

**Comparative Analysis
of the Duties
of
Youthreach Staff**

- FINAL REPORT -

by

CHL CONSULTING COMPANY LTD.

to the

TEACHERS' UNION OF IRELAND

January, 2006

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CONTENTS

	Page No.
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 <i>Background to the Study.....</i>	<i>1</i>
1.2 <i>Terms of Reference</i>	<i>1</i>
1.3 <i>Methodology.....</i>	<i>2</i>
1.4 <i>Acknowledgements.....</i>	<i>3</i>
2. THE YOUTHREACH PROGRAMME	4
2.1 <i>History and Objectives</i>	<i>4</i>
2.2 <i>Participants</i>	<i>5</i>
2.3 <i>The Youthreach Programme.....</i>	<i>6</i>
2.4 <i>Staffing.....</i>	<i>10</i>
2.5 <i>Youthreach Centres</i>	<i>14</i>
2.6 <i>Current Developments</i>	<i>15</i>
3. EDUCATION SECTOR CONTEXT.....	16
3.1 <i>Legislative Developments</i>	<i>16</i>
3.2 <i>Policy Issues and Developments</i>	<i>18</i>
3.3 <i>Implications for Youthreach</i>	<i>20</i>
4. POSTS AND DUTIES OF FULL-TIME STAFF	22
4.1 <i>Terms and Conditions of Employment.....</i>	<i>22</i>
4.2 <i>Roles and Responsibilities of Co-ordinators.....</i>	<i>25</i>
4.3 <i>Roles and Responsibilities of Resource Persons</i>	<i>32</i>
5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.....	38
5.1 <i>Comparison with Senior Traveller Training Centres</i>	<i>38</i>
5.2 <i>Comparison with Vocational Schools.....</i>	<i>40</i>
5.3 <i>Concluding Comment</i>	<i>45</i>
6. CONCLUSIONS.....	47
7. APPENDICES	50
Appendix One	
<i>Evolution of Senior Traveller Training Centres</i>	<i>50</i>
Appendix Two	
<i>Comparison between Pay Scales for Teachers and Youthreach Staff.....</i>	<i>52</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Youthreach was launched jointly by the Ministers for Education and Labour in October, 1988. It was envisaged that it would be a two-year programme of education, training and work experience for unqualified early school leavers in the 15-18 years age group. The programme is an inter-departmental initiative of the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Department of Education and Science funds Youthreach centres managed by the Vocational Education Committees. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment funds a network of Community Training Centres through FÁS.

This study is concerned specifically with the Department of Education and Science/VEC element of Youthreach provision.

Youthreach was introduced initially as a temporary, experimental programme, and this status was reflected in the original staffing arrangements which were also temporary and short-term. However, by 1996, there were 57 centres in operation, and it was evident that there was a strong demand for the service. Now, in 2006, some 17 years after the programme commenced, there are 90 Youthreach centres around the country.

During the time that the Youthreach Programme has been running, there have been some improvements made to the terms and conditions of employment of staff. However, there continue to be areas of serious dissatisfaction among staff arising from Youthreach's origins as a temporary programme which was positioned very much outside the mainstream education system. A key issue is the status of the full-time staff employed in Youthreach centres i.e. the Co-ordinators and Resource Persons. The Teachers' Union of Ireland is seeking to address this dissatisfaction, and appointed CHL Consulting Company to conduct an independent study of the issues involved. We are pleased to present our findings and conclusions in this report.

1.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The overall purpose of the study is to make a detailed assessment of the work carried out by staff in Youthreach centres to determine whether or not the work in Youthreach is similar in nature and equal in value to the work being carried out in second level schools and Senior Traveller Training Centres.

In addressing this objective, the study examined the following subjects:

- The development, present status and future outlook for the Youthreach Programme, including its objectives and structure.

- The present terms and conditions of employment of Youthreach Co-ordinators, Resource Persons and teachers, including pay, allowances, pensions, status, working hours, leave entitlements etc.
- The evolution of the terms and conditions of employment of Youthreach staff, taking into account representations made by the TUI and responses to these, including the decision of the Arbitration Board in December 1998 and its subsequent implementation.
- A detailed review of and analysis of
 - the qualifications of Youthreach staff
 - the roles and responsibilities of Co-ordinators and Resource Persons
 - the duties, tasks and activities carried out by Youthreach staff.
- Comparison of all of the above with the positions of secondary teachers in vocational schools and teaching staff in Senior Traveller Training Centres.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The research for this study was largely conducted between March and May, 2005. It was subsequently updated to take into account the Productivity Agreement accepted by Youthreach Coordinators and Resource Persons following a ballot in October 2005, and also the Transitional Agreement reached in September, 2005, between the Unions, Department and Management on the Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act, 2003. During the main study period, the consultant team implemented an extensive programme of research, interviews and field visits. The study process involved:

- **Visits to Youthreach Centres:** the members of the team visited 12 centres around the country. The centres were selected with a view to obtaining a good cross-section of locations, size and type of centre. The twelve in question were in the following locations:
 - Ballymahon, Co. Longford
 - Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin
 - Coolock, Dublin
 - Dean St., Cork
 - Hospital, Co. Limerick
 - Leixlip, Co. Kildare
 - Navan, Co. Meath
 - New Ross, Co. Wexford
 - Roscrea, Co. Tipperary
 - Sligo Town
 - Tuam, Co. Galway
 - Wicklow Town.

- **Visits to other Centres:** the members of the team visited two Senior Traveller Training Centres, two second-level VEC schools, and a Community Training Centre for comparative purposes.
- **Survey of Youthreach Centres:** questionnaires were sent to all Youthreach centres to gather data to augment the study visits. The survey focused on the collection of quantitative profiling data including the number and type of staff, their qualifications, level of staff turnover, subjects and courses offered and progression of students. Responses were received from 68 centres, representing a response rate of 76%.
- **Consultations:** the team consulted with a number of individuals and organisations with responsibilities relating to Youthreach or with an involvement in education and training of relevance to the objectives of the study.

Those consulted included:

- the Teachers' Union of Ireland
 - the Department of Education and Science
 - National Youthreach Co-ordinator
 - Dublin Regional Youthreach Co-ordinator
 - National Co-ordinator of FÁS Community Training Centres
 - National Co-ordinator of Senior Traveller Training Centres
 - Association of VEC CEOs
 - Chair of the National Educational Welfare Board.
- **Review of Documentation:** the consultant team gathered and studied a large number of published and unpublished reports, papers and other documents of relevance to the subject. We also received detailed written comments from many of the centres that responded to the survey.

The inputs received from the five strands of research provided the team with a wealth of material to study and analyse. The findings of our analysis are presented in this report.

1.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the above summary of our study programme indicates, the consultant team relied heavily on the co-operation and inputs of a large number of individuals and organisations. We wish to record our sincere gratitude to all those who participated in and contributed to the study. Particular thanks are due to the staff in the Youthreach centres and other centres that we visited who accommodated us willingly despite the inconvenience to themselves.

2. THE YOUTHREACH PROGRAMME

2.1 HISTORY AND OBJECTIVES

Following its launch in October, 1998, Youthreach was introduced in 1989 as a programme of education, vocational training and work experience for unqualified early school leavers provided in an out-of-school setting. The programme is an inter-departmental initiative, and is part-funded by the European Social Fund. It is operated through a number of different strands: Youthreach Centres funded by the Department of Education and Science and managed by VECs; Community Training Centres funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and managed by FÁS; and Justice (Prison) Workshops funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and FÁS. A similar programme is operated for Travellers in a network of Senior Traveller Training Centres managed by VECs.

The Youthreach programme was established initially as a temporary, experimental programme. However, it is now in its seventeenth year and the number of Youthreach centres has expanded steadily to reach its present total of 90 spread throughout the country. Although there continues to be some uncertainty over the programme's long-term future, Youthreach centres now have a statutory footing having been designated as Centres for Education in September, 2004, under the Education Act, 1998.

The overall purpose of Youthreach is '*to provide participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to successfully make the transition to work and adult life.*'¹ The Department of Education and Science lists the following objectives for Youthreach on its web-site²:

- Personal and social development and increased self-esteem
- Second-chance education and introductory level training
- Promoting independence, personal autonomy and a pattern of lifelong learning
- Integration into further education and training opportunities and the labour market
- Certification relative to ability and career options
- Social inclusion.

These objectives are broadly consistent with those of second-chance education programmes elsewhere in the EU. The goal is to offer early school leavers who do not fit into the highly structured, mainstream school environment a second chance to obtain an education and qualifications in an alternative environment. The Youthreach programme is provided in '*out-of-school*' settings given that the majority of Youthreach students have been alienated from mainstream schools.

¹ 'Evaluation Report: Early School Leavers Provision', the European Social Fund Programme Evaluation Unit, Dublin, 1996.

² www.education.ie

2.2 PARTICIPANTS

The Department of Education and Science describes the eligibility criteria for Youthreach applicants on its website as follows:

- aged 15-20
- have left school early with either no qualifications or minimal qualification (e.g. have left school without sitting the Junior Certificate or have achieved less than 5 Grade Ds in the Junior Certificate examination)

While these criteria are descriptive of the main body of Youthreach students, some centres also target specific groups such as lone parents. The age range has also widened in practice: a report on early school leavers published by the National Economic and Social Forum in 2002³ expressed concern that there was a growing number of children under 15 attending Youthreach centres. During the course of our study, it became apparent that the actual age range of Youthreach students extends from 14 to 21 years. The difficulty at the lower end of the age range is the lack of other suitable alternatives. The raising of the school-leaving age to 16, and the associated possibility that the Youthreach minimum age will be raised to 16, will compound this problem.

Young people recruited to Youthreach typically suffer from economic and social disadvantage as well as educational disadvantage. Many experience severe problems in their homes and neighbourhoods. All have left, dropped out or have been excluded from mainstream schools and, almost without exception, they have become deeply alienated from schools and the formal education environment.

To some extent, the profile of Youthreach students has changed over time. The economic boom of recent years has resulted in a far greater availability of jobs, even for those with little educational qualification. Those young people who enter Youthreach therefore tend to be those who have difficulties obtaining employment due to personal and/or learning difficulties. A high proportion also have emotional problems. Furthermore, educational mainstreaming has led to a reduction in places in special schools, and this has contributed to a growth in the number of young people with special educational needs applying to Youthreach centres. The National Youthreach Co-ordinator estimates that 60% to 70% of Youthreach students have special educational needs, and this proportion rises to at least 80% if behavioural and emotional needs are included.

There is no doubt that the growth in the intensity of the problems with which Youthreach entrants present has made the work of Youthreach staff more difficult. Meeting the challenges imposed by the student group requires considerable skill, effort and commitment, and arguably more than is required of teaching staff in mainstream schools.

³ NESF: 'Early School Leavers', Forum Report No.24, 2002.

2.3 THE YOUTHREACH PROGRAMME

2.3.1 Structure

Youthreach was originally planned as a two-year programme, comprising a Foundation Year and a Progression Year. These are now described as phases since students may take more than a year to pass through either of them, depending on their learning skills and the courses they pursue.

- The Foundation Phase seeks to address learning difficulties, develop self confidence and build a range of competencies for further learning.
- The Progression Phase provides more specific development and learning through a range of educational, training and work experience options.

Over time, the Programme has evolved and students may spend up to two years in Foundation. Progression options within Youthreach may also be provided in the same centre or a nearby Youthreach Progression centre.

The Programme is operated on the basis of a 35-hour week over a 48-week/226 day year. This structure is based on an industrial training model, intended to prepare students for a working life, rather than an educational model. In contrast, the second level school year is 167 days long, while Senior Traveller Training Centres operate a 209 day year.

All of the Youthreach staff whom we met, and virtually all other persons whom we consulted, are strongly of the view that the Youthreach year is too long. The principal reasons advanced for this are:

- it is unreasonable (and unenforceable) to keep Youthreach students in their centres when their peers are all on holiday.
- the majority of curricula offered by Youthreach centres have assessments in May or early June, and much of the rest of the summer in Youthreach centres is filled in with activities of limited value.
- the centres are statutorily defined as centres for education and should not be used as a form of teenage crèche.

The length of the working day in Youthreach centres was also questioned by many. Their view is that a 35-hour week/7-hour day is too long and that it is very difficult for students in Youthreach's client group to maintain interest and concentration for that length of time. It would be possible to achieve the same learning goals in a shorter day of, say, 5-6 hours.

