent and capable'

4.3 Access to a Centre-based Counsellor

In response to the needs of their trainees, 35% of respondents would like the facility of either a **centre-based counsellor, or a full-time counsellor who would provide continuity of service**. Such a counsellor would need to be *'centre –friendly'* and be seen as an integral part of the centre team. In this situation the *'trainees can build up a regular on-going relationship with the counsellor – a full and fruitful relationship'*. Where the counsellor is not available full-time, they should be available on a regular basis and *'the same counsellor available at short notice in crisis situations'*. It would be ideal to have a *'full-time counsellor to talk and listen to trainees on a daily basis where necessary'*, however failing this provision, centres need access to a counsellor on a regular basis, who is familiar to both staff and trainees.

4.4 Other Desired Responses to Trainee Needs

Other ways of responding to the guidance, counselling and psychological needs of trainees included the provision of vocational guidance (suggested by 8% of respondents). There is a need to prepare trainees for 'Life after Youthreach' as many *'get quite dependent on the safe environment'*. Trainees require guidance towards a return to education, further education or into employment. The introduction of new elements into the programme e.g. life skills, assertiveness, improving self-esteem and social network mapping ('new elements' mentioned by 5% of respondents) was also suggested, and links into the need for guidance within Youthreach.

Outreach workers, improving community networks/links with other agencies, and assessment of trainees before entering the programme were also suggested as desired methods of response to trainees' guidance, counselling and psychological needs.

5. CURRENT RESPONSE TO THE PERCEIVED NEEDS OF TRAINEES

Based on their responses to the first question on needs of trainees, the centre managers/co-ordinators were asked how they have responded to these needs. Again the categories of psychological referral services, access to a counsellor, and training for staff emerge. In addition, the modal category for answers to how staff have responded to the guidance, counselling and psychological needs of trainees comes under the heading of *'staff do their best'*

5.1 *'Staff do their Best'*

Almost one third of respondents (32%) respond to trainees' needs *'as best we can'*, and by *'using our limited resources and hoping for the best'*. Most of these staff are not trained in guidance or counselling skills. They respond to trainee needs in the following ways:

- *On an informal basis using the existing staff who are not trained;*
- *Staff try and advise and prevent problems using their own knowledge;*
- *Staff with considerable experience, own experience and wisdom.*

Though not officially trained many of these staff are already using skills involved in frontline guidance and counselling. However, what is very evident from their responses to this question is the personal cost to staff of responding to trainee needs in this way:

- *Lots of 'blood, sweat and tears' in one-to-ones with co-ordinator and staff;*
- *Individual staff and co-ordinator have dealt with a wide range of problems at the expense of other tasks and at great personal, emotional and health costs for staff;*
- *By overstressing ourselves – staff visits in the evenings and at weekends – it is only through these committed long-term staff that we are able to respond at all.*

5.2 Access to a Counsellor

Nearly one third (29%) of respondents address trainee needs through providing **access to a counsellor**³, either a trained counsellor/psychologist as part of the existing staff, or a counsellor who attends the centre for certain hours each week. The number of hours stated by the respondents in the latter case ranges from 3 ½ to 12 hours per week. Counselling services offered in response to trainees' needs vary from one-to-one counselling, to small group counselling to personal development courses run by counsellors.

³ These counsellors are funded mainly from the Youthreach teaching/training budget i.e. from Youthreach pay allocation.

5.3 Psychological Referral Services

Overall, 41% of respondents indicated **referral to, and liaison with professional psychological services** as a method used to respond to trainees needs. Although this would seem to be the modal answer category for this question, there was clearly two types of answers within this broad response: referral to and liaison with professional services (26% of respondents) and referral to and liaison with professional services which proved unsatisfactory (15%). Because of the qualitative difference, these categories will be treated separately.

26% of respondents have liased with professional services such as the Health Board, Social Workers and Psychologists, the Gardai, and outside agencies such as STEPS and ACCORD, in response to their trainees' needs. Respondents report having *'a good database of outside agencies, who we avail of when necessary'* and use of professional services by trainees being *'encouraged and facilitated, with meetings with staff where possible, progress reports and on-course problems notified'*.

On the other hand for the additional 15%, experience of referral to psychological services was not as positive. As before, access to these services is the main issue. Respondents report spending *'a long time on the phone trying to access these services'*, and having *'limited access to the Health Board services, it's very unsatisfactory'*. One respondent recounted a situation where the waiting period was just too long: *'we tried to use the psychological service of the Department of Education, but the waiting period was too long and the trainee left'*.

