

External Strategic Review and Plan:

Bradóg Regional Youth Service -

Present and future needs of young people



***Dr Alan Bruce
Universal Learning Systems
Dublin***

November 2007

1. Background

Bradóg Regional Youth Service commissioned this review in April 2007. In the original brief, Bradóg requested a comprehensive literature review (based on national and EU youth policy, youth organizations operating in the north inner city and funding structures) together with a schedule of interviews and facilitated meetings focusing on development of a strategic planning process. Following initial meetings and discussions, it was specifically requested that the process should produce a final report with specific recommendations for a Strategic Plan to cover the period from 2007-2010.

The key aims of this strategic review and plan are:

- To evaluate the degree to which identified needs have been met (or otherwise) in the context of Bradóg's mission.
- To outline the key developments and changes in the community that impact on the needs of young people in the area.
- To identify current needs and issues based on analysis, evaluation and background research with reference to policy at national and European levels.
- To provide such an overview with reference to the needs and expectations of relevant stakeholder agencies (public and voluntary) and the specific role and remit of Bradóg.
- To provide an analysis of the impact of national trends on youth policy, current and anticipated.
- To provide a strategic critique of the strengths and opportunities of Bradóg initiatives in meeting youth needs.
- To provide an overview of opportunities and planning with reference to staffing, funding, capital expenditure, innovative projects and/or targeted programmes.

The objectives are to:

- Identify the key challenges or successes.
- Identify to what extent youth needs and expectations have been met (or otherwise).
- Identify the degree of stakeholder satisfaction.
- Determine nature of changing demographic characteristics and profiles.
- To provide an overview of youth service needs and organization in the north inner city area.
- Undertake interviews, surveys and meetings to establish issues, themes and identified needs.
- To develop a comprehensive consultation process.
- To consult with and interview relevant stakeholders.
- To determine current identified needs and concerns.
- To analyze the impact and effectiveness of Bradóg activities in youth service provision within the context of community development priorities.
- To identify key elements for forward strategic planning.
- To make recommendations from the findings on how youth needs can best be defined and addressed within the strategic mission of Bradóg.
- To provide a final report with targeted recommendations for future developments in a strategic plan.

In addition, the Board of Bradóg, at its meeting of 14 May 2007, requested that all such planning targets and recommendations be practical and focused so that a clear direction would be available to management in structuring the work and interventions of Bradóg over the next three years.

The review involved the following stages:

1. Group meeting with staff (May 2007)
2. Individual interviews with staff (May-June 2007)

3. Interviews with manager and ongoing liaison (May-August 2007)
4. Background literature review (May-June 2007)
5. Interviews with Board members (July-September 2007).

A number of submissions was received, both written and verbal. These, together with structured interviews, observation and background literature review, provide analysis for the context within which Bradóg works and the challenges faced by the organization as it develops its mission. This analysis takes place at a time of profound change for the communities in the north inner city. Shifting demographic patterns, a radically altered intercultural and ethnic environment, employment and housing patterns and the evolving issue of drugs and substance abuse provide a critical strategic background.

In addition inter-agency responsibilities and organizational overlap place a focus on the need for role clarity if the purpose and remit of Bradóg are to be known and valued by the community and funding agencies alike.

2. Contexts

Dublin's inner city has undergone rapid and intense transformation in recent years. While this has produced some level of new economic opportunity it has also produced contradictions and difficulties for people living in these communities. Evidence shows ongoing issues with patterns of inequality, access and empowerment. Several commentators have noted some of the trends. These include:

- The end of work and trades traditionally associated with inner city areas
- Massive new building project activity
- Large-scale construction of private housing/apartments
- Adoption of an increasingly flexible approach to urban policy by the local authority.

From these trends many commentators have raised concerns about the potential exclusion of local populations from access to jobs and housing. This is seen as adding a new dimension to the outlines of the inner city crisis. These local experiences may often provide insight into the processes of urban social change that have been noted in academic literature. They relate specifically to conditions of globalized economic pressure, realignment of urban governance and deepening social inequalities.

McGuirk (2000)¹ claimed that the entrepreneurial approach to planning, necessitating fluid relations among a variety of stakeholders, might allow the local authority room to generate positive social outcomes by taking a more central role. However, he indicates that while the local authority has become a stronger player in the new paradigm of urban governance, it is unclear if it has used this to pursue aims around meaningful social inclusion. He describes a

¹ McGuirk, P. (2000) "Power and policy networks in urban governance: local government and property-led regeneration in Dublin", *Urban Studies*, 37, 651-672.

situation where the local authority seems to embrace a pro-development agenda, with inherent risks of dismantling a number of social housing estates, transforming them into largely private enclaves, and, in the process, displacing populations with long historic connections to the city.

A critical paper on urban development and change in inner city Dublin was published in Chicago in 2004 (Punch, Redmond, Kelly, 2004)². This focused on the current trend of “integrated area planning” and the relationship of revival of a number of social housing estates (primarily flat complexes) in the inner city with significant levels of poverty and other social distress. The authors see the changes affecting these inner city areas in Dublin following a broadly similar pattern.

- First, many social housing estates were socially and economically devastated by industrial job loss and restructuring.
- Second, regeneration plans for some of these estates were developed in conjunction with local communities which were, on paper, comprehensive, integrated and socially and community-centred.
- Third, and most significant, these plans were effectively abandoned by the local authority and reconfigured with heavy emphasis on privatization of social housing areas.
- Fourth, new private plans are being resisted by local communities individually and by a citywide tenants movement (Tenants First).

The authors point to the fact that, for the first time since the Housing Action campaigns of the 1970s, tenants and communities have organized to share information, analyze the processes at work and build a committed resistance movement. These struggles and concerns underlie trends that will be decisive in shaping the future trajectory of the city’s housing and planning priorities. They

² Punch, M., Redmond, R. and Kelly, S. (2004) “Uneven development, city governance and urban change: Unpacking the global-local nexus in Dublin’s inner city”, City Futures, Chicago.

also give a context to issues of uneven development, resources and power in the inner city that shape an approach to and understanding of the needs of youth.

Throughout this research and planning process attention has been drawn by respondents to the need to consider youth needs from the perspective of a changing community context. Young people in these communities have a range of needs, concerns and issues that, in many cases, are pressing and urgent. The socio-economic and demographic transformation of the area poses a range of additional challenges to individuals, families, schools and service providers in enabling the human actors at the centre of the story to achieve their potential.

A critical document informing understanding of these needs is the research commissioned by the Interim Working Group for the North West Inner City Regional Youth Service in 2005. This was a comprehensive needs analysis relating to youth services in the North West Inner City Area. In turn, this followed on from the recommendations of the report *Good Neighbours Close to Town* (Community Technical Aid, 2002). The 2005 report (commonly referred to as the *80:20 Report*)³ conducted the research in the area defined more specifically as the Markets Area and “DDH area” (Dominick St., Dorset St. and Hardwicke St.).

The *80:20 Report* highlights a number of critical issues in relation to quantitative data that underline the nature of change in demographic, social, age, family and economic terms. It defines the area concerned as the North West Inner City area which crosses the boundaries of seven Electoral Divisions. The latest available Census returns (2002) showed 1,900 young people in the area aged between 7 and 18 - and the authors felt that this had not significantly altered by 2005. The authors pointed out strongly, however, that any understanding of the percentage of youth would be necessarily arbitrary as it was impossible, without a household

³ Nolan, A. and Regan, C. (2005), *Dublin North West Inner City: Regional Youth Service Study, 80:20*, Bray.

survey, to know exactly how many of the 1,900 young people between the ages of 10 and 21 in these seven Electoral Divisions fell into the NWIC area.

The authors make further reference to a recent report published by Dublin City Development Board (2005)⁴ which provided a demographic and socio-economic profile of Dublin Central. According to this report, there are 33,579 persons who are 24 years or under in Dublin Central. It was noted that, of the 23,181 children living in family units in Dublin Central, 34% lived with a lone parent (compared to 29.4% in Dublin City and 18.6% in the State as a whole).