2.3.2 Programme Content

There has been some evolution in the content of the programme over the past ten years. The emphasis originally was on offering mainly practical subjects with the most popular certification options being NVCA and City & Guilds. FETAC modules

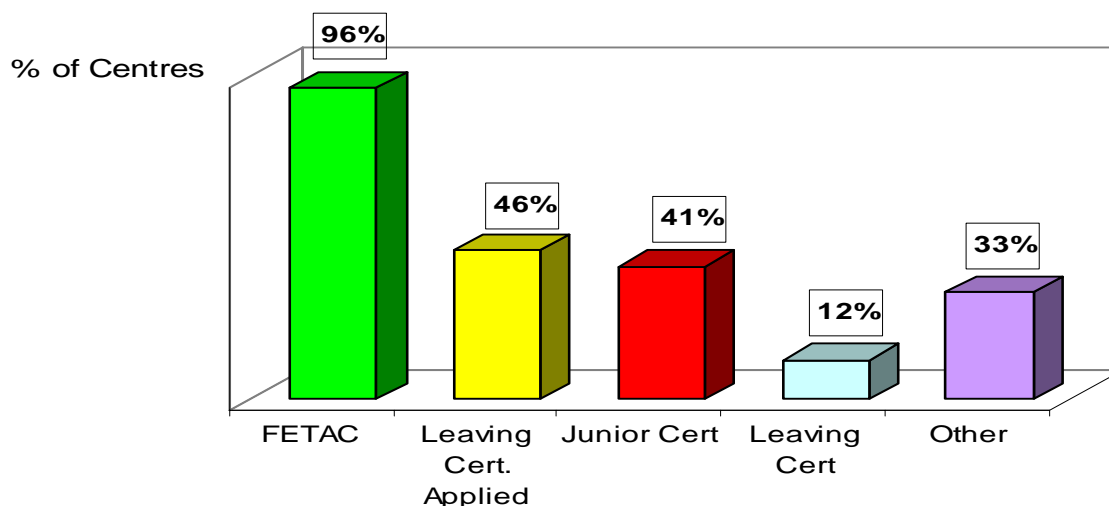
are now the courses most widely offered and taken up, as evidenced by the certification outcomes in 2004. A significant proportion of Youthreach centres also offer subjects from the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied curricula.

The range of courses offered by the 68 Youthreach centres that responded to the survey are summarised in Figure 2.1. As is clearly evident, almost all offer FETAC certification (usually Foundation and/or Level 1). 46% of respondents offer subjects at Leaving Cert Applied level and 41% offer Junior Certificate courses. Some 12% offer the traditional Leaving Certificate courses.

This finding contrasts with the results of a study conducted by Sarah Ryan for VEC Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres⁴. On the basis of data for 2002-2003, this study found that the percentage of centres offering Junior Certificate was decreasing with just 21% of a sample of 67 centres providing it in 2003. Detailed comparison of the respective samples and further analysis would be required to reconcile the findings of the two surveys.

It is important to distinguish between the capability of centres to offer courses and the actual take-up of these courses. Data provided by the National Youthreach Co-ordinator on certification outcomes in 2004 clearly show that the principal mode of certification in Youthreach is through the FETAC system. These data show that, overall, some 73% of Youthreach centres offered FETAC certification, with 31% offering the Junior Certificate in whole or in part, and 33% offering the Leaving Certificate Applied as a progression option.

Figure 2.1: Educational Programmes Offered by Youthreach Centres

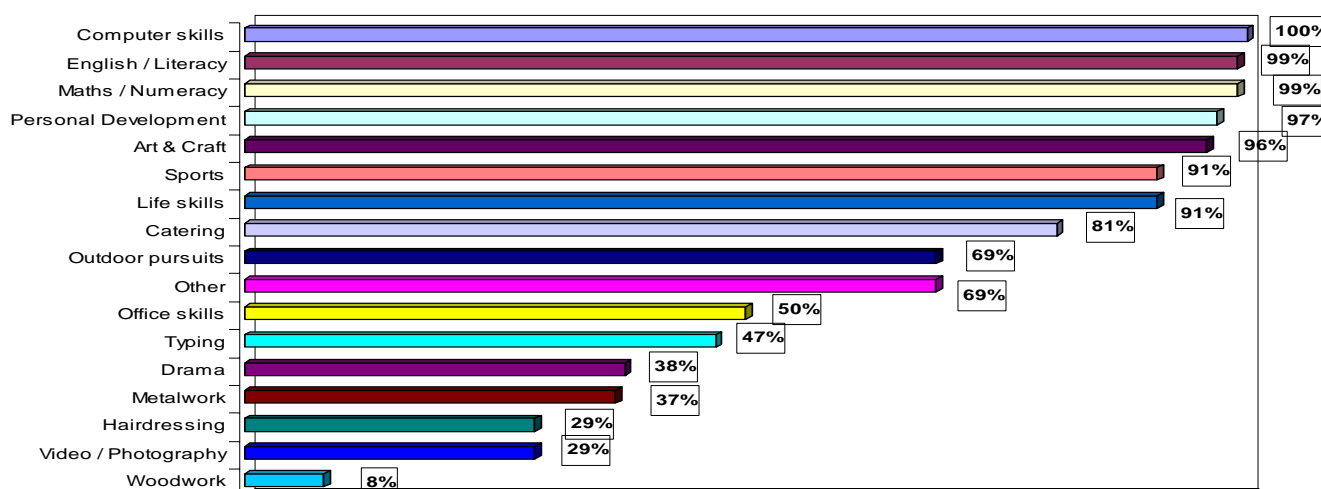


A variety of other minor Certificate courses are also offered, the most frequently mentioned being the European Computer Driving Licence and First Aid.

⁴ Sarah Ryan: "Certification Outcomes for STTCs and Youthreach", Edited by Gerard Griffen and Dermot Stokes, Jan. 2005

The range of subjects offered by respondents is summarised in Figure 2.2. This shows that computer skills, English/literacy and maths/numeracy are offered by virtually all centres. Other popular subjects include personal development skills, life skills, arts & crafts, sports, catering and woodwork. The subjects which were least offered included hairdressing, video/photography and metalwork.

**Figure 2.2: Subjects Most Frequently Offered by Youthreach Centres
 % of Centres**



Overall, the range of subjects taught is similar to that found by our survey in 1996. However, the nature of the curriculum has evolved to one that embraces the same certificate programmes offered by mainstream second-level schools, at least in what is offered. We have also been advised that FETAC modules are being offered in many mainstream schools. In terms of academic content, the distinctions between mainstream and Youthreach have narrowed.

The content of the programme and the age-group of the students are self-evidently consistent with those of second level schools. It may be argued, therefore, that Youthreach centres have been inappropriately designated as Centres for Education. The definition of a Centre for Education in the Education Act, 1998, is:

'(...) a place, other than a school or a place providing university or other third level education, where adult or continuing education or vocational education or training is provided and which is designated for that purpose under Section 10 (4)(...)'.

Although Youthreach Centres are not recognised as 'schools' under the Education Act, 1998, they clearly possess the characteristics of schools as defined by the Act.

2.3.3 Educational Approach

Youthreach centres have always been flexible in their approach to designing programmes to meet the needs of their local environment and client group. In general, they have been allowed considerable latitude in this respect by their VECs, which contrasts sharply with the traditional approach in mainstream second-level schools. The latter typically have been led by their curriculum and deliver a highly-structured approach built around a fixed timetable. Youthreach centres, on the other hand, are student-led in that they are focused on the needs of their students; time-tabling is flexible and generally appears to be organised on a weekly basis to allow for changing circumstances. Thus, while the curricula offered are consistent with mainstream schools, the mode of delivery is much different.

The essence of Youthreach is that it offers a programme which can be tailored to the needs of individual students. Such individualised education can only be offered to small groups, and involves intensive work by staff. Most of the centres we visited operate a system of individual learning plans for each student, with constant monitoring of progress and a focus on the overall development and welfare of the student.

The approach in Youthreach recognises that people have different learning styles, and that there is no single ideal method of education. This has been widely recognised at international level and it is possible that, in future, there will be more rather than fewer alternatives to the traditional school model. Moreover, there is a strong argument in favour of locating these alternatives within the formal education system rather than defining them as being outside the mainstream and a part of further education. Essentially, the mainstream should expand to become an inclusive system offering opportunity to students of all backgrounds and abilities. The National Framework of Qualifications is a vitally important enabling mechanism in this context.

The importance of having a range of educational settings available for young people is emphasized by the National Educational Welfare Board. In a recent document, the NEWB states that

*'Some students do not flourish within the traditional second-level school settings. There is a need for the value and success of other kinds of educational settings to be formally recognised for the purpose of providing an appropriate education within the terms of the Education (Welfare) Act.'*⁵

2.3.4 Progression of Youthreach Students

As we noted in our 1996 report, given the severity of the problems with which participants present themselves to Youthreach, the programme is achieving considerable levels of success. Information on the destination of students who left Youthreach Centres during the past year was sought in the survey. 64 of the 68 respondent centres gave information on this, relating to a total of 1,206 students.

⁵ 'Submission from the National Educational Welfare Board to the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools', NEWB, April 2005.

The results are shown in Table 2.1. For comparative purposes, the results from the 1996 survey (20 centres/471 students) are also given.

As the data in Table 2.1 below shows, there have been increases in the proportions of leavers going on to employment and to further education and training. These increases have been balanced by a significant decrease in the proportion going on to unemployment, largely due to the buoyancy in the labour market.

Table 2.1: Destination of Students who left Youthreach Centres in 1996 and 2004

Destination	Students			
	1996		2004	
	%	No.	%	No.
Employment	34	158	37	448
Further education & training	33	154	36	429
Unemployed	19	91	13	158
Pregnancy/marriage/motherhood	3	16	3	33
Other	2	8	3	37
Unknown	9	44	8	101
	100	471	100	1,206

- Notes:
1. 1996 figures relate to 20 centres; 2004 figures relate to 64 centres.
 2. 'Further education and training' includes VEC colleges, apprenticeship, FÁS and Fáilte Ireland courses and, in a small number of cases, return to school
 3. 'Other' includes family reasons, custodial sentences and psychiatric referral
 4. 'Unknown' includes trainees who left the locality or emigrated.

2.4 STAFFING

2.4.1 Structure

Youthreach centres are established by Vocational Education Committees with the approval of and funding by the Department of Education and Science. The staffing model is based on a full-time Co-ordinator, a full-time Resource Person and a pay provision of 4,200 tuition hours per group of 25 students. A portion of the tuition hours are allocated to the full-time staff and the balance is taken up by the employment of part-time teachers in accordance with the curricular needs of the centre.

This model is generally adhered to, although there is some variation from centre to centre. Larger centres have pro-rata budget allocations and can therefore employ more full-time staff. A number of centres share their premises and staff with other programmes, such as VTOS or a Senior Traveller Training Centre, and some share staff with other Youthreach centres operated by the same VEC.

The number and distribution of staff by category in the 68 centres that responded to the survey is set out in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Staffing of Youthreach Centres

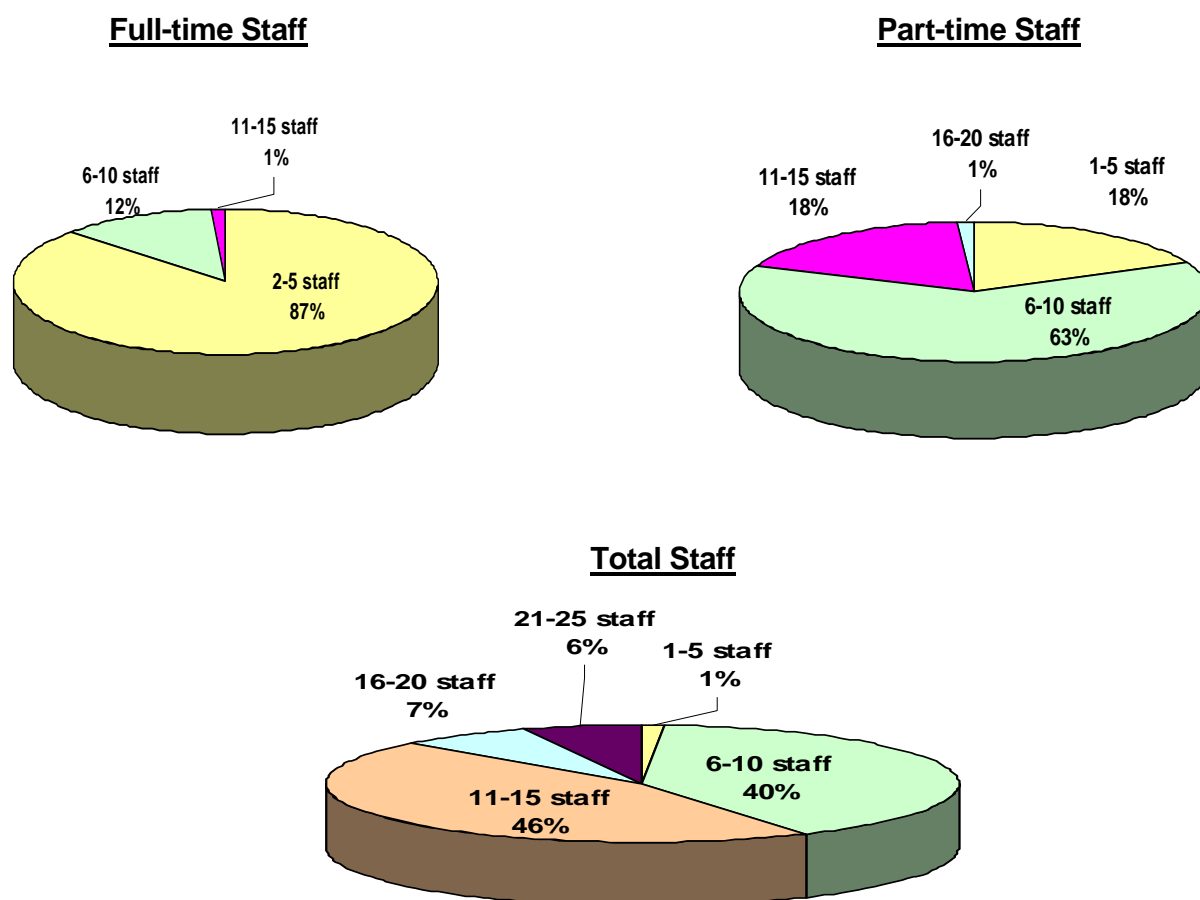
	Total		Average per Centre	
	2005	2005	2005	1996
No. of Centres:	67	-	-	-
No. of Places:	2,153	32.1	34.2	
Full-time				
Co-ordinators ⁽¹⁾	66	1.0	1.0	
Resource Persons	116	1.7	1.5	
Other full-time ⁽²⁾	47	0.7	0.4	
Total full-time	229	3.4	2.9	
Part-time				
Qualified teachers	223	3.3	-	
Unqualified teachers ⁽³⁾	245	3.7	-	
Other ⁽⁴⁾	83	1.2	-	
Total Part-time	551	8.2	7.1	
Overall Total	780	11.6	10.0	