5.4 Staff Training

14% of respondents indicated that their staff have had or are currently involved in **training in frontline or basic counselling skills**. This training included: basic introduction to counselling skills, introduction to psychology of counselling, front-line counselling and support skills, and training and seminars by outside speakers on grief and bereavement, drug awareness etc.

5.5 Other Responses

Only 2 respondents indicated that any sort of **career/vocational guidance** was provided in response to their trainees' needs. Other examples of responses to trainees needs are:

- Giving each staff member responsibility for 3 trainees

- Developing links with the families to further understand the problems of the young people involved;
- The introduction of a range of modules in to the programme e.g. the 'Copping On' programme and 'Drug Awareness Week'.

In summary, the Youthreach centres have responded to needs by falling back on their own resources, referral to a counsellor and to professional services. Experience of referral to and liaison with professional psychological services is very mixed and mainly a problem of access.

6. CURRENT ACCESS TO GUIDANCE, COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Managers and co-ordinators were asked whether they had access to guidance, counselling and psychological services to address the needs of trainees. They were then asked to describe the details of the provision – whether provided by a member of staff or an outside agency, and whether delivered on- or off-site.

43% of respondents reported that their centres have access to guidance, counselling or psychological services at present to address the personal needs of course participants. The question reads ‘Has your centre /workshop access to guidance, counselling or psychological services at present to address the personal needs of course participants?’. If the answer to this question were ‘No’ then respondents were supposed to skip the next section asking for details of the provision. Bearing this in mind, it is not clear whether 43% of respondents have access to *some level of guidance, counselling and psychological services* for course participants, or whether 43% consider they have access to guidance, counselling or psychological services at present sufficient to *address the personal needs of course participants*. Some respondents went on to answer the next question, while answering ‘No’ at this question, while others who answered ‘Yes’, did not reply to subsequent related questions. Because of the low response rate to this section of the questionnaire, all responses have been counted regardless of previous answers. Note that results need to be assessed carefully and any conclusions must be extremely cautious. For 29% of respondents⁴ the access to counselling, guidance and psychological services is through a member of staff –made up of 26% part-time and 2% full-time. 17% of respondents access these services through another agency.

⁴ Since some respondents to this question answered ‘no’ to the preceding ‘filter’ question (and therefore should have skipped the rest of the section), while others who answered ‘yes’ to the filter question, failed to give an answer, percentages are again based on the full sample of 65.

7. DELIVERY OF SERVICES - ONSITE AND OFFSITE

Co-ordinators and Managers were asked to examine the value of onsite and offsite delivery of guidance, counselling and psychological services vis-à-vis their current experience.

7.1 Onsite Delivery of Services

Although only 9% of respondents indicated that the service from another agency was delivered onsite and 8% indicated a combination of onsite and offsite, 24% of respondents answered the question on the **strengths and weaknesses of onsite delivery** of services. However, whether required to answer the question or not, all responses to this question have been treated as equally valid. Nearly 90% of those who gave an opinion (15 respondents answered this question) identified strengths of onsite delivery. Strengths in order of importance were:

- Accessibility of the services – *as the need arises the situation can be dealt with;*
- Counsellor/ service provider as a team member – *very important from trainees point of view, takes the stigma out of attending, less threatening for trainees;*
- Feedback – *Staff are aware of what is going on and have the opportunity to meet and liaise with counsellors;*
- No transport or venue problems.

Just under half identified weaknesses. However the majority of these stemmed from a lack of adequate resources in terms of physical space and time:

- Lack of a suitable room – *availability of a private, confidential place;*
- Lack of time – *too little time to see each trainee, don't get to deal with everyone.*

One respondent felt that if the service was delivered onsite, but managed offsite by the psychological service, it could *'leave an element of it being removed from the centre, and may leave other staff feeling undervalued'*.

7.2 Offsite Delivery of Services

Those whose services were delivered **offsite** were asked to identify **strengths and weaknesses**. Again the numbers answering this question, exceeds those who indicated previously that the services were delivered either wholly offsite (3%), or in a combination of offsite and onsite delivery (8%). 25% of respondents answered this question; again due to the small numbers answering this question, all responses will be treated as equally valid.