The NWIC area, as defined in the study, encompassed a large section of Dublin City Council flat complexes. It was felt useful to look at the tenant profile of Dublin City Council as a whole and specifically at the profile of the North West Inner City tenant population. This was derived from a profile of the tenant population carried out in 2001 by Dublin City Council, in conjunction with its Housing Unit. This produced key findings:

- At 30.7%, the proportion of children under 14 in City Council tenant households was higher than the national population (21.4%).
- A significant proportion of City Council tenant population contained lone parent households (22.4%).
- The average weekly income of a tenant household was less than half the national average for 1999/2000.
- The average income of female, single adult and lone parent tenant households was lower than all other types of households accommodated by Dublin City Council.
- 62.5% of tenant households had incomes below 50% of the national average in 2001. These data also indicate that the DCC tenant households had become poorer, relative to the general Irish population, since the mid-1990s

⁴ Dublin City Development Board (2005), *Inclusion is Everyone's Business*, Dublin.

- Compared to adults, children accommodated by DCC experienced particularly high levels of income poverty.
- Tenant households headed by an employed person experienced lower levels of income poverty than other tenant households - but significantly higher poverty levels than equivalent households in the general Irish population.
- As a result of the large number of lone parent and single adult households in the City Council tenant population, households of this type make up the majority of income-poor tenant households.

These general socio-economic indicators point to the widespread challenges faced by individuals and families living in such circumstances. Of particular relevance for young people are issues around education and schooling, widely regarded as key indicators in empowering individuals and communities to break out of vicious circles of poverty and disadvantage.

The *80:20 Report* built on findings from work done by Dublin Inner City Partnership. This had pointed to widespread educational disadvantage, particularly at primary level.

The majority of pupils in the 41 primary schools located in or around Dublin City Centre come from the most educationally disadvantaged communities in the Country. Up to 20% qualify for Special Needs and an even larger number qualify for Learning Support. Somewhere between 70 and 80% are below the national average in reading and mathematics. A substantial number display poor attendance, a disinterest in education, inappropriate behaviour and low self-esteem. Many drop out of the school system at an early age... Over 90 children out of 100 assessed in 10 Inner City schools in 2001-2002 qualified for special help. In addition, there is a high turnover of staff and schools are regularly losing teachers who have received specialist training.

(80:20 Report, 2005, p. 8).

In addition, low school attendance was recognized as a key factor in educational underattainment. This was linked in some research to issues around anti-social behaviour in the area, the presence of a number of dysfunctional families and a lack of role models in terms of educational success. Such research particularly identified boys in the over 14 age group as being particularly 'at risk' and in need of youth work activity and support. Running through all this were the ever present concerns about drug misuse and the impact of substance abuse in the community for those at such risk.

Social change in the area indicates improved educational outcomes – for some. In part this has been linked to new private housing or to new immigrant communities. What is not in dispute is the persistence of literacy problems, poor educational attainments and negligible progression rates to third level education for significant sections of the youth population.

The rationale in establishing Bradóg Regional Youth Service rested in large measure on the documented fact from previous research that available resources simply did not meet local needs because of a number of concerns.

When asked what these concerns were, research highlighted the following:

- The lack of constructive activities or *places* to go
- Personal safety issues (including concerns around bullying and harassment)
- Awareness about availability of drugs and pressure to use drugs
- Concerns about vandalism and crime
- Employment.

In the “Good Neighbours” report (CTA, 2002) some of the key issues affecting youth had also been highlighted.

Primarily these involved issues around:

- Poor facilities
- Lack of physical infrastructure
- Lack of youth workers
- Early school leaving.

The *80:20 Report* built on these issues in formulating its findings on the rationale for establishing a regional youth service. It recommended a number of themes that needed to be prioritized for any such regional youth service to have maximum impact. These themes were:

- Outreach
- Adequate funding
- Linkage
- Staff capacity and dynamism
- Community led focus.

Additional analysis and recommendations on the wider community development needs were contained in the draft strategic development plan developed by the North West Inner City Network in 2006. While not specifically highlighting youth service needs, it paid tribute to the establishment of Bradóg and located its analysis in the context of education, family, drugs, health and intercultural perspectives.

The establishment of the Regional Youth Service is a welcome development. The potential for the establishment of a Youth Forum by this service and other youth services in the area could be examined to ensure the concerns and viewpoints of youth can be heard and can contribute to developments in the community.

(NWICN Draft Strategic Plan, 2006, p. 21).

All the available literature points to a complex picture of social and demographic change. In this environment, the needs and aspirations of young people are paramount. The picture painted is also one of exceptional organizational complexity with often overlapping roles and responsibilities for a range of statutory and voluntary service providers and agencies. The literature frequently refers to a strong sense of territoriality and localism in the outlook of young people and their families.

Running throughout this material is a general agreement on a number of identified common needs for youth. While these are subject to modification on the basis of gender or age, they nonetheless provide a useful starting point for evaluating the function and future direction of the role and services of Bradóg.

These needs are:

- After school supports and services
- Health
- Sport and recreation
- Supplementary education and lifeskills training
- Employment
- Personal counseling and support.

3. European dimensions

Membership of the European Union has had a marked effect on Irish policy and development over the last 35 years. In addition to the significant supports provided by the European Social Fund, a range of measures, innovative project funding strands and transnational learning and cooperation agreements have stimulated projects and programmes designed to promote community solidarity, innovative learning and progression routes to employment.

As the EU has developed its focus it has moved from the purely economic to embrace a wider range of social, educational, learning and technological supports to facilitate the free movement of capital, labour and ideas. It has promoted strategies to facilitate social inclusion, especially when these are related to the four thematic principles that are contained in the Lisbon Agenda:

- Adaptability
- Innovation
- Employability
- Equal opportunities

In this context policy coordination among the member states in relation to a range of issues – including youth – has become a noted feature of EU intervention. While the EU role in this has had a marked effect on many countries (especially Ireland) it should be remembered that all EU policy is subsumed under the need to promote employment and develop enhanced access to the labour market.

Within this framework, EU policy in relation to youth has in recent years focused on a number of topics and targets. These include:

- Development of a EU Youth Portal

- Development of a EU Youth Forum
- Measures to tackle racism and xenophobia
- Issues around immigration
- Issues around health.

On 5 September 2007 the EU Commission launched a policy initiative on youth designed to chart EU targets for youth over the next few years. This policy initiative was accompanied by two papers from the Commission on youth employment and voluntary activities for young people. As part of this initiative the EU Commission has called on Member States to step up efforts to invest more – and earlier – in young people. This is emphasized not only in financial terms but also in terms of politics, social affairs, families, teachers, employers and NGOs. The Commission emphasizes that youth strategies at both national and EU levels must be across a broad range of policy areas which include education, employment, health, enterprise, culture and sports.

The targets set by the EU for Member States focus on measures that:

- Reduce early school leaving and provide more early school education, especially in disadvantaged areas
- Focus on youth employment prospects
- Create links between business and education through transnational mobility
- Involve young people in decision-making.

Practically, this policy initiative will support proposals around health, voluntary activities, cultural exchange and improved employability for young people. As in all EU initiatives, the primary aim is employment development with a focus on creating the best conditions for long-term labour market entry for young people.

Such a policy, however, also underpins innovative initiatives for funding support such as the new *Lifelong Learning Programme* (2007-2012) and the *Progress* initiative (which links to community development). Initiatives such as these can provide a significant resource base for transnational exchanges, capacity building and community development.

Bradóg has already been involved in a youth exchange initiative (with young people being able to participate this summer, for example, in an exchange visit to Finland) and in joint multimedia projects.

The availability of such resources points to a strategic direction that could significantly enhance Bradóg's mission and capacity. Direct participation in such projects is encouraged and exchange of information, best practice and innovative methodologies is central to a range of innovative funding and support measures. The development of transnational networks is also strongly encouraged. This relates directly to young people but also to youth workers who can benefit from a range of mobility and professional development and learning resources (for example in measures under the EU Lifelong Learning programme such as Grundtvig or Leonardo da Vinci).