- Notes:
1. One of the respondent centres in 2005 has two Resource Persons and shares a Co-ordinator with another centre.
 2. 'Other' full-time staff include administrators (8), secretaries (9), crèche staff (9), cleaners/caretakers (7) and contracted qualified teachers (7).
 3. Unqualified teachers are those who do not have the teaching qualifications defined by Memo V7 / Circular Letter 32/92.
 4. 'Other' part-time staff include secretaries/administrators (35), carers/counsellors (13), caretakers (9) and cooks (6).
 5. 67 of the 68 respondent centres replied to this question; the exception was a centre which is managed by the YMCA and which has a different staffing structure, with 5 full-time and 7 part-time staff.
 6. The 1996 data relate to a sample of 32 centres.

The figures in Table 2.2 show that there is an average of 3.4 full-time and 8.2 part-time staff in the respondent centres in 2005. This amounts to an average total staffing complement of 11.6 per centre. The 1996 survey recorded an overall average of 10 staff per centre, with an average of 34.2 students. However, while the absolute number of teachers employed in Youthreach has increased, there is no evidence that the total volume of teaching hours per centre or per student has increased. The distribution of centres in terms of staffing complements is shown in Figure 2.3. As the charts illustrate, the vast majority of centres have between 2 and 5 full-time staff. The level of part-time staffing varies more widely - almost two-thirds of the centres have between 6 and 10 part-time staff, while almost one-fifth have more than 10 part-time staff.

The figures in Table 2.2 also highlight the high-level of dependence on part-time staff, especially for teaching duties. According to the survey respondents, the part-time teaching staff are divided almost equally between those with recognised teaching qualifications and those without such qualifications. This is not to say that the latter have no qualifications but that their qualifications do not meet the requirements laid down in Memo V7/Circular Letter 32/92.

Figure 2.3: Staffing Levels in Youthreach Centres



2.4.2 Staff Qualifications

From the time Youthreach was established there were no formal qualifications specified for employment as Co-ordinator or Resource Person. The thinking in 1988 was that maximum flexibility should be given to VECs to select applicants with the combination of personal qualities and professional skills most likely to meet the needs of students. In fact the original Youthreach Operators' Guidelines stated that the programme requires staff who are flexible, multi-disciplined and experienced. A high degree of motivation and commitment to the student-centred model of training is essential, as is a commitment to working with the target group.

While no consensus has emerged as yet between the Department of Education, the VECs and the TUI with regard to the issue of qualifications, the Arbitration Board issued recommendations in 1998 for the payment of qualifications allowances to Youthreach staff. The Arbitration Board also recommended that part-time staff should be paid at the standard part-time teaching rates.

The number of qualified teachers working in Youthreach has grown over the past ten years. The extent to which full-time staff in Youthreach centres have recognised teaching qualifications is set out in Table 2.3. As the data indicate, some two-thirds

of Co-ordinators and a similar proportion of Resource Persons have recognised teaching qualifications. A little under 50% of part-time teachers have recognised teaching qualifications. These findings show that there has been a significant increase in the proportion of Youthreach staff holding teaching qualifications than was the case in 1996. Our survey that year found that about 40% of Youthreach staff then had teaching qualifications.

Table 2.4: Proportion of Youthreach Staff with Recognised Teaching Qualifications

Category	With Teaching Qualifications %	Without Teaching Qualifications %
Co-ordinators	67	33
Resource Persons	62	38
Part-Time Teachers	48	52

Source: CHL Survey of Youthreach Centres, 2005

The shift in the balance between the proportions of staff with and without recognised teaching qualifications has been influenced by the policy among a growing number of VECs to hire qualified teachers for Youthreach posts. The improvements in terms and conditions of employment following the recommendations of the Arbitration Board in 1998 may also have had an impact. The reduction in the number of full-time posts in second level schools as enrolments have declined may be a further influence.

We found that a significant number of Youthreach teaching staff who do not have recognised teaching qualifications in accordance with the stipulations of Memo V7 have taken, or are currently taking, the Bachelor of Science degree in Education and Training offered by Dublin City University (DCU). In many cases, they have received financial support from their VEC specifically for this purpose. However, while this degree is intended to equip students with knowledge and skills in the field of education and training, it does not enable its graduates to enter post-primary teaching. It is clear from our discussions with Youthreach staff who have taken this degree that they have done so in the hope that it will be recognised by the VECs as a teaching qualification.

The increase in the proportion of teachers with recognised qualifications in the Youthreach staffing complement is also reflected in the increase in TUI membership. On the basis of responses from 60 centres, some 77% of full-time Youthreach staff are members of TUI in 2005. Information on TUI membership among part-time staff was only provided by 42 centres in 2005, and the proportion is 43% (presumably, these are mostly qualified part-time teachers).

2.5 YOUTHREACH CENTRES

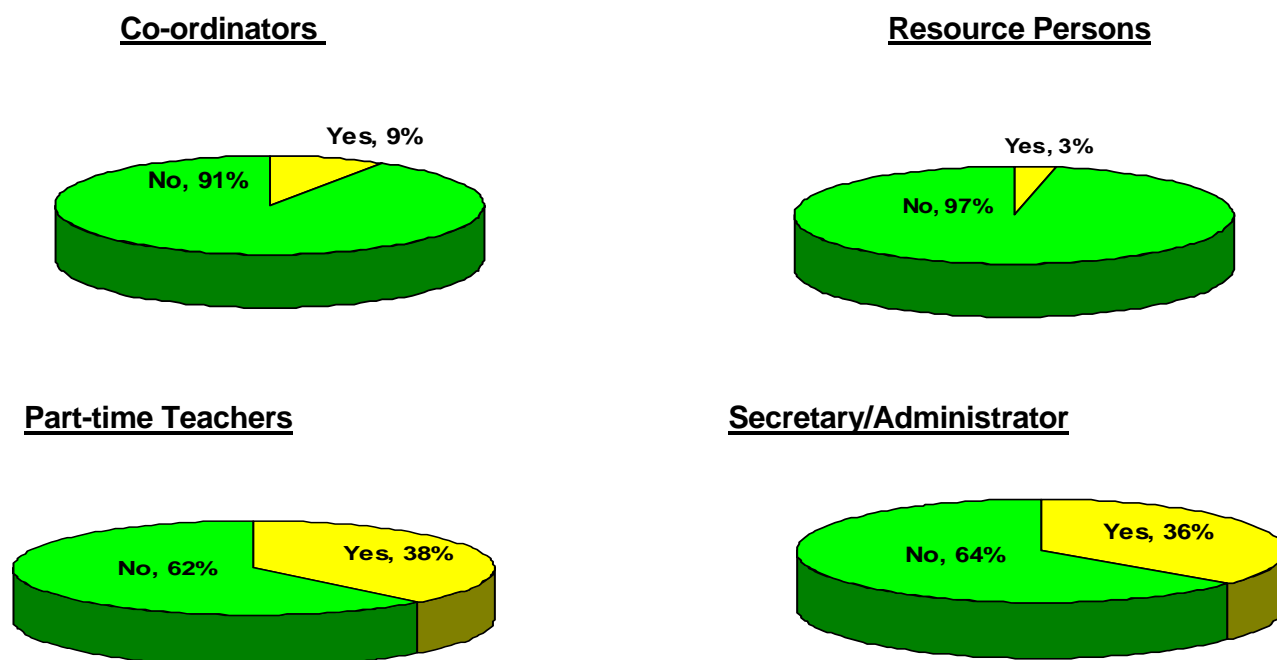
There are some 90 Youthreach centres in operation in 2005. Based on our survey findings, these centres provide a total of c.2,900 places⁶. Centres typically offer 25 places, but many offer substantially more than this. The average among the 67 centres that gave information on this point is 32.4 with a range of 10 to 100.

The centres are housed in a diverse range of buildings. Some have been purpose built, others are former VEC schools, and others are converted industrial premises. In many cases, a significant amount of effort and expenditure has to go into the maintenance of the premises, and this impacts heavily on the available budgets.

Many Youthreach centres also share their premises. Among survey respondents, almost half (30 centres) stated that they share with other programmes. The most frequently mentioned co-habitants are VTOS programmes, followed by adult literacy, Youth Services Centres, Senior Traveller Training Centres and Back to Education Initiatives.

Respondents who shared their premises were asked whether they also shared their staff. As shown in Figure 2.4, over 90% of respondents stated that they did not share their Co-ordinators and Resource Persons with any other groups; however, over a third of centres share their part-time teachers and secretarial / administrative staff with other groups.

Figure 2.4: Extent of Staff Sharing where Premises are shared with other Programmes



⁶ 67 centres gave information on the number of students currently attending, the total amounting to 2,171.

2.6 CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

The principal current development in Youthreach is The Quality Framework Initiative (QFI) for Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTC). The aim of this initiative is to develop and implement a quality assurance model that will lead to continuous improvement in the service offered by centres in a manner that meets the needs of learners, staff and management. The Framework was born out of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, and the Youthreach 2000 Consultative Process.

The Framework - through the processes of Centre Development Planning, Internal Centre Evaluation and External Centre Evaluation - identifies 27 quality standards designed to make Youthreach more professional, streamlined and accountable. A pilot phase took place from September 2003 to July 2004 in 44 Youthreach centres and STTCs. We understand from Youthreach staff in centres where the QFI was piloted that the Framework has provided a useful tool for structuring centres and measuring outcomes. It represents a new and more established phase in the Youthreach Programme taking on board explicit standards, accountability and responsibility for the success of the Programme.

We have been advised that the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science has included the evaluation of Youthreach centres in its business plan for 2005 and is scheduled to begin these evaluations in 2006. This can be seen as further evidence of mainstreaming.

3. EDUCATION SECTOR CONTEXT

Ireland has changed rapidly over the past twenty years and this has created new challenges for the education sector. Recently enacted legislation goes some way towards tackling these challenges. However, new issues emerge all the time as educational policy-makers attempt to keep pace with the changing economic and social environment. This Section discusses the impact of legislative changes and policy developments on the Youthreach Programme.

3.1 LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

In recent years, there have been significant additions to legislation in the education sector. The Education Act, 1998, and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, are particularly important.

3.1.1 The Education Act 1998

The Education Act, 1998, provides for access to education for ‘...every person in the State, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs.’ It gives practical effect to the constitutional rights of all children - in so far as it is practicable and within available resources - to receive ‘a level and quality of education that is appropriate to meeting (their) individual needs and abilities’. The Act covers primary, post-primary, adult and continuing education and vocational education and training. It aims to ensure that the education system is accountable to students, parents and the State for the education provided.

The Education Act establishes statutory responsibility to provide education to every person in the State. In specifying that education should be appropriate to individual needs and abilities, it acknowledges that one size does not fit all. There is recognition that the formal school system does not provide the educational solutions that meet the needs of every person in the State. To meet different needs, the Act allows the Minister to designate⁷ ‘centres of education’⁸ which, though distinct from schools⁹, have an equally important role to play in the education system. On the 20th of September 2004, all Youthreach Centres were designated as centres for education¹⁰ in recognition of their role. Youthreach has, through designation, moved from a temporary and experimental programme to an important strand of the Irish educational system. However, as noted in the analysis in Section 2.3.2 above, Youthreach centres are, in many respects, closer to schools than further education centres.

⁷ Section 10 (4), Education Act, 1998

⁸ A ‘centre for education’ means ‘a place, other than a school or a place providing university or other third level education, where adult or continuing educational or vocational training, is provided and which is designated for that purpose’. (Section 2, Education Act 1998)

⁹ ‘School’ means ‘an establishment which (a) provides primary education to its students and which may also provide early childhood education, or (b) provides post-primary education to its students and which may also provide courses in adult, continuing or vocational education or vocational training.’

¹⁰ Circular Letter No. F49/04.