In contrast to the opinions on onsite delivery, just under half (47%) the respondents to this question (17 respondents answered this question) identified strengths of offsite delivery, while approximately 90% identified weaknesses. The main strength identified was that of confidentiality of the service: other trainees don't need to know about the visits; those who are upset can go home without other trainees knowing. The most cited weakness of offsite service delivery was the fact that the service was considered remote and separate to the centre – there is less liaison with personnel, and centre staff and trainees do not get to know the personnel involved; it is not part of an integrated service. Slightly less cited were the problems experienced in relation to accessing the relevant services – most of the waiting lists are very long and sometimes the trainees have left the centre by the time they are called. Centre staff have also experienced problems getting feedback when service delivery is offsite. Trainees are reluctant to visit offsite services as this *'labels them as needing outside help'*.

7.3 Combination of Onsite and Offsite Delivery of Services

Only 14% of respondents answered the question on the **strengths and weaknesses of onsite and offsite combination of service delivery**. Again this fails to tally with the number of respondents who claimed a combination of on and offsite delivery of services (8%), but again all responses are treated as equally valid. Approximately equal numbers of respondents identified strengths and weaknesses. The strengths seen in the combination of off and onsite delivery include: onsite delivery is given by those sensitive to the trainee's needs; the onsite deliverer can *'bring the trainee to the realisation that they need further professional counselling'*; and the combination of deliveries allows *'a response tailored to the individual in a time scale that is suitable'*. On the negative side, staff found it hard to keep track of trainees attending outside appointments, and the outside services are often only available to trainees with more severe problems. Table 2 shows a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of each type of delivery.

Table 2: Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses of Onsite, Offsite and Combination Service Delivery

Delivery	Strengths	Weaknesses
Onsite	Accessibility Service Provider as team member Availability of Feedback No transport/venue problems	Lack of suitable room Lack of time to deal with every trainee
Offsite	Confidentiality	Remote and separate to centre Problems with access and feedback Labels trainees as needing help
Combination	Onsite delivery by those sensitive to trainee needs Response tailored to the individual	Difficult to keep track of trainees appointments Outside help only available to those with severe problems

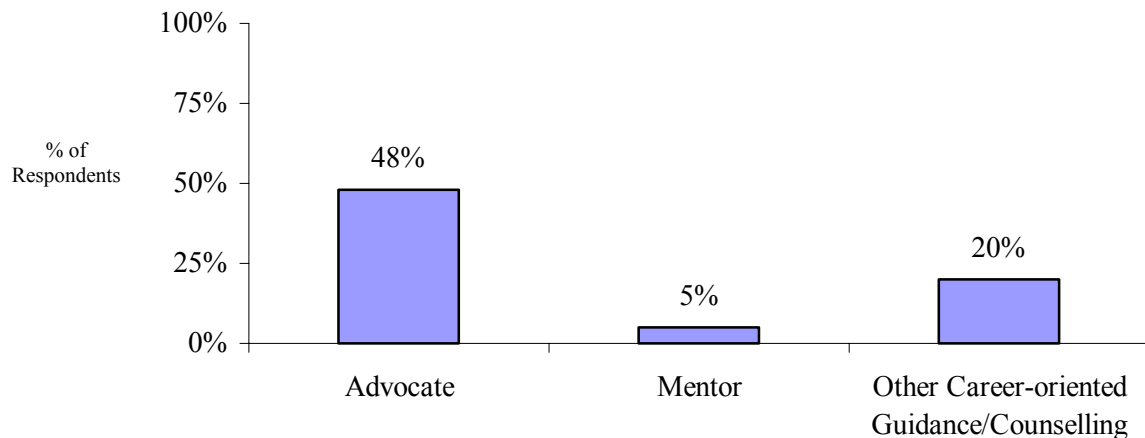
8. ADVOCATES, MENTORS, AND OTHER CAREER-ORIENTED COUNSELLING/GUIDANCE SUPPORT

The next section of the questionnaire dealt with vocational guidance and counselling in particular access to advocates, mentors and other career-oriented counselling/guidance support.

Respondents were asked sources of funding, whether the support was relevant or effective, and suggestions for improvement or replacement.