Bodies such as Leargas, the EU Commission Office and European Volunteering Service in Dublin can be strongly supportive of project initiatives developed under these and other strands. They all offer useful and effective resources for young people and youth workers alike.

4. Stakeholder analysis

The review process undertook a number of meetings and interviews with staff, management and the Board of Bradóg that informed the analysis of issues, needs and themes to be considered in developing a plan. This process occurred over the summer of 2007 when a number of developments were taking place. These included the provision of an externally funded training programme for staff on team working to meet needs (May), the summer programme of activities for young people (June), changes in administrative personnel structures and development of project work around digital media.

Discussion and reviews with the personnel involved is summarized below and forms the basis of the evaluative conclusions which inform the recommendations for the strategic planning process.

4.1 Board

At the time of this review, the Board of BRYS consisted of nine members, all of whom were interviewed and provided extensive feedback and comment. The general sense gathered is of a motivated group of people who have a clear and committed sense of engagement with both the needs of youth and the needs of the inner city community of which they are a part. The Board has displayed a strong sense of understanding and involvement. It has also displayed a strong sense of awareness of the wider issues and concerns facing the future development of Bradóg.

In the responses received there were certain common trends regarding both analysis and expressed concerns about the issues facing BRYS. There were also differences of emphasis expressed in terms of envisaging the way forward or the priorities that should be addressed by the service in general and management in particular. All members had concerns about improving

representation on the Board from the community in general and from the DDH area in particular. It was recognized that significant growth had occurred in a relatively short period of time and, in that context, there was unanimous agreement that the next phase of development had to be focused and articulated in terms of a clear plan with defined outcomes and targets.

All respondents made specific mention of the central role of the City of Dublin Youth Services Board (CDYSB) and its relationship to BRYS. As the primary funder of BRYS, CDYSB has a critical importance as well as a stated function to monitor and support BRYS activities – and this occurs while a CDYSB representative is also on the Board. While this may have the potential to cause some tensions in terms of operational role clarity, it is a factor about which all are aware. The CDYSB representative on the board of Bradóg changed in the summer of 2007.

The responses of Board members can be analyzed under a number of headings. These include:

- Key themes
- Positive achievements
- Concerns
- Recommended priorities.

In addition, individual members of the Board raised particular points that are considered separately.

Key themes

All members of the Board agree that Bradóg had made a major impact in a short period of time. It had grown rapidly and had achieved significant recognition for the quality and scale of its work. All further agreed that this rapid expansion

posed a set of challenges in terms of defining and meeting the needs of youth in the area.

In terms of these needs, Board members agreed on a number of general issues that face youth in the area. These can be summarized:

- The continuing vulnerability of many youth in the inner city due to their socio-economic situation, demographic changes, lack of activities, family circumstances and uncertain training or employment prospects.
- The ongoing issue of drugs in terms of dependence and availability.
- The need for all age groups to be involved and yet the very specific issues faced by each age group in terms of needs and interests.
- The dramatic rate of change in terms of housing, demographic composition and community involvement in inner city areas.
- Persistent issues around education, schooling supports, guidance and access to valued learning outcomes.
- Significant degrees of territoriality in youth thinking that may inhibit movement or interaction outside the immediate neighbourhood.
- Issues around health, awareness, sexuality and information access.
- Density of housing and level of facilities available.
- While youth retention in school to the age of 16 had increased (indicating a more widely shared parental sense of the importance of educational attainments) early school leaving was still an ongoing issue.
- Low levels of progression and weak employment outcomes.
- The impact and scale of social and demographic change with particular reference to immigration and cultural diversity.

Positive achievements of Bradóg

All members of the Board felt that Bradóg had grown dramatically in a short time. It had made an impact in the area in terms of dynamism, creativity and innovative project work development. An impressive fact, noted by all, was the ability of Bradóg to achieve significant financial resources in a relatively short period of time and to be able to present to other community and statutory agencies an effective and positive public relations presence in relation to the mission, scope and role of Bradóg and youth needs.

All Board members viewed Bradóg as having made good progress in a number of defined areas. These areas include:

- An impressive focus on outreach born out of a visibility and presence which had been established in a relatively short period of time.
- While financially well resourced from the outset, Bradóg has attracted significant funding and resources in a number of innovative and imaginative ways. Fundraising has been successful.
- Bradóg has made a significant impact in terms of its involvement with creative issues around arts, cultural events and digital media. The emphasis on creative expression has proved attractive and engaging to many young people and has demonstrated the ability to develop engagement, skill acquisition and personal expression at many levels. Bradóg has had significant success with its European exchange and creative projects as well as events stemming from its involvement with Aontas Youth Arts Initiative.
- The profile established with statutory groups and among the community is acknowledged. This is seen as a significant factor in promoting Bradóg, its mission and networking ability. Working relationships with Dublin City Council are positive. Engagement with the North West Inner City Network, the forum of regional youth service managers, the City of Dublin Youth

Services Board (CDYSB) and associated structures has been positive and constructive.

- The ability of Bradóg to grow out from its origins in the Markets Area Youth Service to have a presence across the region is acknowledged. The ability to get different and formerly unconnected areas together and to engage in common activities is seen as a real achievement. The ability to break down barriers, to foster joint activities and to secure access to secure access to facilities in Dominick Street are valued as positive outcomes.
- Management has been viewed as dynamic and pro-active. It has been driven across a number of issues and all members of the Board appreciate how much has been achieved in terms of activity, profile and intervention in such a relatively short time. Particular awareness of the importance of outreach was acknowledged if youth were to be engaged effectively. In this context the role of staff was regarded as critical, particularly in view of the importance of the emerging role of the Project Leader.

Concerns

Clearly, the rapid and significant development of Bradóg in such a short time has also resulted in a number of challenges and difficulties. The complexities of community development and youth needs are underscored by profound challenges in terms of continuing pockets of deprivation, legacies of exclusion, demographic transformation and the significant and often overlapping role of agency involvement and responsibility. Allied to this, among all members of the Board was a stated concern that rapid growth had to be matched with a clear and consistent focus on priorities, plans and resources to achieve key and measurable outcomes.

An allied concern for Board members was the ability to secure representation on the Board from additional representative members of the community. While there is a recognition that the scale and extent of volunteering in Ireland has declined in recent years, it is a matter of some frustration that more community volunteers are not represented on the Board of Bradóg. All Board members expressed significant concerns about the ability to establish consistent service provision in the DDH area, with particular reference to Hardwicke Street. Access to premises, interagency liaison, targeted outreach and potential for geographic expansion of Bradóg services (and the targets, accepted goals, phasing and resources necessary to do this) were all referenced as concerns.

A common concern was the stated need to develop a structured and managed level of professionalization in the operation and direction of the service. This related to policies, procedures, administrative resources, planning, review and evaluation. The importance of locating, hiring, training, developing, managing and supporting staff was acknowledged as critical to developing both quality and impact – internally and externally. Funding strategies, staffing levels and the sustainability of service within a planned context were mentioned by all Board respondents.

Board members felt that this was a critical time to stand back and take stock of what had been achieved (or not) and to plan services and actions on this basis. There were some concerns about the need to think through the implications of activities in a consistent way. While it was felt that staff did need enhanced professionalization, it was also felt that this should be in the framework of a common Bradóg vision around critical thinking, accountability (to funders and community alike), demonstrated results, collaboration and communications. Running through many of these responses from Board members was a stated recognition for the need to develop models of best practice, good governance and a clear and agreed focus.