3.1.2 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, provides a framework within which issues relating to the educational welfare of children can be addressed. It provides *'for the entitlement of every child in the State to a certain minimum education'*. The Act also provides for the establishment of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) which, through a network of educational welfare officers, is responsible for implementing many of the provisions of the Act.

The NEWB has wide-ranging responsibilities in relation to children's school attendance and behaviour. Ideally, the aim is to tackle the problem of non-attendance within the walls of *'recognised schools'*¹¹ and the creation of the NEWB provides the guidelines, training and resources to help schools and parents address this problem. There is an opportunity for Youthreach, given the experience of staff in the area of early school leaving and non-attendance, to work with the NEWB to help provide strategies and solutions for non-attendance at schools.

The Act provides for the registration of children receiving education in places other than recognised schools. This registration does not apply to children who are *'participating in a programme of education, training, instruction or work experience prescribed by the Minister.'*¹² While Youthreach is not mentioned specifically under this heading, we understand that the NEWB would like to see Youthreach specifically prescribed by the Minister as part of the formal education system in recognition of the fact that it satisfies the constitutional requirements of the State to provide *'a certain minimum education.'*

3.1.3 Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004

This Act makes provision for the education of people with special educational needs and determines the setting in which this education should take place. Education shall *'wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs.'*¹³ The Act builds on recent legislation in the education sector - notably the **Education Act, 1998**, and the **Education (Welfare) Act, 2000**, both of which are briefly described above.

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act determines that people with special educational needs have the same rights to avail of appropriate education as do their peers. It aims to ensure that people with special educational needs leave school with the skills necessary to participate in the social and economic activities of society. The Act establishes the National Council for Special Education and encourages the greater involvement of parents of children with special educational needs in the education of their children. At the same time it confers certain functions on Health Boards in relation to the education of people with special educational needs.

¹¹ A 'recognised school' means a school designated by the Minister under the Section 10 of the Education Act 1998.

¹² Section 14 (19b)

¹³ Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004

As we noted in Section 2.2, it is estimated that 80% of Youthreach participants have one or more special educational needs or significant emotional/behavioural difficulties. Youthreach centres therefore have been responding to the objectives of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act for some time, by providing an inclusive environment for education and training, and creating more inclusive teaching methodologies.

3.2 POLICY ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS

In addition to changes in the legislative environment, there is a number of policy issues that set the context for the future development of the Youthreach Programme. Those of central relevance to the Programme are outlined below.

3.2.1 Early School Leaving

When the Youthreach Programme was launched in 1988, it was introduced as a temporary, experimental programme to address the problem of early school leaving. Figures from the *Annual School Leavers' Survey*¹⁴ demonstrate that, while the situation of early school leavers has improved, the problem still exists. Table 3.1 shows the qualification levels of school leavers between 1996 and 1999.

Table 3.1: Qualification Levels of School Leavers, 1996-1999 (%)

Level of Attainment	1996 %	1997 %	1998 %	1999 %
No qualifications	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.2
Junior Certificate	15.2	16.3	15.5	15.3
Leaving Certificate	80.8	80.0	81.0	81.6

Source: McCoy and Williams, 2000

The percentage of early school leavers - those leaving before completing the Leaving Certificate - remained consistent at around 19% between 1996 and 1999. In 1999, *'almost 13,000 young people left before completion of the Leaving Certificate, of whom 2,400 or 3.2% left with no formal qualifications.'*¹⁵ The situation has improved greatly since 1980 when 10% of young people left school with no qualifications, and figures for 2001 - as yet unpublished - put the figure for Leaving Certificate completion at 83%. Despite this progress, *'the key priority to eliminate early school leaving has still not been realised. Indeed, the issue is becoming more complex as the marginalisation of those leaving school with no qualifications is increased.'*¹⁶

¹⁴ McCoy, S. and Williams, J., *1999 Annual School Leavers' Survey of 1997/1998 Leavers*, ESRI, December 2000.

¹⁵ NESF, *Early School Leavers*, Forum Report 24, March 2002, p.40

¹⁶ NESF, *Early School Leavers*, Forum Report 24, March 2002, p.14

The growth of the Youthreach Programme demonstrates that the problem of early school leaving remains. It is increasingly recognised that the root causes of early school leaving are many and complex. The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) Report on early school leavers identified the following possible variables¹⁷:

- **Individual:** Learning difficulties, literacy and numeracy difficulties, self-esteem and confidence issues, bullying, etc.
- **Family:** Behavioural difficulties, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, attitudes of parents to schooling, parents' confidence in their own and their child's ability, parents' previous experience of education and education level achieved, ethnic/cultural identity, role of extended family, level of financial resources, unemployment, etc.
- **School:** School ethos, funding, discipline procedures, management and planning, pupil selection and streaming, entrance testing, teachers, teacher/pupil ratios, teacher expectations, pupil participation in school planning, integration of initiatives available, parental involvement, co-education, etc.

Given the wide range of issues faced by early school leavers, it is recognised that there '*.....is a growing need for diversity and flexibility in provision and mode of delivery to meet the needs of early school leavers, young people and adults with low qualifications, and the long term unemployed in promoting the over-arching agenda of social inclusion.*'¹⁸ Over the past 17 years, Youthreach has made a serious contribution to tackling the problem of early school leaving. Each year, roughly 1,600¹⁹ students (roughly 12% of all early school leavers) progress from Youthreach with an increasing number onto employment or further education and training. Through its individualised approach to education, Youthreach has become proficient at dealing with many of the issues that lead to early school leaving.

3.2.2 Educational Disadvantage

In recognition of the importance of human resources in our knowledge-based economy, there has been increased policy attention given to educational disadvantage. In May 2005, the Government unveiled a €40m plan to help schools in poor areas. While educational provision has a key role to play in tackling disadvantage, it will not provide solutions to the complexities of poverty and economic and social disadvantage. The multi-dimensional nature of educational disadvantage and early school leaving that can only be addressed by understanding the diversity of young people and meeting their needs in an holistic way.

These values underpin the work of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) in tackling non-attendance and behavioural issues. They also are the values on which the Youthreach Programme is built. Youthreach Centres are student-led and focus on the individual needs of their diverse pool of students. Participants typically

¹⁷ NESF, *Early School Leavers*, Forum Report 24, March 2002, p.18

¹⁸ CL 45/99 - Management Structure for VTOS.

¹⁹ Figure based on grossing up survey sample of 1,206.

suffer from economic, social and educational disadvantage as well as a growing number with special educational needs. Emotional and behavioural problems are dealt with as part of the learning process. Youthreach is not only tackling the issue of early school leaving, it is also addressing the wider educational, social and economic needs of the most disadvantaged young people.

3.2.3 Special Needs and Mainstreaming

The National Disability Strategy 2004 recognises the need to improve provision for people with special needs. It gives statutory effect to the policy of mainstreaming public service provision for people with disabilities. In the education sector, it has led to the drafting of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004. The Act states that the education of people with special educational needs '*...shall, wherever possible, take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs.*'²⁰ With increased awareness of special needs, there is also recognition that there is a spectrum of need from severe to minor disability. The Act aims to ensure that people with special educational needs leave school with the skills necessary to participate in the social and economic activities of society.

Educational mainstreaming has led to a reduction of places in special schools. However, despite the creation of new special needs teaching roles in mainstream schools there has been growth in the number of people with special needs applying to Youthreach. Over the past few years, Youthreach has provided for the education of many people with special educational needs in an inclusive environment. However, Youthreach has been providing education to this group of school-age going people without the support services provided in second-level schools. The IVEA have made a plea to the Department of Education and Science for additional resources and support services along the lines of the model proposed for primary schools²¹.

There is an opportunity to acknowledge Youthreach's role in mainstreaming and recognise it as a permanent part of Ireland's model of formal education provision. It is one strand in a menu of programmes designed to meet the educational needs of all people in the State under the Education Act, 1998.

3.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTHREACH

Youthreach is already tackling many of the issues that concern educational policy makers, and it is responding to statutory requirements laid down by recent legislation. It is providing a '*level and quality of education appropriate to individual needs and abilities*' as required by the Education Act, 1998. It is satisfying the requirement of the State to provide every child with '*a certain minimum education*' under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. It is tackling the issue of early school leaving and educational disadvantage as well as providing education for people with special educational needs '*in an inclusive environment.*' It is time to widen the model

²⁰ Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

²¹ Address to the IVEA Congress, 2005, by Mary Bohan, President of the IVEA.

and recognise Youthreach as a permanent and vital strand of the formal educational system.

At the same time, it is necessary for Youthreach to retain a strategic perspective on its future role and objectives. While some mainstream schools are becoming better at dealing with the issues of disadvantage, special needs, and diversity, it is important that Youthreach continues to exist as a distinctive strand within the education sector, providing flexible education for young people whose needs are not and cannot be met in a mainstream environment. As part of the formal sector, Youthreach will need to provide greater levels of accountability and quality assurance. The Quality Framework is an important part of this process and one that has been grasped by Youthreach staff.

4. POSITION AND DUTIES OF FULL-TIME STAFF

4.1 TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

4.1.1 Original Terms and Conditions

In January 1989, the City of Dublin VEC proposed a staffing structure for Youthreach that has remained the basic operational model. Since Youthreach was introduced as a temporary programme, it recommended that each centre be headed by a full-time Co-ordinator employed on a one-year contract, renewable on a yearly basis, subject to continued funding of the programme by the Department of Education. This appointment was to be supplemented by a full-time Resource Person, also to be contracted on a year to year basis.

The CDVEC proposal covered such matters as salary for new appointees, and recommended that existing or former whole-time teachers employed by a VEC and wishing to transfer to Youthreach should retain their teaching salary and be paid a Grade A allowance. Provision was also made for part-time teachers to be employed on a temporary and/or hourly basis. The Department of Education in January, 1989, in response to a letter from the TUI, referred to the recommendation (to be made by the Department to VECs) that qualified teachers provide the educational components of the programme. The letter went on to state: *'any teachers appointed will have the same entitlement in respect of pay and conditions as their equivalent elsewhere in the VEC service'*.

The salaries for Co-ordinators and Resource Persons were pitched at a low, flat rate, with no formal link with the pay scales and conditions of service applicable in analogous or comparable employment. The only increases paid over the first eight years were those due under national wage round increases. The low pay and the associated grading or positioning of full-time Youthreach staff at a level below those already established in the education sector with whom they may have been considered comparable gave rise to growing dissatisfaction among the staff. A further source of great discontent and insecurity was the temporary nature of their employment under annual contracts.

4.1.2 Results of the 1998 Arbitration

During the 1990s, there was an extended period of negotiation between the TUI and the then Department of Education on the terms and conditions of employment in Youthreach. This culminated in referral of the matters at issue to arbitration in 1997. The Arbitration Board issued its recommendations in December, 1998. These led to the following changes in terms and conditions of employment in Youthreach:

- **Contracts:** existing Youthreach Co-ordinators and Resource Persons who at the time had in excess of 1 year's service were offered a Fixed Purpose Contract, i.e. employment to continue subject to the continued operation of the Youthreach programme and the number of places approved by the VEC being continued. All new staff (and existing staff at that time with less than 1 year's

service) to be appointed on an initial probationary period of 1 year followed by a Fixed Purpose Contract on satisfactory completion of the probationary period.

(In contrast, following the 1998 Task Force Review when the management and administration of the STTCs became the remit of the Department of Education, permanent appointments within the STTCs became possible. No rational basis has ever been set out for the different treatment of STTC staff.)

- **Pay:** the Arbitration Board decided not to award teachers' pay and conditions to Youthreach Co-ordinators and Resource Persons. Instead it was determined that they would be placed on a new pay scale linked to similar staff in Community Training Workshops with a small number of modifications.

Qualifications allowances were also introduced for Co-ordinators and Resource Persons whose qualifications and experience are eligible under Memo V7 and/or Circular 32/92. Those with a degree, diploma or certificate in vocational or further education and training, or adult and community education and training, or community or youth work, or adult guidance and counselling also became eligible for a qualifications allowance.

- **Pension:** with effect from 1st September, 1996, tutors or teachers within Youthreach were admitted to the Education Sector Superannuation Scheme. It also became compulsory for tutors or teachers joining Youthreach after that date to join the Scheme. Following the Arbitration Determination, full-time staff in Youthreach also became eligible to join the Scheme.
- **Sick Pay:** the Arbitration Board determined that Youthreach full-time staff be granted full pay for certified sick leave up to a maximum of 365 days in any period of 4 years or less. Absences for minor indispositions not exceeding 7 days in a year may be allowed, provided that absences in excess of 3 days are medically certified.

Part time staff are not entitled to sick pay and are paid only for hours worked. Pro-rata teachers may be granted sick leave with pay up to a maximum of 91 days in a given year on the same terms and conditions as are applicable in the school system.

- **Annual Leave:** in line with the findings of the Arbitration Board, the annual leave for Co-ordinators and Resource Persons was set at 30 and 35 days respectively. (Under the new productivity agreement - see Section 4.1.4 below - annual leave is to be taken at times when centres are closed to trainees with the remainder to be taken outside these periods with the agreement of the VEC. Staff entitled to concession days will retain them on a personal basis.)