8.1 Advocates

Figure 2 Access to Advocates, Mentors and Other Career-oriented Guidance/Counselling



Nearly half of the respondents (48%) have access to an advocate –all of these advocates funded by FÁS. A further two respondents were allocated an advocate ‘in theory’ but have never met him/her; the service has never been available to their centre in reality. 61% of those who have access to an advocate (31 have access) felt the support of the advocate was relevant and effective, the remainder did not feel the support was relevant or effective, or they failed to respond to this question (23% not relevant or effective, 16% non-response). The advocate is deemed as relevant ‘*but under-resourced*’, and relevant and effective ‘*but only in career guidance and less serious personal problems requiring counselling*’. The main improvement suggested for the advocate service is an increase in time spent in and availability to each centre (by almost one third of those who have access to an advocate). Other miscellaneous suggestions included that local people and youth workers, who are ‘*familiar with the trainees’ needs*’ and ideally full-time, staff the service, or that an outreach worker be put in place of the advocate. 23% of those with access to an advocate are in favour of the service being replaced. However, when asked what the service should be replaced with, suggestions revealed a need for the service to be extended and expanded rather than replaced. Proposals include that the advocate should

be a full-time staff member, and that they should be based locally and operating in conjunction with local agencies such as the LES. Others suggested that the advocates require more time per centre as the previous suggestions for improvement of the service have also indicated.

8.2 Mentors

5% of respondents (3 centres) have access to a mentor, funded by the Stepahead project, or the local youth service in collaboration with Youthstart. Only one of the three respondents with access to a mentor answered the question on the relevance and effectiveness of service – the answer was positive. The Mentor service was also given a positive response in suggestions for improvement – it needs support from FÁS to continue and it could be improved by mainstreaming the project. Both of the respondents with access to a mentor who answered this question were against the service being replaced.

8.3 Other Career-oriented Counselling/Guidance Support

20% of respondents have access to some other career oriented counselling/guidance support – these supports include the local youth service, in-house jobskills person, liaison with a number of agencies including the Local Employment Service and Victim Support, and access to guidance and counselling through Linked Work Experience person. 85% of those with access to one of these other service felt they were both relevant and effective (15% non-response), though some qualified their answers with comments such as relevant *'if ad-hoc'* and *'as far as it goes'*. Suggestions for improvement were mainly centred on the need for more time allocation and co-ordinated links with other agencies. Almost one third of those with access to some other career oriented counselling/guidance felt it could be replaced /augmented. Suggestions for this included that the counselling/guidance service should be linked to the workshop, the service should be extended, and trainees should be seen with only small time intervals between appointments.

Some respondents made general suggestions that mirrored the needs expressed in the responses to the first question – mainly the need for better access to referral, and the need for a full-time counsellor in each centre.

9. GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING QUALIFICATIONS/TRAINING OF STAFF

Respondents were asked whether any of the staff of their centre were qualified or trained in counselling or guidance.

More than half the respondents (52%) reported that none of their staff were qualified or trained in guidance or counselling. Table 3 shows the type and level of the qualifications/training of Youthreach centres.

Table 3 Guidance and Counselling Qualifications/Training of Youthreach Staff

TYPE AND LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION	% of Respondents	No. of Centres
No staff qualified in Guidance or Counselling	52%	34
Certificate in Counselling	20%	13
Diploma in Counselling	12%	8
M.Sc. in Counselling	12%	8
Other specific counselling courses	9%	6
General counselling – no standard given	3%	2
Certification in Reality Therapy	3%	2
Post-graduate diploma in Guidance and Counselling ...	2%	1

*Numbers sum to more than 65 because some centres have more than one staff member with guidance and counselling qualifications.

Cross-analysis of the data with previous sections, reveals that over one quarter of the respondents lack staff qualified in guidance or counselling and also lack access to an advocate, mentor or other career oriented counselling/guidance support. Exactly one-fifth of respondents (13 centres) have **not** got *‘access to guidance, counselling or psychological services at present to address the personal needs of course participants’* (Q2), have **no** access to an advocate, no access to a mentor, no access to any other career oriented counselling/guidance and have **no** staff qualified in the area of guidance and counselling.

10. SUGGESTIONS FOR A NEW SERVICE

The final section of the questionnaire referred to how a hypothetical new service should be integrated with existing resources and also how a new service should be provided.

10.1 Integration of Hypothetical New Service and Existing Services

When asked how a new service could most effectively work with existing services and supports, the most important point cited was that the new service should adopt an integrated team approach to guidance and counselling (25% of respondents). The network of services formed should recognise that *'guidance can come from all staff in an integrated approach with the counsellor having special skills in certain fields'*; the new *'inter agency approach to delivering services'* should have *'more links with staff in workshops'*. The notion of a team approach also extended to access to referral: *'an effective referral network must be put in place with regular consultation between all services'*. Any new service should work hand in hand with existing services.

8% of respondents pointed to **access to referral services** as being crucial to the working of any new service. Centres need speedy access to services. Unless referral can be *'fairly immediate, trainees may drop out without availing of the specialist help'*. The outside agencies need to understand the nature of trainee and family problems within Youthreach – these are usually of a crisis nature and therefore require immediate attention. The belief that current provision should be built upon and enhanced rather than replaced was held by 6% of respondents: *'provision should be expanded and enhanced, add-on elements are required'*.