Members of the Board mentioned a number of other concerns. These included:

- The need to avoid distraction, ad hoc responses to crises or any sense of firefighting in the responding to service provision challenges. There were concerns expressed about recent staffing issues and the absence of agreed HR procedures. There were additional concerns around staff understanding of role clarity and performance indicators. It was generally felt that management capacity needed to develop in a way that avoided potential conflict or micro-management and that ensured stability and professional performance.
- A critical concern was that additional staff needed to be recruited to perform agreed functions and to extend effective service provision. For Board respondents such recruitment underlined the need for organizational development procedures and mechanisms that emphasized managing growth and expansion, role clarity, job descriptions and internal procedures that were clear, understood and accepted.
- There were significant concerns expressed about the difficulties of access to premises in some areas within the remit of Bradóg, and in particular to Hardwicke Street. These concerns further related to a number of logistical and practical issues (such as the time involved in moving equipment in and out of premises, securing a minibus, finding administrative premises).
- There were concerns about the need for a visible project base, a centre that ideally should be de-coupled from the existing MACRO building.
- It was felt that financial systems needed strengthening, with greater clarity needed on protocols and procedures with funders (existing and potential).
- There were expressed concerns about how Bradóg could develop an integrated approach to youthwork activity on the ground that took into account multiculturalism and the rapid expansion of newer “gated” communities.
- Several concerns were expressed about the nature and effectiveness of outreach. This is of significance as one of the main funders (CDYSB) ties

- its funding support to a requirement that 70% of staff contact time should be with youth most at risk. This produces understandable pressures and means that structures and programmes need to address the bottom line concerns of such funders. Demonstrating relevance of non-core activities therefore is a particular challenge for the Board and staff of Bradóg.
- Ongoing concerns were expressed around needed additional resources and how these could meet agreed organizational targets. Particular concern was expressed around the need for as effective an outreach resource as possible. Branding was a common concern. While the Bradóg profile was high in certain sectors, many felt that its profile, role and mission in the community were inadequately developed.

Recommended priorities

Members of the Board of Bradóg shared a number of ideas in relation to the priorities for future development of the services and structures of Bradóg. Many of these centred on the development of procedures, mechanisms and policies that facilitated professionalism and best practice. A critical issue for all respondents was how to marshal the talent and resources available to meet the needs of youth in a sustained and planned way. Many recommendations centred on liaison and interaction with other agencies through planned networking and collaboration. There was a stated sense that the key mission of Bradóg was to see that targets were achieved and needs met – even if not necessarily done by Bradóg itself. Developing a range of services which can meet need across all areas in the region was mentioned - not least because this raised the issue of potential geographic extension of service provision in the future. Developing procedures and policies that facilitated best practice and professionalism underlined all recommendations from respondents.

The recommendations shared by members of the Board centred on a number of key areas.

These include:

- A need to develop strategic management capacity
- The need to resource and extend the role of the project leader in the framework of administrative capacity.
- Enhanced image and profile for Bradóg through planned public relations, image development and branding among youth, community and stakeholders.
- Improved mechanisms to secure access to all community centres and resources under the management of DCC. Need for clearer service agreements with DCC.
- Need for dedicated Bradóg premises.
- Need for more staff.
- Need for more joined up thinking and action.
- Need for improved supervision and training for staff and management.
- Improved reporting procedures between management and Board.
- Need to prioritize sports and recreation as pole of attraction for youth.
- Need to address the fact formally that DCC has no plan for the area. CDYSB is not giving sufficient support or staff funding. Clarification of relationship with CDYSB.
- Need for household survey to establish real needs.
- Profile and work around targeted outreach need significant expansion
- Need for implementation of regular review and evaluation mechanisms. Research and development capacity should also be extended.
- Need for strategic priorities so that networking with local partnerships and agencies can be enhanced.

Specific individual issues

Members of the Board of Bradóg also responded with individual recommendations for future development of the service and structure of the

Regional Youth Service. While these were not necessarily shared by all Board members, they fit in to a pattern of suggestions that emerge from a common acceptance of the needs of youth in the area. These individual recommendations included:

- A need to change the legal standing of Bradóg to extend its fundraising brief (e.g. charitable status).
- The need to expand services into new areas as a priority and specifically into Stoneybatter.
- The need for corporate governance procedures to be devised and implemented for the Board itself. This should include the establishment of sub-committees to streamline and improve the work and function of the board, to facilitate improved outcomes and to encourage additional participation at Board level.
- A need for established supervision and mentoring resources for management.
- Speedy resolution of the access issue in Hardwicke Street by a strategy that addresses the DCC directly and builds on precedents set when the DCC gave money to projects to fund specific work.
- Direct approach to the CDYSB for additional funding and resources built around evidence based needs through the household survey.
- Enhanced priority on sport and sporting resources.
- Development of a Youth Band as a priority.
- Improved digital arts work within context of planned activities for improved youth involvement.
- Improved capacity in addressing issues around health and sexual knowledge.
- Consideration of implications of potential advocacy role Bradóg can or should play in advancing needs and/or rights of young people in the area.
- Increased liaison and networking with a wider range of relevant agencies in the area.

- Improved precise procedures for HR and staff management. Immediate clarification of the role and profile of the Project Leader role (with a concomitant increase in salary to reflect role and responsibilities).
- Enhanced reporting procedures from management to the Board.

4.2 Staff

Bradóg bases its services and actions on its staff. The staff are the critical resource in delivering services and, as such, much attention has been given to analysis of capacity, skill, competence and resources to undertake this. The needs in the area demand a high level of both analysis and intervention. As such, a recurring issue for all respondents was the adequacy of the staffing resource in terms of both numbers and capacity.

Staff contributed freely and extensively to this review process. They were seen collectively in May 2007 and thereafter individually. Many issues were addressed in the review process and the comments received reflected a wide range of issues and concerns. Staff, no less than anyone else, have been impressed by the rapid expansion of Bradóg services. They have developed a lot of expertise in meeting the challenges before them. A number of concerns were addressed however in terms of resources, focus and direction which form the basis for a number of recommendations and suggestions.

A critical factor for Bradóg will be the development of a professional staff management and Human Resources Development system, which develops, agreed policies and procedures for the recruitment, retention, development, support, monitoring and deployment of personnel. At present much staff activity is affected by insufficient numbers and inadequate administrative resources. In addition, certain concerns have been voiced around role clarity and coordinated service provision.

Many staff responses regarding the issues faced by Bradóg were common. Some were individual. Staff responses, whether individual or collective, have been subsumed under general headings. The themes entailed give a sense of staff perceptions on the way forward for Bradóg in developing a meaningful and effective planning process to the satisfaction of all. They are designed to form the basis of a planned response to needs of youth which is relevant and based on the considerable experience of the people involved.

Bradóg staff showed themselves to be motivated and aware. All expressed appreciation of the opportunities and challenges. While variations in style and approach were in evidence, much effort has been invested to develop an effective common understanding and teamwork approach. Such a team-working approach has been an objective of Bradóg management although the rapid pace of events has often meant that this has lagged behind because of the effort to meet other pressing needs.

Staff reflect a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Some have specific backgrounds in youth work, although not all have completed formal qualifications. Some worked in the communities concerned for a number of years prior to the establishment of Bradóg while others came into the area from elsewhere. A range of skills and interest is evident, ranging from advanced theoretical understanding of community development patterns to strongly practical and youth centred service provision.

A key component has been the development of the Project Leader role. Increasingly the Project Leader operates under the remit of the Bradóg management perspective and her responses and suggestions will be considered in the appropriate section on management responses.

Key themes

All staff respondents acknowledged the rate of change and development in Bradóg in recent times. All were aware of the nature of exciting new projects and the potential to engage young people creatively. All had strong concerns about the best methodologies to develop effective outreach to engage young people – particularly for those in older age groups. There was a general awareness of the complexity of issues and challenges facing young people in the area, if less evident agreement on how best to develop services to meet these. Particular reference was made to schooling support difficulties and the issue associated with underage drinking and availability of drugs.

Among the common themes identified by all or most staff were the following:

- The need to develop a clearer distinction in Bradóg at all levels between innovative projects and mainstream work. Some pointed out that the distinction could be blurred and there could be a resultant lack of focus in achieving agreed targets. Some respondents felt uncertain about where priorities lay and were concerned that funding pressures could deflect interventions or allow events take over the core work tasks needed to meet needs.
- There was a general and stated concern that professionalism needed to be developed to the highest levels. It was unclear however whether professionalism was understood in the same way by all. Some felt that staff were not treated professionally while others felt that qualitative interventions were not sufficiently acknowledged because of the need to meet quantitative targets for external funding requirements.
- There was a general recognition of the need to develop effective and far-reaching outreach strategies and methods. This was seen to underline the need for more staff and resources. Additionally, many mentioned the need for a clear networking strategy to enhance not only outreach but also

cooperative measures to understand and meet the needs of youth in the area.