While these improvements went some way to addressing the high level of discontent at the time, a number of significant issues remain to be addressed. As time has gone by, these have again become sources of growing dissatisfaction among full-time Youthreach staff. The main problems are raised by staff were:

- the temporary status of their employment and the lack of permanent contracts (this issue has now been addressed under the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act, 2003 - see Section 4.1.3 below).
- the fact that qualified teachers employed as Co-ordinators and Resource Persons in Youthreach are not recognised as teachers; they have a lower status compared with teachers in vocational schools and STTCs
- the unfavourable terms and conditions of employment in Youthreach compared with Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTC) and Vocational Schools
- the fact that part-time teaching staff with recognised teaching qualifications enjoy better pay and conditions than full-time staff with the same qualifications.

Unless these problems are resolved, they are likely to lead to an increase in staff turnover in Youthreach and the loss of experienced and committed staff who constitute its most valuable resource.

4.1.3 Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act, 2003

A Transitional Agreement on the implementation of this Act was reached between the Unions, Department of Education & Science, the VECs and School managerial authorities in September 2005. The terms of this agreement, which comprehends, inter alia, Youthreach Co-ordinators, Resource Persons and qualified part-time teachers; were set out in Circular Letter PPT 14/05. Effectively, the agreement means that Youthreach Co-ordinators and Resource Persons with more than 4 years service who have not been given objective grounds in writing for not receiving a contract of indefinite duration will now receive such a contract. This agreement will do much to address the serious concerns that Youthreach staff have had in relation to the status of their employment.

4.1.4 New Productivity Agreement

In 2005, proposals for a new productivity agreement for Co-ordinators and Resource Persons were drawn up by the Department of Education and Science and the Irish Vocational Education Association in consultation with the TUI. This agreement is broadly consistent with the new productivity agreement applied in the Community Training Centres. Following a ballot by Youthreach staff in October, 2005, the productivity agreement was accepted.

The productivity agreement states in very clear terms that Youthreach staff are employed by the VECs and that the Irish Vocational Education Association is the recognised employer body. The document goes on to outline how the implementation of agreements negotiated on behalf of Youthreach staff is a matter for each VEC, in consultation with the IVEA and the Department of Education and Science.

The stated objectives of the productivity agreement are to:

- provide a level of training and services to participants which is consistent across the VEC sector, is of an agreed standard as identified from time to time, and addresses the needs of early school leavers;

- operate Youthreach centres within national guidelines in a manner which is consistent across the sector and is needs based, quality driven and provides value for money;
- acknowledge, develop and promote the models of good practice that have evolved within Youthreach centres;
- facilitate staff co-operation with ongoing change and development in the programme at local level;
- to work with the programme stakeholders to identify and implement indicators for evaluating education and training outcomes for learners;

The implementation of pay increases attached to the productivity agreement is contingent upon full time Youthreach staff agreeing to and accepting:

- revised conditions of employment and duties as an integral element of the their contract of employment;
- the Quality Assurance Framework and Operators' Guidelines, as updated from time to time.
- that they will pay particular attention to addressing the social, personal and health needs of Youthreach participants
- a commitment, on their part, to ongoing change and their recognition of the need to respond in a flexible manner to new and emerging needs of early school leavers.

In addition to the above and the changes in duties, discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3, the productivity agreement makes some amendments to contractual conditions regarding annual leave and hours of attendance. The amount of annual leave is not changed, but both Co-ordinators and Resource Persons are now required to take their annual leave at times when the centre is closed to trainees with the remainder to be taken outside these periods with the agreement of the VEC (see Section 4.1.2).

The length of the Youthreach year is also left unchanged at 226 weekdays excluding public holidays and such closures as are allowed for the Christmas and Easter breaks. However, Co-ordinators and Resource Persons are now asked to work their 35 hours per week 'in a flexible manner that may include evenings and other times, in accordance with service needs'.

In return for accepting these revised terms and conditions, new pay scales are being introduced. These involve substantial (backdated) increases including new long service increments. The pay scale for Resource Persons has been extended from 7 to 11 increments plus two long service increments.

4.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CO-ORDINATORS

4.2.1 Title

While Youthreach personnel generally refer to and acknowledge the person managing the centre as the Co-ordinator, the nature of the duties and the style of operating the centre is more analogous to that of Principal of a school, albeit on a

lesser scale in terms of staff and student numbers. With the word Co-ordinator offering several interpretations - manager, director, planner, controller or arranger - its usage in the context of managing a Youthreach centre, and particularly one that has in excess of 50 trainees, only serves to understate the role. In contrast the person managing a STTC, which is broadly similar to a Youthreach centre, is variously described (both within STTCs and the education sector) as Principal or a Director. In our 1996 report, we recommended that the title 'co-ordinator' should be changed to 'director'. We continue to hold that view.

4.2.2 Duties

The principal duties of the Co-ordinator in Youthreach are defined in the existing contract template²² as comprising the tasks outlined below. The changes introduced under the productivity agreement are noted in bold italics.

The list of duties are set out following a statement of the responsibility of the Co-ordinator 'to the Chief Executive or Education Officer or Adult Education Organiser of the VEC as appropriate for the overall daily management of the centre'.

- **Task 1: *Development, delivery and monitoring*** of the centre programme, including curriculum development, discipline, administration of certification procedures, organisation of work experience, networking with other Co-ordinators and centres, and organisation of guidance and counselling support
- **Task 2:** Supervision of staff, staff development, team formation and leadership
- **Task 3:** Recruitment of trainees / ***admission of programme participants***
- **Task 4:** Liaising with the local community and other appropriate agencies
- **Task 5:** Assessment and monitoring of trainee course work; ***identifying, promoting and supporting as necessary, progression options, including the Advocacy service and vocational guidance.***
- **Task 6:** Development and monitoring of programmes (***now included under task 1 in the new productivity agreement***)
- **Task 7:** Administrative duties appropriate to the post ***including the establishment and maintenance of appropriate procedures for record keeping and regular reporting to the VEC and the Department of Education and Science as appropriate.***
- **Task 8:** Budgeting and financial management within the financial framework of the VEC system
- **Task 9:** Management and development of premises, including health and safety.
- **Task 10:** Direct class contact in keeping with programme needs, as required by the VEC, subject to a maximum of 15 hours per week.

The above list is closely reflected in the perception and understanding of the role and responsibilities that we found in each of the Youthreach and STT Centres visited. However, we did find some variations, either in respect of the manner in

²² Department of Education & Science, Circular Letter 12/2003

which some of the duties are carried out, or in the respective level of emphasis that might be placed here and there with regard to how the duties are prioritised.

The additions made to the above task list by the new productivity agreement by and large make explicit the duties under these headings that are already being performed by Co-ordinators at the centres we visited. The productivity agreement also defines a number of additional duties, as follows:

- Under the direction of VEC management, identify, plan and evaluate responses to education and training needs, including the identification and implementation of indicators for education and training outcomes for learners.
- Work with VEC and Centre Management to (i) agree and implement a Centre Development Plan for the delivery of Youthreach services and (ii) conduct an internal centre evaluation process as set out in the Youthreach Quality Framework.
- Provide substitution cover for absent staff and supervise participants as necessary during lunch breaks and at opening and closing of the centre
- Ensure the flexible operation of the centre to meet the needs of participants.

In the following paragraphs, we review the list of duties/tasks in the light of our consultations, visits to centres and documentary research.

• **Task 10: Direct Class Contact**

Although last on the list of duties, we discuss this first because it is very much at the heart of our brief. Co-ordinators are required to have direct class contact for up to a maximum of 15 hours per week. The term '*direct class contact*' is not defined, but the clear presumption among all persons consulted is that it means teaching. By way of comparison, STTC directors may also be required to have up to 15 hours class contact, while the directors of Community Training Centres do not teach.

While the initial intention of this duty (direct class contact) was presumably to teach for a maximum of 15 hours per week, we found that the necessity for Co-ordinators to have direct contact with the students, not only within the classroom context but throughout the day, week and year as a whole, was common across all twelve centres visited.

In practice, there is some variation between centres in relation to the extent of direct class contact by the Co-ordinators. In virtually all Youthreach centres [and in STTCs as well] the Co-ordinator regularly acts as a substitute for teachers who are absent. This is a necessary duty because there is no provision to pay part-time teachers for substitution and, as a result, many are unwilling to do so. (Substitution has become a more contentious issue in Youthreach since the introduction of a substitution and supervision allowance for teachers in voluntary, comprehensive and community schools in 2002. The new productivity agreement expressly provides for substitution and supervision). Most Co-ordinators also schedule themselves for direct class contact. While some do the full 15 hours, many do less than this because the extensive range of their

management and administrative duties allied to the need to be available at short notice to deal with problems as they arise effectively limits the amount of time they can spend in class. This is also the case for the directors of STTCs.

Co-ordinators emphasized that they have a very large amount of direct contact with students on a one-to-one basis. This frequently involves teaching work (e.g. literacy tuition or guidance counselling) and is considered by Co-ordinators to be at least as important as direct class contact. It also involves more than teaching as traditionally defined.

Some Co-ordinators, in describing what they mean by direct or one-to-one contact, referred to how, in the space of a few days, they can be involved in any number of issues directly affecting the students. These range from poor attendance through to attempted suicides, drug abuse, and declared sexual abuse (within the family) to mention just a few. Such matters may also involve the Co-ordinator not only with the individual(s) concerned but also with parents, social workers, the Gardaí etc. It was in the context of discussing the direct class contact requirement with Co-ordinators that such examples were given and this form of intervention counselling was described as being a major part of the role of Co-ordinators in Youthreach. Another way of highlighting this role was the reference to the Co-ordinator being the “first person to become aware of problems” in the centre and of the need for the Co-ordinator to be constantly available for direct or one-to-one contact.

- **Task 1: Development of the centre programme, and Task 6: Development and monitoring of programmes**

These tasks overlap and are central to the role of Co-ordinator. (They have been combined into one task in the new productivity agreement). Fundamental to the success of Youthreach is the ability of each centre to respond to the needs of its students and local environment. The programme is intentionally flexible with regard to the courses offered by any one centre. The Co-ordinators interviewed generally spoke positively of their relationship with line management in their VECs in this regard, and of the relative freedom they enjoy in identifying and introducing suitable programmes and curricula.

The administration of certification procedures, organisation of work experience and the organisation of guidance and counselling support in a number of centres is shared with Resource Persons while in others it is delegated entirely to them.

The addition of the term ‘delivery’ and detailing of components of task 6 in the new productivity agreement essentially makes explicit the scope of this task as already carried out by Co-ordinators whom we met.

- **Task 2: Supervision of staff etc.**

In the sometimes claustrophobic environment of Youthreach centres, the quality of the working relationships between full-time staff can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the programmes and the general well-being of the

centres. On average, there are only about three full-time staff, and these are obliged to work very closely together, with a potentially high level of interdependency. Despite this, Co-ordinators do not appear to have a formal role in the selection of their Resource Persons although, in practice, many VECs involve the Co-ordinator in the process.

The recruitment of part-time teachers was described by some Co-ordinators as being similar to the procedures followed for recruiting staff in mainstream schools, with advertising and interviews conducted by the VEC HR resources department. In such cases the Co-ordinator would describe his/her role as having “some input but limited choice” and to “probably having some involvement”, while other Co-ordinators spoke of hiring part-time teachers themselves.

Given the variable experience of selecting staff and the fact that a majority of Co-ordinators have only a limited role in such appointments, it was not surprising to find a range of responses in respect of line managing such staff. While some Co-ordinators felt they had a role to discipline or otherwise warn staff, others felt that this was solely a matter for HR in the VECs. Others spoke of being able to recommend certain action or discipline but referred to their involvement as being “ineffective”.

With regard to staff development, team formation and leadership, each Co-ordinator would seem to have his or her own approach and there was little or no evidence of any blueprint or common guidelines. Generally speaking, when talking about staff development and budgets, Co-ordinators noted that only limited resources were available from the VEC for staff training, and that it could be difficult to get support. However, we also found that a significant number of full-time staff have been assisted by their VECs to study for the B.Sc. in Education and Training offered by DCU.

Until this year (2005), centres have had the option of applying to the National Youthreach Co-ordinator for funds for staff training, including team development and staff induction. However, many centres did not apply for these funds. VECs themselves have included Youthreach centres in induction training and staff development and, in many instances, VECs applied for funding on behalf of their centres. In the future, the VECs will play a greater role in staff training as they have recently been allocated a budget for professional development.

- **Task 3: Recruitment of students / admission of programme participants**

We found a fairly consistent pattern of Co-ordinators directing and/ or controlling the recruitment and selection process. In some cases, it is very much a collective or team effort while, in other centres, the Resource Person(s) and/or part-time teachers had only a peripheral role in the process. Some centres have lengthy waiting lists while others appear to canvass more actively for new students. The centres that we visited already operate procedures regarding the admission of programme participants, as required by the new productivity agreement.