Other respondents drew attention to the fact that *any* **additional resources** would be welcome (5%) and also that whatever provision was made should be on a full-time basis (5%).

'An expert available on a given day is of no value as problems occur any time and need to be addressed at that time'

10.2 Method of Providing Hypothetical New Service

The same picture is evident in answer to the question on how the new service should be provided in the area. The modal response was **access to specialist services** (26% of respondents) *'provision of an organised, comprehensive, easily accessed, referral network including access to a clinical*

psychologist, *'the service needs to be available to everyone and not stigmatised'*. 20% of the sample favoured **training for existing staff** – again responses were along the same lines as 'need for staff training' responses to previous questions. Almost one fifth of the sample (18%) felt that whatever the response it should be **locally provided** and a shared facility between centres. The service needs to be locally provided so that *'personnel have a familiarity with the needs of the trainees and a sympathy with the circumstances in which they find themselves'*.

Again almost one fifth of the sample (17%) felt the new service should provide a **full-time/familiar counsellor** to each centre. Again reasons for a full-time counsellor are similar to those cited previously e.g. *'supports need to be incorporated into the timetable so that personnel get to know our young people and therefore, trust and confidence in them is increased'*. A further 8% shared the view that existing provision should be enhanced and improved upon.

10.3 Collaborative Networks of Centres

69% of respondents' workshops belonged to some sort of network or cluster. 93% of those belonging to a network or cluster could envisage collaborating with these clusters. Overall 80% of the sample could envisage working in a cluster with other centres - therefore some of those who did not belong to any sort of formal grouping of centres would be willing to collaborate with others even so. Again the vast majority of these respondents see collaboration with other centres with a view to employing a counsellor between them (51% of respondents). Other suggestions for cluster collaboration include the opportunity to share best practice and research, sharing training, and support groups for both trainees and instructors.

11. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS

Finally respondents were asked to make any additional comments on the subject of the allocation of the guidance resources. The most common comments were in relation to issues to be taken into account when employing counsellors either full-time or between centres:

- *There should be a choice of male or female counsellor particularly for sexual abuse victims, therefore it may be preferable to have 2 counsellors between 6 centres which would also allow for relationship difficulties;*
- *Counselling needs to include a family dynamic;*
- *Staff should also have access to a counsellor who is not working with the trainees;*
- *The guidance and counselling service must take into account the special problems that travellers experience (discrimination etc.);*
- *The counselling service must be an integral part of the system and not a sort of adjunct that is not closely related to our systems of operation;*
- *Vital that a minimum standard of service be defined and that the task force should try to ensure each centre is in a position to avail of this service.*

Other respondents took the opportunity to welcome the initiative, and emphasised the need for such a service. The need for a counsellor onsite and access to a reliable referral service was also reiterated in this section of the questionnaire. Miscellaneous comments included: the need for a directory of professional help and services, the need for specialist numeracy and literacy skills, and the need for giving credit to keywork staff.