- There was consistent mention of concerns around planning, structure and staff development. It is not clear to what extent staff feel themselves competent to analyze systematically the needs in the area and to input to action research or planning processes. Issues around the balance between taking responsibility and accepting management direction were not clearly understood. Many identified barriers and difficulties without necessarily being aware of concrete strategies to address these externally or, more importantly, internally. Strong opinions were expressed that role clarity for staff had been insufficiently developed. Concerns were evident about staff being undervalued or professionally undeveloped.
- All appreciated the fact that a key role for staff was one of guidance, support and advocacy for young people in the area. There was less evident agreement on how best to develop these roles and some degree of unawareness about the professional and training implications for assuming any or all of these roles in an accountable and effective way.
- The practical engagement and experience of staff meant that there was a highly developed sense about the needs, structures and changing circumstances of the community and its young people. All mentioned the importance of developing some way to interface with new gated communities or ethnic minorities, or to develop non-formal experiential learning processes that could prove attractive to young people at risk. All were concerned at the high degree of local territorial focus that presented many young people from engaging with anyone outside their immediate locality (other than when at school). Strong emphasis was placed on the need for after school projects (associated unease with the lack of linkage with schools and home-school liaison services was also expressed). While this awareness was common among staff there was less agreement on what specifically Bradóg could or should do in such circumstances. Many expressed dissatisfaction with 'management structures' and others

complained about group tensions and disagreements that had on occasions turned problematic.

- Linkage and liaison were mentioned by all as valued outcomes that would enhance the work and mission of Bradóg. This was felt to be poorly developed with a range of significant actors, particularly in the education sector. This lack of linkage was seen as also existing in regard to the Garda/JLO, churches, immigrant agencies, FAS – to name some of the agencies referenced.
- There was a general sense of enthusiasm among staff for the excellent results produced by innovative projects in the arts, media and European exchanges. Some concerns were expressed that these could impede or hamper mainstream or core work. Many specific examples were referenced by staff in relation to services that required enhanced development – health programmes, advice on sexuality and relationships, addressing anti-social behaviour concerns, sports, education and learning.
- A common concern, mentioned but not extensively developed, was the worry about progression for older groups (over 16) and employment. Issues around personal confidence and employability were identified. There was also general awareness of gender specific concerns for older teenagers in engaging with their future life expectations.
- Lack of Bradóg profile was a concern for many of the staff respondents. Many felt this had been insufficiently developed and was uneven in its impact. One respondent summed it up by saying that those ‘in the know’ successfully accessed the service while those ‘not in the know’ simply did not. These raised additional concerns about only addressing the needs of more accessible or easier to manage target groups. Significant concerns were mentioned on how best to tackle the needs and provide service to all those who could potentially benefit in a planned and systematic way. On a positive note, it was felt that this could be done.

It was generally accepted that Bradóg had a major role to play but lacked sufficiently clear direction, resources and focus to do this as well as it should.

Positive achievements

Staff acknowledgement of change and impact was in evidence from all responses. All had a strong sense that Bradóg had made a substantial impact, had enormous potential and should rise to the challenges identified in the changing communities of the inner city. In locating the positive achievements and successes staff expressed excitement about the energy and enthusiasm Bradóg had displayed in addressing imaginative developments.

Among the positive achievements referenced by staff were the following:

- Bradóg had shown itself to be providing a useful and important service in a well-managed and developing way. It had initiated and conducted new and imaginative projects that tapped into the interest of young people. Much of this project work had a stimulating and educational content and ensured that the reputation of services provided among the target groups was high.
- Bradóg was providing essential and meaningful supports in an effective way. It engaged with a variety of activities and had succeeded in making extensive contacts with significant numbers of young people. Much of what Bradóg did and accomplished highlighted examples of best practice.
- Innovative projects, especially in terms of digital media and European exchanges, were highly valued for their scope and impact. This range of activities was seen as underlining Bradóg's role as a cornerstone of community activity.
- Many staff felt that big events were done well. Outreach did work well but it was felt to be a difficult process, as it had to overcome and break down

- a number of barriers. Understanding of outreach and effective methodologies seemed, however, uneven.
- Staff felt that the networking, which had been developed either through day-to-day work or through specific projects, had been extremely useful. Concerns centred on the need to extend this networking in a systematic way.

Concerns

All staff recognized that Bradóg had made a rapid and significant level of development in a short time. Many were gratified at the impact they were able to have through activities and projects. There was also a range of concerns expressed regarding a number of challenges and difficulties faced. There were stated difficulties in relation to common issues in youth work: community development challenges in a context of deprivation and demographic transformation, connecting with young people where they are, addressing health needs, meeting the very different needs of different age groups (and particularly older youth).

For most staff the biggest expressed concerns centred on a perceived lack of structure or strategy. Several expressed concerns about poor interpersonal relationships or the impact of conflict. Many felt that aspects of work were simply not integrated in a coherent way. Some were unsure about expectations in terms of professionalism and the training, qualifications and standards needed to achieve this at individual levels.

Particular frustration was in evidence in relation to access issues with community resources in certain areas. While access had been secured in Dominick Street it was still blocked in Hardwicke Street and this was seen as blocking the effective expansion of services under the remit of Bradóg – as well as raising questions about future geographic expansion plans if these issues could not be resolved

speedily and satisfactorily. Staff expressed significant concerns about their ability to establish consistent service provision in these areas if access to premises, interagency liaison and logistical resource issues were not resolved.

A common concern was expressed around the need to develop and enhance outreach. Some dissatisfaction was mentioned about the emphasis on the need for quantitative measures, administrative demands and the danger of prioritizing 'tasks over process'. The reality is that levels of training and experience among Bradóg staff vary. To develop effective teamwork, roles will need to be clearly demarcated but with a developed common understanding of the professional methodologies, techniques and interventions required to achieve strategic targets. This applies particularly to concepts around outreach. The reality is that this needs to be done in a systematic and recorded way with specific targets. While this is a requirement for some external funding providers (as was noted by staff respondents) it is also a foundation for the effective planning and delivery of service. A central dimension of this is core staff training and the development of observational and action-research capacity.

It is evident that all staff are extremely busy and that some pressures have been experienced in having to meet targets or respond to new project demands as they arise. It is also understood that this goes with the early and rapid expansion of service provision. Some staff felt that they were too much in their own comfort zone. Some felt they did not have adequate levels of development for the level of professional communications, analysis and reporting required.

Many felt that the real direction should more and more centre on 'intelligent advocacy', tied to a deep understanding of the difficulties facing youth in inner city communities while also providing relevant services and developing effective outreach to all. Allied to this were real concerns whether Bradóg currently had sufficient rigour and structure. There was a general sense that this should be one of the key targets to consolidate successes so far while, at the same time,

developing the on the ground linkage to meet the real needs around skills development and progression for the young people accessing services of Bradóg.

Respondents mentioned some specific concerns. These include:

- Poorly developed levels of linkage to schools and home school liaison programs.
- Persistence of strongly localized and territorial mindsets where some youth are reluctant to move outside their areas. In some cases this is changing but, especially for certain age groups, it can be a powerfully inhibitory factor to participation in some region wide projects.
- The persistence of gaps in service for older age groups.
- The perceived lack of balance for some respondents between core work and new projects. Some attributed this to unclear direction and the lack of strategic planning.

Recommended priorities

In general, staff were all too aware of the need to match expertise, competence and commitment to the needs of a rapidly developing regional youth service. Local community issues were seen as things that could be addressed. There was also realism about the need to meet the requirements and expectations of funders – however awkward or time consuming the administrative burdens might be. Many staff had extensive levels of experience in a variety of settings. All accepted the need to develop as a coherent team for effective performance.