- **Task 4: Liaison with the local community and other agencies**

In some cases, this task is shared with Resource Persons but, generally speaking, it is the preserve of the Co-ordinator. The scope of the task varies according to the emphasis placed on it by Co-ordinators. Some focus mainly on referral sources, including schools, social workers, the health board and the Gardaí. Others take a broader approach, building and maintaining links with area and community social and economic bodies, as well as with employers and others with whom ongoing contact is productive. Contact with employers helps to generate work experience and employment opportunities for students.

- **Task 5: Assessing and monitoring student course work**

We found excellent examples of the extent to which some Youthreach centres monitor and assess the progress of students, while in other centres the standard was less thorough or committed. In some centres, individual education plans are maintained for each student with each Resource Person/part-time teacher adding their comments on an ongoing basis. The education plans and the comments contained within them are reviewed and discussed at regular team meetings, with the Co-ordinator then meeting each of the students on a one-to-one basis to review his/her education plan with him/her. This task was described by way of illustrating the emphasis some Centres put on the process of developing the student as a whole person and not simply on the work they produce.

Whilst we found variations of the above fairly comprehensive review mechanism, we also came across examples of less rigorous monitoring and assessment processes. The implementation of the Youthreach Quality Framework will help to standardise approaches in this area.

The new productivity agreement highlights the issue of student progression options and the role of Co-ordinators in assisting students in this area. Again, we found that this matter in practice already forms part of the work of Co-ordinators.

- **Task 7: Administrative duties**

All Co-ordinators interviewed were in agreement in describing the growing extent of their administrative workload, including the preparation of reports for the VEC and Department of Education and Science. This was also reflected in the responses to the postal survey. The general view is that all aspects of their work are becoming more regulated and that there appears to be an expectation that they should take on more of this with little or no discussion about the time implications. The introduction of the Youthreach Quality Framework will increase this workload.

Where there is a full-time or part-time secretary or administrative person in the centre, the Co-ordinator is delegating more than before, especially bookkeeping and related tasks, with the Co-ordinator signing off each week or as appropriate.

Administrative duties relating to curricula and the administration of certified programmes etc. are carried out to some extent by the Co-ordinator but the bulk of this work appears to be delegated to the Resource Person(s).

A further area of growing administrative responsibility is that of compliance with legislative requirements, and dealing with issues that could give rise to litigation. Co-ordinators and Resource Persons need to have the same understanding of legislation and legal processes as school principals in mainstream schools.

- **Task 8: Budgeting and financial management**

Given that budgeting and financial management essentially amounts to spending and accounting for the non-teaching cash budget allocated by the VEC, the approach to the implementation of this task is broadly similar in each centre. Major cost items in many centres are transport and maintenance.

The Co-ordinators have no say in the amount allocated and it appears to have remained fixed at the same level for years. Standard VEC procedures with regard to procurement and accounting are followed. As is generally the case throughout the public sector, budgeting is strictly on an annual basis, and neither over-spending nor under-spending are welcomed. With the budget fixed and costs rising steadily, this makes it difficult for centres occupying old, high-maintenance buildings, since they cannot accumulate funds from year-to-year to pay for more costly repairs.

- **Task 9: Management of premises, including health and safety requirements**

The scale and nature of this task varies from centre to centre. In addition to the caretaking requirement, Co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring that structural problems/defects are put right by the relevant contractors. As noted already, the cost of essential maintenance work eats heavily into the available cash budget of centres that occupy large, old buildings.

A majority of the centres visited have either 24-hour security cover on site or enjoy the facility of an external key-holding arrangement, with either the Co-ordinator or Resource Person acting as the second key holder.

With regard to health and safety, Co-ordinators and Resource Persons (where they have been delegated to assume the role) all acknowledge that Safety Officer is their function, but they noted that the level of training that has been provided is fairly minimal.

- **Additional tasks under the productivity agreement**

The five additional tasks introduced under the productivity agreement cover:

- responses to education and training needs
- centre planning and evaluation, as set out in the Youthreach Quality Framework

- establishment of partnerships with local schools and statutory and voluntary agencies
- substitution and supervision
- ensuring the flexible operation of the centre.

Much of what is defined by these tasks, including substitution, is already happening to a greater or lesser degree in Youthreach centres. The real changes under the productivity agreement appear to be as follows:

- implementation of the Youthreach Quality Framework
- flexibility in respect of the 35 hour working week with the possibility that the Co-ordinator might be asked to undertake work outside of normal working hours. Ensuring the flexible operation of the centre to meet the needs of participants
- annual leave is to be taken at times when the centre is closed during the month of August and over the Christmas and Easter holiday periods; the remainder is to be taken at times outside these periods with the agreement of the VEC. (If staff have an entitlement to concession days, these will be retained on a personal basis.)
- supervision of participants as necessary during lunch breaks and at opening and closing of centre.

Centre planning and the implementation of the Youthreach Quality Framework is an initiative welcomed by staff in the centres that we visited. Flexibility is already a feature of Youthreach centres and the work of Co-ordinators. It is not clear how, if they are asked to undertake work outside of normal working hours, they can arrange to take time off in lieu during an already busy working week.

The supervision requirement, or at least the formalising of what is at present a voluntary arrangement, may need further thought. In some cases, given that this task is limited to Co-ordinators and Resource Persons, there may already be breaches of the working time legislation with the staff concerned having inadequate breaks or none at all as they attempt to carry out their normal duties and provide supervision at the same time (Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997).

4.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESOURCE PERSONS

4.3.1 Title

Resource Person is the title used to describe the individuals working full-time alongside the Co-ordinator, but we found some exceptions to the rule. In at least two centres, these individuals are described as Resource Managers, and this applies even where there is more than one such jobholder. While the term 'Resource' does not seem to be a problem per se, the reference to 'Person' is a major problem for some. One Resource Person claimed that the position they had applied for was advertised as a Resource Position and spoke of their understanding that it was a Resource Teacher position.

In some centres the term Resource was the subject of comment in the context of the duties of a Resource Person. Some Co-ordinators appear to have interpreted the word 'resource' as a source or supply to be used by and/or on behalf of teachers, and the individual therefore may be asked to assist, prepare or otherwise gather information on behalf of teachers. However the majority of Resource Persons do not see this as a feature of their job description.

4.3.2 Tasks

Resource Persons are responsible to the Co-ordinator on a day to day basis for the delivery of the programme. The principal duties of the Resource Person in Youthreach as set out in the contract template²³ are listed below. The amendments made by the new productivity agreement are shown in bold italics.

- **Task 1:** Direct class contact in keeping with the programme needs as required and subject to a maximum of 20 hours per week;
- **Task 2:** Curriculum development and delivery, implementation of certification procedures, ***supervision of work experience*** and front line guidance and information;
- **Task 3:** Maintenance of discipline;
- **Task 4:** Development and monitoring of the programme
- **Task 5:** Assessment and monitoring of student course work
- **Task 6:** Conducting interviews of students
- **Task 7:** Administrative duties relevant to the post, ***including the maintenance of records and provision of reports as required.***
- **Task 8:** To deputise when necessary for the Centre Co-ordinator.

The above general outline reflects the perception and understanding of the role and responsibilities of Resource Person/Manager/Teacher that we found in each of the Youthreach and STT Centres visited. To a greater or lesser degree each of the individuals holding a resource post is fulfilling the defined requirements.

The new productivity agreement introduces three additional tasks:

- Work with the centre management in the planning, delivery and evaluation of appropriate responses to education and training needs, including the identification and implementation of indicators for education and training outcomes for learners.
- Work with VEC and centre management to (i) agree and implement a Centre Development Plan for the delivery of Youthreach services and (ii) conduct an internal centre evaluation as set out in the Youthreach Quality Framework.
- provide locally agreed substitution cover for absent staff and supervise participants as necessary during lunch breaks and at opening and closing of the centre.

In the following paragraphs, we review the list of duties or tasks in the light of our consultations, visits to centres and documentary research.

²³ Department of Education & Science, Circular Letter 12/2003

- **Task 1: Direct class contact**

All of the Resource personnel are meeting this requirement and, in some cases, putting in more than 20 hours per week. They typically have one or two main subject areas such as literacy or a Junior Cert. or an LCA subject as their main direct class contact work. However, in some cases, they may cover several subjects, depending on their own qualifications and experience. This work is delegated by the Co-ordinator and there is a weekly timetable which may vary from week to week according to needs and availability of teachers.

As in the case of Co-ordinators, a majority of the Resource Persons whom we interviewed commented on the high level of their overall direct contact work, not only within the classroom context but throughout the day, week and year as a whole.

The nature and frequency of this direct contact work is similar to that described by Co-ordinators (see Section 4.2.2.). Other direct contact work that is carried out and is not covered under any of the other tasks listed above includes such activities as:

- Dealing with “out-bursts” or other forms of unacceptable behaviour when they arise. This type of work was identified as being different from maintenance of discipline. It was illustrated during our visits to the centres when such eruptions occurred on occasion and the interview had to be suddenly adjourned to facilitate the staff.
- Following up on absentees, either by telephone, home visits and/or other forms of contact with students and/or their parents.
- Career counselling, arranging work placements and researching relevant career and further study information following one-to-one meetings with students.

- **Task 2: Curriculum development and delivery, including certification procedures**

Resource Persons generally are fully involved in all aspects of this task. Resource Persons frequently act as course co-ordinators for certificate programmes, including Junior Cert., Leaving Cert. Applied and FETAC courses. In other areas, where there is not a set curriculum, courses are developed each year on the basis of the needs of the current class. The flexible nature of Youthreach is demonstrated in the ability of staff to adapt the programme to meet changing needs among their students.

Resource Persons and Co-ordinators emphasized that a key distinguishing feature of Youthreach and their work in it is flexibility and responsiveness in addressing the challenges posed by students and meeting their needs. This approach was described as being born out of a requirement to adapt to different learning styles. The focus is on addressing each student’s needs which are

frequently made complex by learning difficulties as well as family, social and economic problems. This flexible, individualised and student-centred approach contrasts with the timetable and curriculum driven approach of mainstream schools, and can only be applied in centres with small numbers of students.

The supervision of work experience is a requirement of the new productivity agreement, but this confirms what many, if not all, Resource Persons are already doing.

- **Task 3: Maintenance of discipline**

Maintenance of discipline is something for which all staff in the centres assume some responsibility. However, it is either the Co-ordinator or Resource Persons, or both if the need arises, who enforce it. Some centres cited examples of the extent to which verbal abuse, and the threat of something more serious, is directed at staff. Responses on the part of the Co-ordinator or Resource Persons to such challenges will depend upon the nature of the incident that has arisen, the circumstances that gave rise to it and the impact on other staff and students. Given the difficulty that many of the trainees have experienced in respect of maintaining discipline in mainstream schools, there appeared to be a genuine desire on the part of Co-ordinators and Resource personnel not to be rigid or heavy-handed in the enforcement of discipline.

- **Task 4: Development and monitoring of the programme**

All of the Resource Persons interviewed felt that they had an acceptable level of involvement in monitoring existing programmes and in the recommending of new or additional courses. There was particular reference to the freedom they enjoy to recommend and/or add to FETAC modules as appropriate. Topics such as horticulture, beauty therapy, biology, sailing, languages and drugs related courses were mentioned.

- **Task 5: Assessment and monitoring of student course work**

This has already been mentioned in the analysis of the Co-ordinator role. Resource Persons also play an important part in this area in the preparation and maintenance of learning plans for students. Resource Persons who are acting as course co-ordinators for the certificate programmes also have a formal role in the assessment and monitoring of student course work.

- **Task 6: Conducting interviews of students**

To a greater or lesser degree all Resource Persons have a direct role in the recruitment of students. Some Resource Persons described how they conduct a fairly formal interview with prospective trainees; others spoke of psychological and education assessments forming part of the initial and subsequent selection stages, with special provision made for weaker students. Irrespective of whether these prospective candidates are referred by a school or are self-referred, the

Resource Person will telephone the school to validate what he or she has been told.

- **Task 7: Administrative duties**

Discussion around this task provoked fairly strong reactions with a majority if not all of the Resource Persons highlighting the extent to which administrative duties have become a heavy consumer of time and energy.

The tasks described under this heading include writing letters, completing multiple forms, office paperwork, managing the Roll Call and Payment system, meeting counsellors, following up absentees and matters relating to the involvement of staff in wider European activities as well as substantial administrative duties related to the Junior Cert., LCA and other courses.

While a number of Resource Persons spoke of not getting away many evenings before 6.30 or 7.00 p.m. resulting in them often working a 45-hour week, others indicated that, despite the administrative workload, they try not to work in excess of 35 hours per week.

- **Task 8: To deputise when necessary for the Centre Co-ordinator**

The extent to which Resource Persons deputise for their Co-ordinator would seem to vary from centre to centre. The pattern in any one centre appears to depend on the practice of the Co-ordinator in liaising with the local community and the various local and State agencies. If the Co-ordinator actively involves Resource Persons in this task, and uses them in a deputising role here, then there is evidence of other deputising activities; where there is little or no role for the Resource Persons in this area, deputising is generally limited to when the Co-ordinator is absent.

As in most boss/subordinate relationships, where the Co-ordinator felt secure in his/her ability to manage the centre, there was a tendency to delegate more and have the Resource Persons deputise more as appropriate.