12. CONCLUSIONS

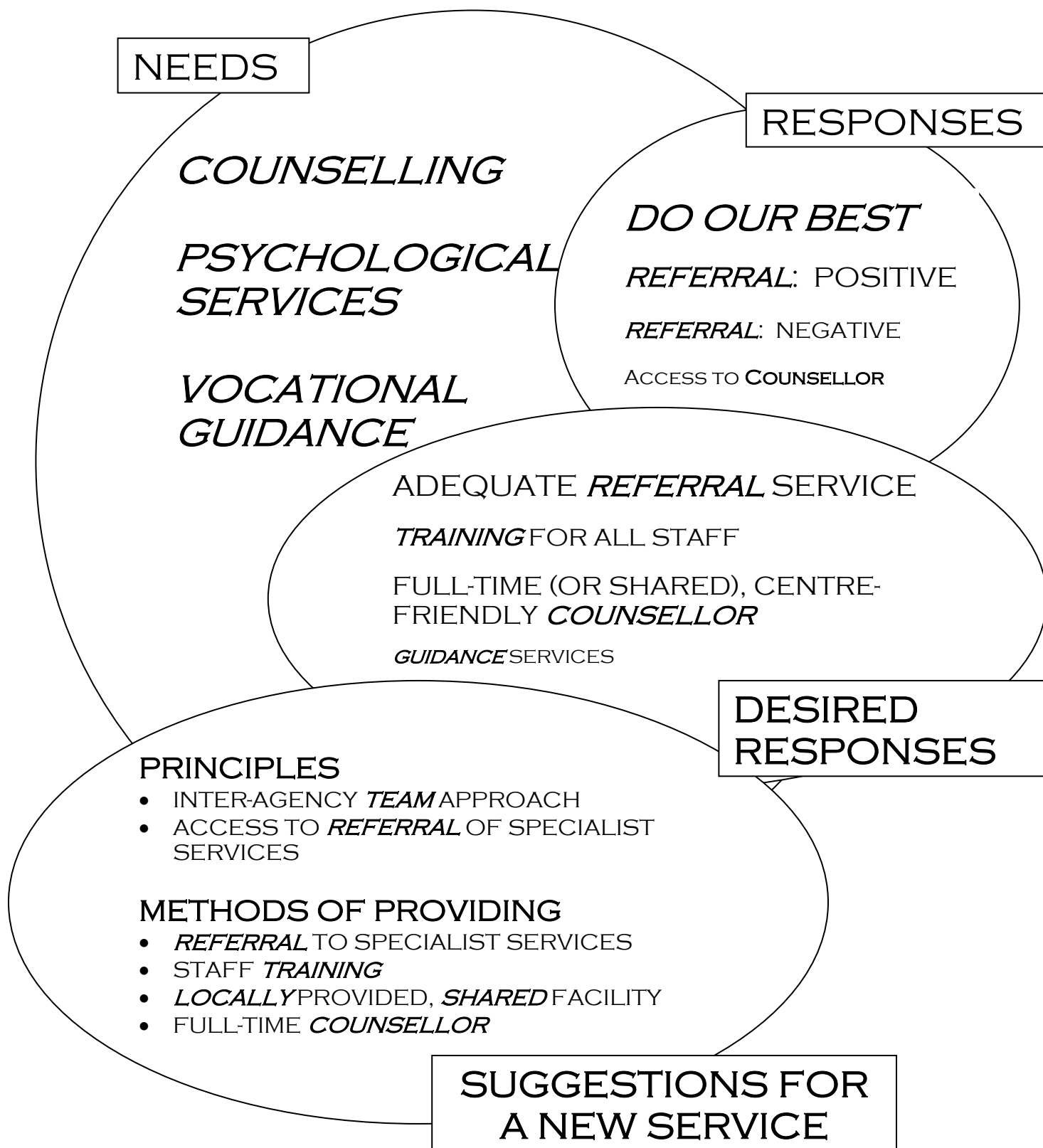
The purpose of this piece of research was to identify the different kinds of guidance, counselling and psychological services which already operate in Youthreach centres, Community Training Workshops, and Senior Traveller Training Workshops, but also to consult the different types of centre on the way any new service should be put in place. Although it was later decided to allocate the new provision of funds on the basis of proposals from clusters of centres, the data from the research still provides us with an insight into the needs of the centres for guidance, counselling and psychological services, and both the present responses and the desired responses to those needs. It also provides opinion and views on a ‘hypothetical new service’ as expressed by centre managers and co-ordinators themselves.

Figure 3 summarises the main research results in a diagrammatic form. As we move from needs, to responses, to desired responses and finally to suggestions for the hypothetical new service, it is clear that there are common themes running through the respondents’ views. These themes then fit together to form an integrated model of guidance, counselling and psychological service provision. There is no simple solution to addressing the needs of Youthreach trainees in this area. However from the responses, there are clearly a number of ways in which provision for Youthreach trainees can be improved. Each of these strands of provision then combines to form the integrated approach, evident in suggestions for the new service.

The needs of trainees, as expressed by the managers and co-ordinators, were for counselling for trainees, adequate referral to psychological services, and vocational guidance. At present the centres are responding to these needs by ‘doing their best’, falling back on their own limited resources of staff and personal time, and also referring trainees to other specialist services, although experience of referral is mixed. The majority of respondents who referred trainees to other services report positively on both the availability of services and relationships with personnel. However, for a little over one-third of users, their experience is less positive, the problem mainly being one of access. Nearly 30% of respondents presently provide access to a counsellor.

Desired responses to the needs of trainees are led by adequate referral to specialist and psychological services for all trainees, as they require it. The need for such referral services has been expressed by two-thirds of the respondents; the mixed experience of the same service was highlighted by a total of 41%. 45% of respondents have referred to access to referral services as a desired response to the needs of trainees. Again, the main issue is access – trainees need ‘*professionals when required*’, and access

Figure 3 – Model of Needs, Responses, Desired Responses and Suggestions for a New Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Service for Youthreach, CTW and STT Centres



to *'immediate referral'*. Respondents also want to be more actively involved in the referral process; they need feedback on what is happening with the trainee and also want to attend case conferences.