A key challenge in this context is professionalism - and acceptance of the responsibilities entailed from being professional. Some staff saw how this, in tandem, related directly to the need for a clear, directive and professional management focus – which in turn also needed to be supported. It is

understandable that for some the requirements and expectations of management may be seen as too rigid or inflexible, especially when the needs of youth in transitional communities may appear so fluid. The reality however is that valuing unquantifiable process over quantifiable targets is a false debate. For meaningful change to occur clear and measurable targets will have to be set, measured and achieved. And if targets are or are not achieved, reasons will have to be advanced. This in turn underlines the need for critical and researched evaluative capacity among all staff so that Bradóg can develop itself as a pole of best practice in identifying and meeting youth needs in a consistent way.

Among the priorities mentioned by staff were:

- The need for a plan and structure that will set priorities and develop the professional capacity of staff.
- The need for a dedicated drop-in centre and premises that acts as a focal point for Bradóg services.
- The need for assigned drop in days for young people.
- The need for organized sports activities.
- The need for outings and organized visits for youth (both national and international).
- The establishment of models of best practice, with particular emphasis on technology, media and the arts where there is already an established track record.
- The need for a coordinated advocacy role. Associated in some ways with this is the need for a comprehensive service around health, relationships and sexuality.
- More after schools programmes.
- A structured outreach programme with a particular focus on new communities not traditionally served.
- Enhanced linkage with other service providers, especially in the context of educational and after school provision.

- Development of a capacity among staff for critical reflection and this reflected in staff training (both internal and external).

4.3 Management

The current management structure of Bradóg rests on a Manager and Project Leader. This structure has been evolving, particularly in regard to the role and responsibilities of the Project Leader. A dedicated office space exists for the manager and administration. In the timespan of this review process a restructuring of the part-time administrator role was necessitated.

The development of an effective management team is recognized by all as an absolute priority for the next stages of Bradóg's development. It is accepted that the rapid development of services and profile has meant a lack of emphasis on role clarity, structures and managerial procedures. The resource is an important one and the individuals concerned are highly motivated. The maximization of their capacity should be a key target in the development of services and structures.

Management is keenly aware of the need to focus on team performance. Issues around professionalism, training, capacity and communications have been central. There is evidence that this is becoming even more important as services expand and needs are more clearly identified. In this context managerial capacity and support are critical. A wide range of issues was identified in relation to performance appraisal alone. Without clarity these could easily slip into sources of potential conflict and discord. It is helpful therefore to note that the need for policies, procedures and professionalism is recognized and accepted. A key task however is to avoid reactive management styles. The capacity to anticipate issues and concerns goes to the core of the planning process.

Both the Manager and Project Leader have extensive experience of youth and community work. Direct experience of professional management was not as well developed and it is accepted that this has had to be developed within the context of Bradóg and its rapid growth. In this context, the scale and range of the Manager's activities has been extremely wide. There is an evident level of enthusiasm, commitment and expertise with a strong sense of leadership in achieving the target of meeting the needs of youth. The Manager's track record in securing funding, innovative projects and profile for Bradóg has been impressive. There is no shortage of creative ideas and energy in developing a range of activities.

An identified issue of concern, however, has been the need to develop the practical, planned and administrative framework within which services can be articulated. The pressures and strains of significant growth have been reflected in issues around role clarity, teamwork, communications and procedural weaknesses.

The development of the Project Leader role has been welcome and has the capacity to address many of the identified issues. The development of administrative procedures, line management reporting structures, clear and accepted targets, performance standards and professional competence is an immediate need. In articulating a management development perspective it is clear that specific attention needs to be paid, on the one hand, to networking, strategic alliances, funding, mission and outreach. On the other hand, there is a need for an internal focus on performance, standards, quality, review and outcomes allied to stakeholder satisfaction, teamwork and effective communications.

Key themes

The responses from both the Manager and Project Leader indicated high levels of awareness of the challenges and issues faced. Among these, focus centred on capacity and support for staff and management alike in developing professionalism. Some of the background issues that were identified looked at the key actors involved in youth work, and in particular at the roles of the CDYSB and DCC. There is a wide range of agencies involved in this sector and significant work has been done in developing networking, contacts and profile. This is recognized as a major strategic focus and will need to be prioritized on an ongoing basis both in terms of raising profile and securing adequate funding (core and project). It is also accepted that this, to be optimally effective, needs to be done on a phased and planned basis.

Networking and linkage are correctly identified as significant issues. In addition, however, is the need to develop staff and team performance. Much effort needs to be centred on setting targets for both professionalism and performance. This has a clear impact on management time spent on developing the communications, personnel resources and supports required. Both the Manager and Project Leader expressed concerns around time management issues with so many competing agendas.

Responses from both indicated a number of concerns and targets in developing an effective management resource. These include:

- The need to develop a common template for staff induction and training. Some elements of this could be done internally (thereby developing capacity) and some could be sourced externally. Systematic and common staff training would help to develop the critical factor of communications and teamwork.

- The need to prioritize clear and accepted standard procedures. This required a handbook and distributed copies of policies and procedures to all.
- The need for adequate office space. There was often little time or space for staff (or management) to reflect and plan and this needed to be addressed.
- Responsibilities needed to be allocated in a clear and understood way. A critical factor was role clarity in developing common professional standards. While it was accepted that things had improved there was a recognition of ongoing understanding of who does what.
- There was an identified need for regular management meetings for management. Internal communications were critical and staff needed clarity and leadership. Supervisory and management needs were connected. Particular emphasis was felt needed on performance appraisal mechanisms.
- There was a priority on enhancing the management role in developing outreach and networking. This was a responsibility that should be undertaken by all in Bradóg but required coordination and motivation from management. Continuity was essential and networking needed to have clear targets and defined outcomes.
- There was an identified need for enhanced capacity to evaluate and review activities. Allied to this was the need for some mechanisms to track 'customer satisfaction' for youth service users as well as the community in general and other stakeholders.
- Management had a critical role in addressing internal staff dynamics. A key element would be training, structures and standards.
- Managerial functions needed to separate into strategic and operational. It was essential that there was a balance between high-end developmental work and internal standards and monitoring.

- Relationships with the Board needed to be developed both in terms of reporting mechanisms and in terms of recognizing the policy-making role of the Board.
- Staff development was critical. While expansion was required, this needed to be achieved in the context of procedures, professional standards and adequate and ongoing training and development supports.

Bradóg has the beginnings of a new and effective management resource. The period of initial significant growth and expansion has brought significant funding and opportunities. It has also brought the need to address internal, procedural and administrative obligations and to achieve a harmonious balance of priorities. Bradóg needs to address these priorities while at the same time not neglecting the innovative opportunities that come from new projects streams, community changes and new developments.

Many respondents identified the significant changes that were occurring particularly with the DIT move to the Grangegorman campus and the new and proposed housing and construction developments in the designated geographic area of the regional youth service. Geographic expansion targets were agreed by all as essential for Bradóg's remit but how this was done was as important. New opportunities could not be grasped without addressing ongoing internal issues and the needs and perspectives of main stakeholders. In all this a process of communications, learning, research and policy advocacy were seen as critical in developing the capacity of Bradóg to both respond to needs and shape them by professional service provision and leadership.

5. Analytical overview and recommendations

Contained in this set of responses were many suggestions and indications from staff, management and the Board of the needs of Bradóg at this time. In developing a strategic plan and direction for Bradóg, there is a need to concentrate on the identified issues and priorities so that a series of recommendations may inform the key strategic goals.

Bradóg can lay claim to a significant number of successes since its inception. It has made a significant impact among strategic interests, not least some personnel in Dublin City Council. It has spearheaded innovative projects around the arts, digital media and European exchanges. It has played a leading role in youth arts initiatives, in particular with Aontas and the Hallowe'en festival programmes. It has initiated a range of outreach measures and project activities that have engaged young people and provided a focal point for good and meaningful youth work. It has liaised successfully with other agencies to develop common actions.

There have also been challenges. It has done all this with inadequate levels of staff. It has found it difficult to balance youth work contact requirements (on which funding is predicated) with administrative and project requirements. Time management, as in any organization, is a concern. It has not developed clear policies and procedures around personnel, practice and performance. Many have found the pace frantic and driven and in the process there are expressed concerns that day to day issues could be neglected – something that could affect the core mission and function of a regional youth service. There have been identified issues around communications and teamwork. In all this there are concerns about capacity and qualifications – staff and management training is underdeveloped. Throughout all this has been the running concern about community capacity and engagement.