- **Additional tasks under the new productivity agreement**

The three tasks added to the Resource Person's list of duties by the new productivity agreement encompass

- working with centre management on the planning, delivery and evaluation of appropriate responses to education and training needs
- substitution and supervision
- implementation of the Youthreach Quality Framework.

The first of these appears to reflect or confirm what Resource Persons are already doing in the majority of centres. Implementation of the Youthreach Quality Framework is generally viewed as a positive development. Substitution is also already a feature of the Resource Person's role. On the other hand, supervision has

been a contentious issue and has created sharp differences between Resource Persons and part-time teachers, as the former supervise lunch periods while the latter go off for a break. This work would appear to be unpaid in most centres and therefore automatically increases the 35-hour week. However, in some centres, the 7-hour day has been structured to incorporate supervision of the lunch breaks. Either way, the requirement on staff to continue working after a fixed number of hours may be in breach of legislation governing breaks, paid or unpaid.

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In this section we compare the roles and certain key conditions of employment of full-time staff in Youthreach with those of full-time staff in Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) and teachers in vocational schools.

5.1 COMPARISON WITH SENIOR TRAVELLER TRAINING CENTRES

5.1.1 Duties of Co-ordinator vs. STTC Director

Whereas in Youthreach the person responsible for managing the centre is described as a Co-ordinator, the individual holding a similar position in a Senior Traveller Training centre has been variously described to us as Principal or a Director.

During our visits and discussions with personnel in STTCs, and with those directly and indirectly connected with STTCs, we found a broad consensus that the principal duties of Youthreach Co-ordinators are very similar to those of STTC Directors/Principals. In relation to the delivery of the programme, whether it be in a Youthreach centre or in an STTC, we found that the person managing the centre - Co-ordinator/ Director or Principal - spoke the same language in terms of describing their freedom to interpret needs as identified within his or her local area. They would also agree that there is no fixed template for the delivery of the programme nationwide or network wide.

They spoke positively of their involvement with VEC line management and of their role in determining and developing suitable programmes and curricula for their centres in conjunction with line management. In both types of centre, the person managing the centre works to a defined annual calendar and to a flexible timetable that provides for the teaching of the various subjects, certified or otherwise. The submission of such timetables on a regular and agreed basis to their respective line manager(s) was offered as an example of similar reporting relationships in respect of delivering the programme.

Youthreach Co-ordinators and STTC Directors are required to have direct class contact subject to a maximum of 15 hours per week. In practice, in both cases, the people managing the centres - Youthreach and STTC - made similar reference to their difficulty in distinguishing between direct class contact/timetable hours and direct contact work generally, with the latter becoming more and more demanding.

The tasks of delivering the centre programmes, supervision of staff, recruitment of trainees, community liaison, assessment and monitoring of trainee course work etc. are virtually identical in both networks as are the tasks that describe administrative duties. Budgeting and financial management and the management and development of premises have some variations that are more to do with the size and specific physical nature of each centre than any other distinguishing factor.

There are also certain similarities between Youthreach Centres and STTCs in relation to their target groups of students. A short note on the evolution of STTCs is provided in Appendix 1. In both cases, the target group comprises people who have left school with either minimal or no qualifications. Many students in both networks have special needs and an individualised approach is adopted to their education and training. The cultural background and traditions of Travellers were highlighted as the key distinguishing feature of STTCs. Another difference is that Youthreach has an upper age limit - now set at 20 years of age - whereas there is no upper age limit in STTCs. However, one of the consequences of this is that a growing number of younger Travellers between 15 and 20 are choosing Youthreach in preference to an STTC, as they prefer not to be in class with adults returning to education. It is estimated that some 12% of Youthreach students now are Travellers. One centre (Tuam) exclusively targets Travellers, and others have largely Traveller groups.

5.1.2 Role of Resource Person vs. STTC Teacher

In Youthreach the person responsible for assisting the Co-ordinator is generally described as a Resource Person, although we came across alternative terms such as Resource Manager and Resource Teacher.

STTCs do not have an equivalent position to that of a Youthreach Resource Person. However, they have a complement of full-time as well as part-time teachers in contrast to Youthreach centres which only have part-time teachers. The teaching staff in STTCs fulfil the same role as teachers in vocational schools, albeit in a different environment and with a student group possessing unique characteristics.

Full-time teachers are required to teach for 22 hours per week with an additional 1.5 hours for supervision and substitution. A Resource Person in Youthreach teaches for a maximum of 20 hours per week - just two hours less than full-time teachers in STTCs - but carries a range of additional responsibilities, as set out in Section 4.3. Some of these duties are also carried by full-time teachers in STTCs, including assessment and monitoring of student course work, maintenance of order, curriculum development and delivery (within limits), and course administration. However, they do not shoulder the same responsibility as Youthreach Resource Persons for the development and monitoring of the programme, interviewing students and deputising for the centre Co-ordinator / Director / Principal.

The lack of an equivalent to a Resource Person is an issue for STTC directors. They need to be able to delegate some of their duties and to have a deputy to cover for their absence. They also need to establish a foundation for succession and continuity.

5.1.3 Terms and Conditions of Employment: Youthreach vs. STTCs

- **Qualifications and Pay:** in STTCs, there has been a policy of recruiting people with recognised teaching qualifications to the full-time positions. In general, all full-time and temporary whole-time teaching staff have recognised teaching qualifications. However, a substantial proportion of part-time teachers in STTCs

do not have such qualifications. STTC staff with teaching qualifications are paid as teachers, while those who do not have such qualifications are paid at the standard VEC hourly rate for unqualified part-time teachers. Youthreach staff are paid according to a specific Youthreach scale rather than the Teachers' Common Basic Scale. Youthreach staff are also paid qualifications allowances, but at a lower rate than those paid to teachers. Directors of STTCs are paid an Assistant Principal (A post) allowance.

- **Hours of Attendance and Annual Leave:** Youthreach follows a working year of 226 weekdays from the beginning of September to the end of July, with breaks for Christmas and Easter. The working week is 35 hours (5 days @ 7 hours per day). Co-ordinators are entitled to 30 days annual leave, while Resource Persons have 35 days. Under the new productivity agreement, annual leave must be taken at times when the centre is closed to students, with the remainder to be taken outside these periods with the agreement of the VEC. (Staff entitled to concession days will retain them on a personal basis.)

STTCs operate a shorter, 209 day/44 week year, with breaks at Christmas and Easter. Full-time staff work a 35-hour week. Teachers may opt for one of three working year lengths - the standard second-level school year of 167 days; work from 1st September to 1st June, a total of 176 days; or work the full 209 days. If they work 176 or 209 days, they are entitled to an honorarium calculated according to the extra time over 167 days. In practice, many opt for a shorter year and longer holidays which creates staffing difficulties during the summer months. Holidays are in accordance with the length of working year selected.

- **Contract Type:** full-time staff in STTCs are entitled to permanent employment status. This status has effectively now been extended to Youthreach staff with more than 4 years service as of 1st September, 2005, where they have not previously been given objective grounds in writing for not receiving a contract of indefinite duration.

5.2 COMPARISON WITH VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

5.2.1 Duties of Co-ordinator vs. School Principal

The primary duties of a school principal are broadly defined by the Education Act, 1998. This states in Section 23(2) that the principal shall:

- “ (a) *be responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including guidance and direction of the teachers and other staff of the school, and be accountable to the board for that management;*
- (b) *provide leadership to the teachers and other staff and the students of the school;*
- (c) *be responsible for the creation, together with the board, parents of students and the teachers, of a school environment which is supportive of learning among the students and which promotes the professional development of the teachers;*

- (d) under the direction of the board and, in consultation with the teachers, the parents and, to the extent appropriate to their age and experience, the students, set objectives for the school and monitor the achievement of those objectives, and
- (e) encourage the involvement of parents of students in the school in the education of those students and in the achievement of the objectives of the school.”

These duties are set within an overall requirement of both principals and teachers to

- encourage and foster learning in students
- regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results to the students and their parents
- promote co-operation between the school and the community which it serves.

In summary, as stated in Memo V7, the principal is responsible for the overall organisation, discipline and administration of the school. Principals of vocational schools are also required to engage in actual teaching, with the extent of this ranging from 5 to 18 hours per week, depending on the size of school.

The deputy principal in vocational schools acts as the principal in the latter's absence, and assists the principal in the fulfilment of the principal's role. A non-exhaustive list of the tasks that may be delegated to the deputy principal, and which reflect the principal's role, are listed in Table 5.1 overleaf. Deputy principals are also required to commit time to actual teaching, ranging from 8 to 22 hours per week depending on the size of school.

The list of duties set out above and in Table 5.1 clearly are directly comparable with the list of duties required of Youthreach Co-ordinators (and STTC directors) as described in Section 4.2.

Principals of second level vocational schools may well point out that staff and student numbers are different and that they deal with a much larger establishment than a Youthreach centre. However, in our view, the complexity of managing a Youthreach/ STTC and the intensity of working with such a challenging group of students at least balances the scale argument. Undoubtedly, Principals will also refer to differences in styles, ethos, culture and philosophy in the management of second level schools compared with Youthreach. However, such references, while possibly true to a degree, do not diminish the comparability of the respective roles.

Clearly there is a difference in emphasis here and there in the list of duties. For example, the Principal of a second level school does not have to go out and recruit students, nor perhaps does the Principal have to put as much creative thought into identifying and developing specific programmes to meet the needs of individual students. The curriculum focussed character of second level schools provides a more readily managed platform for school operation than the more complex character inherent in the individualised approach of Youthreach centres.

Table 5.1: Outline of Duties which may be Delegated in Whole or Part to Deputy Principals

Outline of Duties
- Developing the education aims and objectives of the school and devising strategies to achieve them.
- Developing the school curriculum and assessment policies.
- Preparing the school plan for approval by the Board of Management.
- Promoting an appropriate curriculum and methods of instruction which recognises the diverse aptitudes and needs of students.
- Promoting ongoing staff development and in-service.
- Developing effective communication systems with pupils, staff, parents and the wider community.
- Advising on staff requirements.
- Advising as to a probationary teacher's suitability for appointment to a permanent post.
- Monitoring and evaluating the professional performance of the school.
- Dealing with disciplinary problems both for teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Liaising with the school union representative on matters relating to the school.
- Conducting the ordinary activities of correspondence, making reports and returns of information as required by the Department of Education and Science and the Board of Management and ensuring that arrangements are made for dealing with such administrative matters during vacation periods.
- Student discipline in the school.
- Ensuring that parents are informed regularly of the progress of their children at the school.

Note: This list is not exhaustive.

Source: Department of Education Circular 04/98 which applies to secondary schools.

With the introduction of the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes into Youthreach, second level Principals acknowledge that Youthreach is becoming more similar to schools. In recognising generally the achievements of Youthreach, Principals will concede that it is fulfilling an important role.

5.2.2 Duties of Resource Persons vs. Second Level Teachers

The comparison between the duties of Resource Persons and those of second-level teachers has already been explored to some extent in Section 5.1.2. The main focus of teachers is on delivering the curriculum and facilitating and supporting students' learning. Their core role is to:

- plan and prepare lessons
- prepare and mark tests
- prepare and mark homework
- prepare reports on student achievement
- maintain order in the classroom.

Teachers also have more general responsibilities with regard to maintaining the overall environment and ethos of their school. Thus, they

- support school development and planning activities
- take part in curriculum innovation
- assist in implementing the school's student welfare system
- communicate with parents on students' progress
- work with colleagues in delivering programmes such as Transition Year
- cooperate in the implementation of school policies with regard to discipline etc.

It is self-evident that these duties are incorporated into the job description for Resource Persons. However, the role of Resource Persons extends beyond this to include the sort of duties that are performed by teachers having posts of responsibility in second-level vocational schools, specifically the posts of Assistant Principal and Special Duties Teachers (formerly known as A and B posts). A list of the duties appropriate to these posts is set out in Table 5.2. Schools may combine a number of these duties into one post, or assign more than one post-holder to a duty depending on the size of the school and level of the responsibilities.

Table 5.2: List of Duties and Responsibilities Appropriate to the Posts of Assistant Principal and Special Duties Teacher in Vocational Schools

- Year Heads*
- Assistant Year Heads
- Class Tutor
- Responsibility for timetabling arrangements*
- Responsibility for enrolment and monitoring of absenteeism*
- Co-ordinator of school plan*
- Subject Co-ordinators*
- Curricular Programme Co-ordinators*
- Co-ordinator of Staff Development Programmes
- Co-ordination and implementation of school policies, e.g. discipline*
- Co-ordinator of Work Experience Programmes, including placement duties*
- Organisation/promotion of cultural activities*
- Organisation/promotion of sporting activities*
- Budgetary/Financial Administration Assistant*
- Organiser/co-ordinator of external school visits
- Examinations Secretary*
- State Examinations co-ordinator
- School Examinations co-ordinator
- Administration of School Library*
- First Aid and Safety Officer (Fire Drills, etc.)
- Liaison with Parents' Associations
- Liaison with Department of Education and Science
- Liaison with local community/press
- Supervising the maintenance of and availability of school equipment
- Supervising the maintenance and availability of facilities such as laboratories, PE halls etc.
- Stock control
- Co-ordination of school transport
- Administration of special assistance schemes, e.g. free books

Notes: - The above list is not exhaustive
- Duties marked with an asterisk (*) are appropriate for Assistant Principal posts.