Over one-third of respondents would like to respond to trainee needs by the provision of training for all frontline staff and keyworkers in guidance and counselling skills. Nearly 90% of respondents referred to the need for counselling for trainees, and almost one-third of centres respond to trainee needs through the efforts of existing, sometimes untrained, staff. Training for staff in frontline guidance and counselling skills will not fulfil all the guidance and counselling needs of trainees, but will help staff recognise and deal with less serious problems, and also identify their own boundaries in dealing with those needing more specialist help. In fact over half those favouring training for staff as a response to needs, mentioned it in combination with access to referral services. The fact that so many centres are already falling back on their own personnel, whether trained or untrained, to deal with sometimes complex trainee issues, supports this need for staff training. Nearly half the centres have staff who possess some training in guidance or counselling, ranging from basic counselling courses to Masters level courses. This also supports the need for staff training in this area.

Many centres feel the answer to trainee needs lies in the employment of a counsellor, ideally full-time but possibly shared between centres, so that trainees could avail of onsite access to a 'centre-friendly' and familiar counsellor. Again, the 'counselling thread' is evident throughout the answers to previous questions: nearly 90% referred to the need for counselling; already nearly 30% are responding to trainee needs through the medium of a counsellor. However, some are existing staff members who have other responsibilities within the centre. Allocation of counselling hours varies and there is a wide range of types of provision. Tied in with this viewpoint, are the respondents' views on the delivery of services. By far the most favoured method was onsite delivery of services, and even in the evaluation of a 'combination of onsite and offsite delivery', the strengths mainly referred to the onsite delivery while the weaknesses referred to offsite delivery. Such onsite delivery would more than likely be in the form of a centre counsellor whether part-time or full-time. The need for access to qualified counsellors also underlies some of evaluations of the advocate and other career-oriented guidance services – which were seen as relevant and effective but only *'for career guidance and less serious problems'*.

Other desired responses to trainee needs include the provision of a guidance service to prepare trainees for life after Youthreach and develop new aspects of the programme (8% of respondents). This is again linked to the need for vocational guidance expressed by approximately one-third of respondents.

Almost half the respondents had access to an advocate, who was deemed *'relevant to career guidance'*

and trainee progression, but lacking in sufficient time for each centre. 20% of respondents had access to some other sort of career-oriented guidance/counselling support. This was again seen as relevant and effective for the service it provided - *'in as far as it goes'*. In so far as they fulfil the vocational guidance function they are perceived as both relevant and effective; however trainees also have the need for counselling and other specialist services.

Respondents' views on the 'hypothetical new service' bring together the threads running through the previous answers to form an integrated model of service. The principles emerging from respondents' views on how any new service would integrate with existing provision centre on an integrated team approach to responding to needs, a view already evident in the combination of answers given by respondents. Such an arrangement would incorporate all the main suggestions/themes running through the answers – real access to referral services, use of staff at the frontline of counselling and guidance, and access to either a full-time or shared counsellor to deliver services onsite. Adequate access to referral services was stressed as being crucial to the operation of any new programme/service, a theme common to all areas of figure 3. Some respondents added that any additional resources are welcome, reflecting the fact that one fifth of the centres lack access to guidance, counselling and psychological services to address trainee needs, also lack access to an Advocate, Mentor or other career-oriented guidance/counselling, and had no staff qualified or trained in the guidance or counselling area.

The methods of providing the 'new service' again reiterate what has already been said – access to adequate referral to psychological services, staff training, full-time or shared counsellor – all to be provided in a locally based team approach. This team approach is supported by the fact that 80% of the centres could envisage working together with other centres. Four out of every five centres are willing to work in collaboration with others to fulfil the guidance, counselling and psychological service needs of each trainee, though not all of these actually belong to established clusters of centres.

REFERENCES

Harper, W.M. (1971) *Statistics*, London: Macdonalds and Evans Ltd.