All this has been significantly exacerbated by the practical difficulties in gaining physical access in Hardwicke Street or the logistical difficulties in moving equipment in and out of premises that have been secured in Dominic Street. There has been a sense of frustration in developing adequate outreach to those who are most vulnerable – older age groups and those in areas not traditionally service by Bradóg. There has been the contrast between engaged communities and those that are less so. There are serious worries about the implications of expansion into new areas if these concerns are not addressed.

In a field with many overlapping agencies and strong existing interests and concerns, Bradóg needs to build alliances, raise its own profile and negotiate with a range of statutory, voluntary and community interests. This raises particular issues around capacity and professionalism. The key to this is a clear focus on the needs of the target group (young people) that in turn determines the nature of the personnel who can achieve the Bradóg mandate.

Many concerns were expressed by respondents throughout this review that the transition from a locally based youth programme to a regional youth service has produced many issues and challenges. This is true and it is a tribute to Bradóg that it has been able to do this effectively and in a manner that attracted considerable new funding and support. The issue is to also respond to the need to consolidate and plan the next steps that can extend this process, there is no turning back at this point. A critical component will be for Bradóg to appreciate that it cannot do all this on its own but will have to liaise in structured ways with other agencies and community groups to see that this is done. In the fullest sense this means that the real challenge is developing capacity so the Bradóg can lead a process where many others will contribute collaboratively.

In this process many challenges are faced. The main one will be staff, training and capacity and the learning that comes from critical reflection and professional engagement with youth work in the communities involved.

From feedback, literature and observation a number of issues was identified regarding Bradóg. These issues form the basis of recommendations for the planning process.

They can be summarized as follows:

Rapid growth

This has been a noted feature of Bradóg since its inception. There would now appear a need to consolidate many aspects of this process, to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses and to embed structures and procedures that support this. Attention to details and commonly accepted procedures and policies are necessary. At the same time, Bradóg needs to position itself to seize opportunities presented by a changing environment and simultaneously permit future planned expansion. In a strategic sense this means developing a balance, through ongoing review, between consolidation and expansion. The main point is that service provision needs to follow identified need.

Project success

There has been significant achievement with arts, media and exchange projects. With the establishment of a dedicated arts and intercultural resource centre this looks likely to continue. Such success requires a specific focus on new project development including sourcing such project streams as well as project management skills. Projects need to be constantly referenced to mainstream work and mission. Services that engage youth and provide supports are the core of Bradóg's activity. Needs have been identified in other areas which need investigation – especially health, sexuality, sports, recreation and education. A particular emphasis on educational needs should be developed to equip young people to engage with their learning and development needs. To this end Bradóg

should be open to involvement with a range of educational resources and services. Bradóg needs to assess whether it can provide these directly or link in planned and targeted ways with agencies or resources that can. In this regard linkage with bodies like the HSE, Citizens Information Board, FAS, education providers etc. should be explored and developed as necessary.

Networking

Development of Bradóg capacity and services critically depends on the linkages and profile established with a wide range of statutory, voluntary, and community organizations and alliances. Bradóg requires a clear focus and concentration on the critical paths to follow here and also the best methodologies in which to promote cooperation and collaboration with appropriate bodies. This is an area with vast potential but requires clear targets and a defined sense of achievable outcomes to maximize impact. Networking for the sake of networking can consume significant resources in terms of time and personnel.

In addition to the range of youth specific agencies is a range of statutory and voluntary service providers and networks which could be developed. One identified factor was the importance of skill acquisition and employment progression for youth (especially in the older age groups). Bradóg should develop structured links with FAS and educational bodies to develop momentum and linkage in this area. This means Bradóg developing the capacity to be aware of training, development and employment opportunities. In a similar manner, networks that address identified needs in recreation, education, project and community development should be actively investigated. Bradóg has much to learn from structured networking in terms of staff capacity. It also allows Bradóg to assume a leadership profile in the sectors in which it is active.

Community change

A key issue is the profound rate of socio-economic change and demographic composition occurring in the wider community. Bradóg needs to understand and proactively respond to the opportunities and challenges offered by such a process. A crucial factor will be the identification of new communities and the strategies necessary to engage youth meaningfully in them. Associated with this is a factor identified by the literature and all respondents – the emergence of ethnic minority communities. A separate and focused strategy is necessary to engage these populations in relevant and mutually beneficial ways.

Management capacity

Managerial competence is a striking need for the future development of Bradóg. This implies the training, support and development of existing staff (up to and including consultancy and mentoring) together with the development of management and administrative structures that regulate, motivate and monitor activities professionally and efficiently. Bradóg now requires significant expansion of capacity in this area as a priority for future growth. There is a need to avoid micro-management and to develop supervisory methods that support the wide range of activities on which Bradóg is involved in professional ways.

Staff

Significant issues have been identified in terms of staff needs and requirements. There are evidenced concerns around capacity, competence, resources, training needs and support. Staff are the critical resource in service development and in projecting a professional and quality driven service as well as identification and response to needs. The parallel development of teambuilding and communications skills needs to be strongly prioritized.

Board role

The Board has a critical role in setting policy and strategic mission for the regional youth service. Its role and function need to be resourced in terms of effective procedures, time and structures that enable debate, reflection and emphasis on quality monitoring systems. Methods to enhance the operational efficiency of the Board and to extend its membership in strategic ways need to be considered. The Board also needs to receive information, reports and data in structured and regular ways to facilitate its own decision-making and planning role.

Procedures and policies

Almost all respondents and analysis confirm that there is a gap in the systematic provision of policies and procedures by Bradóg. This needs to be addressed in terms of a range of issues that cover personnel, health and safety, equality and diversity, standards, ethics, operational standards, communications, Human Resource Development, etc.

Outreach

Meeting the needs of the youth in the area (and satisfying the funding criteria of the major funder) requires a significant concentration on contacting, engaging and following up with the target youth population. This requires specific resources that are motivated, innovative and structured. Outreach needs to be implemented and reviewed on an ongoing basis and should form the basis of Bradóg's main activities in extending its impact. This requires resources, training and targets that are reviewed and monitored and dovetailed with management systems.

Profile

Bradóg has an established profile in the area and among the main agencies. This needs a specific plan so that it is continually extended and developed. A key point here, and mentioned by all respondents, is the need to develop a 'branding' strategy for Bradóg. This should inform both internal and external practice. Ongoing presentations to potential funders have been successful and should be extended. Significant enhancement of the website and web-based resources is needed. Issues around the move of DIT to the Grangegorman campus offer particular opportunities here.

Resources

All services require money as well as staff and infrastructural resources. There is an expressed need for a plan to maintain and enhance existing core funding while also creating ways to extend this and develop new project driven funding mechanisms. Most funding comes with a price tag in service development so there should be an established system of prioritization based on researched needs and requirements. Associated with this is the need to plan and employ adequate personnel resources, to provide centres, transport and equipment. This needs to be costed and budgeted in a professional way on an ongoing basis with the clear awareness that it is likely to expand and develop significantly as Bradóg's services develop. Strategies to link in to local infrastructural developments and revenue generating streams are critical. Of immediate importance is the need to develop a structured engagement with Dublin City Council that seeks dedicated resources in terms of staffing and develops a protocol and service agreement mechanism to meet the needs of youth. Significant questions have been placed around DCC's plans for the area and Bradóg needs to be pro-active in engaging with this while not neglecting the additional administrative blockages in accessing premises and existing resources.

Communications

The core of any organizational development strategy is an effective communications strategy, both internal and external. There are noted issues around role clarity, team operation, management directions and internal dialogue that are directly dependent on improved communication structures. Regular meetings, planned training, electronic communications, report writing, research, public relations and professional teamwork demand a commitment to a renewed and ongoing communications programme that includes training and review.