Source: - Department of Education and Science Circular 20/98

Many of the duties listed in Table 5.2 effectively form part of the brief for Resource Persons, including:

- class tutor
- responsibility for enrolment and monitoring absenteeism
- subject co-ordinator
- curricular programme co-ordinator
- co-ordination and implementation of school policies
- co-ordination of work experience programmes
- organisation of cultural activities
- organisation of sporting activities
- first aid and safety officer
- state examinations co-ordinator
- supervising the maintenance of and availability of school equipment
- supervising the maintenance of school facilities.

The actual range of duties varies from centre to centre but, in all cases, includes a substantial selection from the above list. It is evident, therefore, that Resource Persons are fulfilling a role that is equivalent to that of a second-level teacher holding an Assistant Principal's post.

5.2.3 Terms and Conditions of Employment in Youthreach vs. Vocational Schools

- **Qualifications and Pay:** permanent whole-time teachers in vocational schools are required to have the teaching qualifications specified in Memo V7 or Circular 32/92. They are paid in accordance with the Teachers' Common Basic Scale, with additional allowances for qualifications and posts of responsibility. As we have already noted, no specific qualifications are stipulated for the full-time positions of Co-ordinator and Resource Persons in Youthreach, and they have unique pay scales linked to that of staff in Community Training Centres. They are also eligible for qualifications allowances.

The Youthreach pay scales have been revised under the new productivity agreement. However, even after this revision, the pay scale for Resource Persons is substantially below the Common Basic Scale at every point, when qualification and supervision allowances are taken into account. If the Assistant Principal's allowance is factored in, Resource Persons lag behind their equivalents in vocational schools by a large margin at every point on the scale (even when the degree allowance currently payable to Resource Persons is taken into account).

The revised scale for Co-ordinators is higher than the Common Basic Scale at every point up to the 21st point on the latter, even when qualification and supervision allowances are taken into account. However, if an Assistant Principal's allowance is factored in, the Common Basic Scale passes the Co-ordinator's scale at the 11th point. If a Deputy Principal's allowance is factored in, a teacher on the Common Basic Scale with such an allowance at point 6 (17-19 authorised posts) is paid more at every point on the scale. Tables comparing the different scales are provided in Appendix 2.

While the pay gap between Youthreach staff and recognised teachers has narrowed, especially in the case of Co-ordinators, the rates are not equivalent since the Common Basic Scale refers to a 167-day school year while the Youthreach scales refer to a 226-day year. The effective daily rates of pay for Youthreach staff are therefore considerably lower than those paid to recognised teachers.

The gap in effective daily rates of pay is highlighted by the fact that Co-ordinators and Resource Persons may be paid less than part-time teachers with recognised teaching qualifications who teach in Youthreach centres. This is a matter that gives rise to considerable discontent among Co-ordinators and Resource Persons. In fact, there is an incentive for full-time staff in Youthreach to resign and take up positions as part-time teachers - by doing so, they can end up with a higher income, shorter hours and less responsibility.

- **Hours of Attendance and Annual Leave:** teachers in vocational schools work a 167-day year. They have a requirement to teach for 22 hours per week, and may opt to give a further 37 hours per year for substitution and supervision. They receive extra pay for these 37 hours. Post-holders have reduced teaching hours - we have already noted those that apply to principals and deputy principals (Section 5.2.1). Assistant principals qualify for a reduction to 18 hours. Of course, in addition to their actual teaching hours, teachers are also required to put in the time necessary to fulfil their other duties.

The hours of attendance required of Youthreach staff are longer, primarily because they work a much longer year of 226 days. The average hours worked per day are probably similar to those of post-holders in vocational schools. (In fact, the principals of second-level schools work very long hours; a recent survey of secondary school principals by the Joint Management Body found that school principals only take holidays equivalent to the 30-day allowance for Youthreach Co-ordinators).

- **Contract:** qualified whole-time teachers in vocational schools are eligible for permanent employment. As we have noted already, full-time Youthreach staff with more than 4 years service as of 1st September, 2005, who have not been given objective grounds in writing for not receiving a contract of indefinite duration will now receive such a contract.

5.3 CONCLUDING COMMENT

During the course of our research, we found that the high level of commitment by all staff working in Youthreach was apparent, but that the level of commitment by Co-ordinators and Resource Persons was quite exceptional. In this regard, the perspective offered by one Co-ordinator serves to highlight the frustration that has developed due to the perceived discriminatory treatment of Youthreach staff:

'The fact that staff, Co-ordinators, Resource Persons and teachers in Youthreach Centres respond to the challenges of providing an alternative approach should not be the basis of regarding them as "non-teacher" - rather they are "teacher plus".'

While we acknowledge that part-time teachers are now recognised, we also feel that for those who have devoted themselves entirely to the provision of the Youthreach learning environment and have been “promoted” to Co-ordinator and Resource Person (because of their success and dedication to the process) it has been a poor reward to find that they are not acknowledged as teachers at all - still less as teachers who have brought something extra to the situation.

Further, we perform the same duties as Principals and Deputy Principals in schools. This includes introducing the programme, timetabling, enrolment, staff induction, staff meeting and support, liaising with other schools or stakeholders, teaching and administrative duties. This would also include October returns, exam registration and payment of fees, liaising with supervisors and organisation of all exams and centres. All of these operations within the Centres are subject to audit and inspection’.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis in this study has covered a review of the Youthreach programme and its position in the education sector. The findings of our survey have produced an up-to-date profile of the structure, activities and staffing of Youthreach centres (Section 2). The role of Youthreach in the education sector and how this responds to identified needs in society as expressed through developments in educational policy and legislation have been outlined in Section 3.

Against this background, we have reviewed the terms and conditions of employment of full-time staff, and have made a detailed examination of their duties (Section 4). We have compared these with the duties and key terms and conditions of employment of staff in Senior Traveller Training Centres and second level VEC schools (Section 5). Our conclusions are set out below.

- 1) **Our central and unequivocal finding is that the work in Youthreach centres is indeed similar in nature and equal in value to the work being carried out in second level schools and Senior Traveller Training Centres.**
- 2) Our principal reasons for arriving at this finding are as follows:
 - **Teaching duties are similar in nature**
 - There is an explicit requirement in the contracts of both Co-ordinators and Resource Persons to teach, albeit it is described as '*direct class contact*'.
 - Co-ordinators are required to allocate up to 15 hours per week of their working time to teaching, the same level as Directors of STTCs and Principals and Deputy Principals of mid-sized schools.
 - Resource Persons are required to allocate up to 20 hours per week to teaching, slightly less than the 22 hours required of permanent whole-time teachers in second-level schools and slightly more than the 18 hours required of Assistant Principals.
 - The range of subjects taught and the curricula pursued are also taught in STTCs and in second level VEC schools. The learning content is therefore the same.
 - The teaching methods in Youthreach are more like those of STTCs than second level schools, with emphasis being placed on an individualised approach to students.
 - **Non-teaching duties are the same**
 - Although Youthreach centres tend to be smaller in student numbers, the non-teaching duties performed by Youthreach staff are directly comparable to those of post-holding staff in STTCs and second level schools.

- The range of non-teaching duties performed by Co-ordinators are essentially the same as those performed by STTC Directors and Principals and Deputy Principals in schools.
- The non-teaching duties of Resource Persons are directly comparable to those performed by Assistant Principals in schools - in fact, Resource Persons combine a range of Assistant Principal duties into their job.
- **The student population is similar, but more challenging**
 - Youthreach centres are providing education and training to children under 18 years of age.
 - While the upper end of the age range appears to have been lifted to 20 (as indicated in the new productivity agreement), in practice the vast majority of students are in the 15-18 years range. In any event, it may be noted that mainstream second level schools frequently have students over 18 years of age.
 - The Youthreach student population is a more challenging group due to the intensity of their needs and demands arising from learning difficulties, social and economic disadvantage, and personal and family problems.
- **Learning outcomes and progression are equal in value to the mainstream environment**
 - The survey of Youthreach centres undertaken as part of this study found that the centres, while continuing to place emphasis on practical subjects, offer the same curricula and certification as mainstream schools.
 - Almost all offer FETAC programmes, and significant proportions (over 40%) offer the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied. A small number also offer the regular Leaving Certificate. This provision is responding to a demand from their students for educational certification.
 - The survey also found that Youthreach is now achieving greater levels of success in terms of the progression of students to employment and further education and training than was the case at the time of our previous survey in 1996.
- **Youthreach meets educational policy challenges**
 - It is now widely recognised that there are different styles of learning and that there is a need for diversity and flexibility in the provision of education.
 - Youthreach exists as a distinctive strand in the education sector, providing flexible, individualised education and training to young people whose needs are not being met in the mainstream school environment.
 - If Youthreach was prescribed as a part of the formal education system under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, this would have the dual benefits of bringing Youthreach from the margins into a newly-defined, inclusive mainstream while also reducing immediately the proportion of early school leavers.

- **Qualifications of staff are the same**
 - Two-thirds of full-time staff in Youthreach hold recognised teaching qualifications. Indeed, some VECs have a policy of recruiting only qualified teachers for posts in Youthreach.
 - The majority of full-time staff (Co-ordinators and Resource Persons) can therefore be defined as teachers recruited to teach and to carry out the same (or equivalent) duties as teachers in STTCs and second level schools.

 - **Unfair discrimination**
 - It is illogical that Directors and full-time teachers in STTCs and, more pertinently, part-time teachers in Youthreach, are paid as teachers so long as they hold recognised teaching qualifications, while Co-ordinators and Resource Persons are not paid as teachers, irrespective of their qualifications. This is inequitable and discriminatory. **No sustainable argument has been advanced for treating STTC staff differently to Youthreach staff.**
- 3) Since Co-ordinators and Resource Persons are demonstrably carrying out duties that are similar in nature and equal in value to the work being carried out by teaching staff in second level schools and STTCs, they should be paid on the same basis.
- 4) We recommend that, if Youthreach Co-ordinators and Resource Persons become entitled to the status and pay of teachers in second level schools, this should be achieved without disrupting or undermining the Youthreach programme and ethos. In particular,
- Staff should be contracted to work the full Youthreach year, and should be paid accordingly
 - To facilitate this, the Youthreach year should be standardised to the same duration as the 209-day year operated by STTCs
 - Co-ordinators and Resource Persons who do not have recognised teaching qualifications should be enabled and assisted to gain such qualifications.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix One:

Evolution of Senior Traveller Training Centres

A1. EVOLUTION OF SENIOR TRAVELLER TRAINING CENTRES

In the 1960s, it was recognised that the number of Traveller children attending school was small. At the same time, increasing urbanisation meant that Travellers were no longer able to earn money from traditional sources such as helping on farms. STTCs were created to provide skills for employment based on a philosophy of trying to assimilate travellers into the settled world. STTCs were to provide a gateway to FÁS programmes. The basic needs of travellers were literacy and numeracy so the Department of Education hired qualified teachers. In the beginning FÁS funded the training allowance and the programmes day-to-day expenses and the Department of Education funded the teaching hours.

Over time, STTCs developed and became recognised as the natural education continuum of Travellers. So while Youthreach was created for early school leavers - a problem that the Department was committed to solving - STTCs became an integral part of Traveller education. In 1998 the Department of Education took on complete responsibility for Senior Traveller Training Centres and Youthreach and a task force recommended that they be aligned to the VEC system. During the mid-1990s the TUI argued for changes to the terms and conditions of employment in Youthreach and STTCs - particularly on the issues of permanence and pay. Ultimately, Youthreach pursued the arbitration route whereas STTCs chose to negotiate. Youthreach settled first and accepted a deal that tied them to Community Training Centres; STTCs, on the other hand, settled for a better deal in which permanence was granted in order to professionalise roles and responsibilities. Staff permanence was linked to the fact that STTCs were a natural progression for Travellers rather than a programme of assimilation. Staff with recognised teaching qualifications were also given the same terms and conditions of employment as teachers in vocational schools.

There are 32 Senior Traveller Training Centres around the country each with an allocation of 5,250 hours of teaching per annum. The aim of the centres is to provide 'basic compensatory education for Travellers'²⁴ in order to ensure the transition to work and adult life as well as full participation in the community. *'The target group is people who have left school with either minimal or no qualifications, however, there is no upper age limit, and particular effort is made to encourage parents on to the programme, given the impact this can have on their children's subsequent participation in schooling.'*²⁵ Many adults are now availing of the opportunity of returning to education. In fact, as adults have taken up places in STTCs, their children have chosen to attend Youthreach so as not to be learning in the same classroom as their parents.

²⁴ www.education.ie

²⁵ www.sttc.ie

Appendix Two:
***Comparison between Pay Scales
for Teachers and Youthreach Staff***

see Appendix 2 Excel Chart attached



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