Report of Focus Group to Guidance Task Force, 1998

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Additional Allocation of Guidance Resources

Questionnaire

Name of Workshop/Centre _____

1. In general, and with particular reference to the last two years, please describe

(a) the need for guidance, counselling and psychological services for your early school leaver clients _____

(b) how you would have liked to respond to these needs _____

(c) how you have responded to these needs _____

2. Has your Centre/Workshop access to guidance, counselling or psychological services at present to address the personal needs of course participants? (YES/NO) _____

3. If the answer to 2 is YES, is this

(a) through a member of your staff? (YES/NO) _____

- If so, how is this funded? _____

- Are the services part-time or full-time? _____

(b) through another agency? (YES/NO) _____

If YES, is this for a set number of hours? _____ If so, how many? _____

- Is this adequate for the needs you encounter? _____
- Are the services delivered onsite or offsite? On _____ Off _____
- If the services are delivered **onsite**, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the arrangement?

- If the services are delivered **offsite**, what are the strengths and weaknesses? _____

3.2 If a combination of onsite and offsite is available,

(a) please describe the arrangement _____

(b) please outline the strengths and weaknesses _____

4. Does your Workshop/Centre have access to the services of

(a) Advocate? YES _____ NO _____

(b) Mentor ? YES _____ NO _____

(c) Other career-oriented Counselling/Guidance support? YES _____ NO _____

Please describe briefly, including source of funding if any. _____

(d) Is this support relevant/effective? _____

- How might it be improved?

- Should it be replaced? _____ If yes, how and with what? _____

5. If you have guidance, counselling or psychological services, and/or the support of an Advocate, a Mentor or other, how can the new service most effectively work with these services or supports? _____

6. Are any of your staff qualified or trained in counselling or guidance? (YES/NO) _____

7. If the answer to 6 is YES,
(a) in which areas? _____

(b) to what standard (may include training in non-formal techniques)? _____

8. How, in your opinion, should the new service be provided in your area?

9. Is your Centre/Workshop a member of a network or cluster? (YES/NO) _____

- If so, please describe _____

- Can you envisage collaborating within this network/cluster in the delivery of the new service? (YES/NO) _____ If so, how? _____

NOTE: as an example of collaboration, one full-time counsellor might be employed to work with three workshops/centres in a given area. Other examples are invited.

10. **Any other comments** _____

Thank you for your time. Please return to

Fionnuala Scott
CDU, Sundrive Road, Dublin 12
as soon as possible.

Would you like to complete this survey by e-mail? If so, contact Fionnuala Scott at fionnuala.scott@cdu.cdvec.ie

To: All YOUTHREACH Co-ordinators, and Managers of Community Training Workshops and Senior Traveller Training Centres

Re: Additional Allocation of Guidance Resources

Dear Colleague

Arising from the Mid-term Review of EU Structural Funds 1994-9, a provision of £0.987m is being made available over the period 1998-9 for the development of a guidance, counselling and psychological service for early school leavers. The service will cater for trainees participating in YOUTHREACH in both VEC Centres and Community Training Workshops, and in Senior Traveller Training Centres.

The new measure is aimed at providing the additional supports needed to optimise trainee participation and benefit from the programmes. The Inter-Departmental Committee on Early School Leaving considers that the effective delivery of such a service is a complex matter requiring full examination, consultation and analysis. The new measure will embrace a number of strands:

- training in front-line counselling skills for staff on the programme
- access to specialist services for those with more severe problems, and referral to psychological services where appropriate.

A further key need has also been identified – to examine fully the extent to which access can be established to existing services (in education, training, health, and the private sector) in order to provide a coherent and cost effective service.

Several stages are involved in the process of consultation and analysis. A Task Force has been established representing the main strands of provision, including IACTO and the National Association of YOUTHREACH Co-ordinators. It convened in February. A focus group has been developing the themes and ideas which emerged from this first meeting, and is preparing proposals for its second meeting at the end of March.

A particular need has been identified for information on the different kinds of guidance, counselling and psychological services which already operate in the relevant programmes, and for the general opinions of practitioners on how new arrangements might be put in place, or existing ones made more effective. The attached questionnaire is part of this consultative process and is intended to establish a broad base of information.

Your co-operation is appreciated. We hope that the outcome will be an additional resource which will enhance the service which you currently offer to your participants.

Dermot Stokes, National Co-ordinator, YOUTHREACH (Education and Science)
Guss O'Connell, National Co-ordinator, YOUTHREACH (FAS)
Gerry Griffin, National Co-ordinator, Traveller Training Centres

Please return to:

Fionnuala Scott, YOUTHREACH National Co-ordinator's Office, Curriculum Development Unit, Sundrive Road, Dublin 12. Tel: 01-4535487; Fax: 4537659;
Email: fionnuala.scott@cdu.cdvec.ie

This form is available by email from the above, and may be completed and returned by email.