Geographic expansion

Significant issues have been expressed around the challenges of particular locales and access to resources. This impacts on consideration of whether and how Bradóg can or should extend its service provision and activities into other areas. The widespread evidence of need, the significant existing and planned new housing developments in the area, the Grangegorman campus and identified areas for expansion (Smithfield and Stoneybatter) all require immediate attention in terms of planning and strategy. In view of the need to develop a regional focus and identity for youth service provision, extension into areas like Stoneybatter should be thoroughly investigated. While there is a need for consolidation of existing resources and successes, geographic expansion can be a priority when it maintains momentum, enhances profile and attracts the required resources to avoid over-extension. Any such extension into hitherto unserved areas should be preceded by a rigorous needs assessment and research process and agreed set of priorities and rationale through a structured discussion led by the Board.

Project development

The excellent track record of Bradóg in developing innovative projects needs to be strengthened and extended, consistent with agreed operational goals and maintenance of core funding activities. New projects significantly enhance interest and engagement for young people. The development of European exchanges and shared expertise can have a particularly strong impact in terms of developing experience, skills and horizons. Strong needs exist in areas around sport, recreation, health, training, learning, employability and cultural expression that can be met by projects funded by national, EU and international agencies. A key role for strategic management should be to source and promote these. Innovative projects complement and enhance programs and can develop significant added value. Not least of the benefits are the associated skills and capacity development targets for staff. New project streams and the resources of agencies like Leargas (which is located in the area) or EU volunteering services should be explored on a regular basis.

Planning and evaluation

Planning involves all stakeholders: Board, management and staff. In itself it is a critical teambuilding tool. Planning at both macro and micro levels should be promoted throughout Bradóg and its activities. In addition the reflective capacity to analyze community conditions and youth needs requires development and extension. Issues like the household survey or shared outreach strategies indicate how pressing this need is for Bradóg's future development trajectory.

6. Strategic goals

The recommendations flowing from stakeholder feedback and analysis are not designed to be exhaustive. Within the necessarily time limited scope of this review they attempt to pick up the main themes and issues identified by respondents. The recommendations flow into and inform the strategic planning goals. It is suggested that future action and strategy be informed by a number of strategic goals. The strategic goals proposed are:

Mission and focus

Bradóg aims to be a quality regional service that identifies and meets the needs of young people in the North West Inner City area.

Operational professionalism

Bradóg aims to develop, promote and implement best practice in the development and deployment of its human resources.

Profile and branding

Bradóg aims to establish itself as a driving force in service provision, recognized and valued as a quality resource in services and networks that meet identified needs

Policy and governance

Bradóg aims to develop operations, methods and structures that enable effective policy formulation and review mechanisms that can be communicated internally and externally

Activities and outreach

Bradóg aims to develop and promote actions and services that meet identified needs of young people and inclusive strategies to develop their development as engaged citizens. It will be seen as a leader in developing innovative projects based on best practice at local, national and European levels.

Research and planning

Bradóg aims to develop (a) excellence and skills in understanding needs and youth development issues (b) its research capacity and (c) mechanisms that enable effective planning and evaluation of its initiatives and performance.

Finance and resources

Bradóg will plan, target and access the resources, finance and capacity required to meet its strategic goals in a professional, accountable and sustainable way

7. Key actions

The following are the actions to be developed over the 2007-2010 period under each of the Strategic Goals.

1. Mission and focus

- Development of strong mission and profile in the designated area of the North West Inner City for young people.
- Communication of policy and targets to all key stakeholders.
- Develop internal and external focus on best practice.
- Explore quality systems in relation to internal practice and service provision.
- Develop a set of guiding operational principles around youth inclusion, rights, participation, advocacy and partnership which are disseminated and linked to the services of Bradóg.
- Development of an equality unit on Bradóg policies and procedures.
- Development of policy and procedures to ensure that all Bradóg services and buildings are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Development of capacity for lobbying on strategic issues. Development of policy and procedures on lobbying.

2. Operational professionalism

- Development of adequate levels of staffing. A target of at least four new full time positions should be set, with achievement accomplished in the next year.
- Development of new staff positions to cover: fundraising, arts work, intercultural work, financial management, after-schools coordination, training and volunteering.

- Implementation of a professional development framework.
- Development of a full audit of existing staff skills and qualifications.
- Development of staff training needs analysis.
- Development of individual staff training plans.
- Provision of staff and management training, with a particular emphasis on certification.
- Development and implementation of common induction training program and materials.
- Development of comprehensive Human Resources Development strategy and policy.
- Development of a system of regular internal meetings and reviews, with outcomes and decisions communicated clearly to all staff.
- Development of comprehensive communications policy and procedures.
- Development of conflict management and mediation policies.
- Mechanisms around time management should be developed and training provided where appropriate.
- Management should develop a clear policy and focus on leadership and best practice that informs operations and staff relationships alike. This policy should be supplemented by on-job training development.
- Development of policies and procedures, with staff involvement, to cover (at a minimum): health and safety, equality and diversity, training, ethics, procedures, teamwork, communications and reporting procedures. These policies and procedures to be reviewed regularly.
- Development of procedures to formalize, define and set standards for staff in delivering services.
- Promote and enact a healthy and safe working environment for staff and service users.

- In the medium term, the provision of training internships for student youth workers should be investigated (and proposals forwarded to the Board). This could provide useful institutional educational linkage and facilitate the development of best practice.
- The use of volunteer workers under the EVS programme should be investigated and recommendations drawn up.
- There should be an investigation of potential benefits of developing uptake of the FAS CE scheme. This should be strictly monitored before any final decision.

3. Profile and branding

- Development of a clear and agreed marketing strategy for Bradóg with a set of clear objectives regarding audience, methods and outcomes.
- Development of a policy on enhancing the profile of Bradóg among potential service users and their families.
- The development of a series of information leaflets and resources about Bradóg, its services and projects.
- The development of an enhanced web-presence and image.
- The development of a plan for regular meetings and presentations about Bradóg its role and mission.
- The development of regular seminars for youth workers, families, specialist agencies and community activists on issues relevant to youth work.
- The development of a regular magazine or publication – to include issues, themes and information on Bradóg services and activities.
- Development of a strategy to enhance staff competence by involvement in all publications activity.
- Development of a dedicated PR system with regular press releases.

- Development of professional seminars and learning events with national and/or European scope.
- Investigation in the longer term of securing quality accreditation systems and standards (e.g. EFQM).

4. Policy and governance

- Undertake a review of management structure, reporting and operations.
- Development of management training plan.
- Secure management training and mentoring support (as required) with regard to planning, targets and review procedures.
- Enhancement and development of the project leader role as a recognized art of the management function
- Develop leading role of Board in achieving effective policy formulation and organizational leadership.
- Develop sub-committee system for the board to create greater efficiency for meetings and work.
- Development of additional representation on the Board from all communities in the area.
- Development of a strategy and resources to encourage volunteer involvement in the communities involved.
- Investigate process to achieve legal charitable status.
- Development of a strategy and plan to secure increased involvement of statutory agencies at Board level – as DCC, HSE, Department of Justice, FAS, etc.
- Management should supply reports to the Board on a regular basis and standardized format covering developments, matters for decision, policies and procedures.

5. Activities and outreach

- Development of agreed targets and regular review mechanisms for each service provided for internal Bradóg evaluation (in addition to reviews for external funder purposes).
- Development of structured and enhanced programmes based on researched needs analysis within an agreed time frame. All such programmes should be subject to ongoing review and evaluation to set standards. These programmes could include; sports, recreation and outdoor pursuits; youth arts; health, personal development and sexuality; interculturalism.
- Development of focused and systematic approach to health issues (to include drugs, sexual health, mental health, etc.). This needs to be based on agreed policy and resourced with qualified specialist qualified staff. Such an approach should be investigated in a partnership model with appropriate agencies like the HSE.
- Clear and defined targets and policies in relation to access and use of DCC run community centres. An immediate priority is the attainment and implementation of a service agreement with the DCC.
- Investigation of service provision of 6-10 year old age group with a view to developing recommendations for the Board. Such service expansion would require extensive consultation, collaboration and securing of funding outside traditional CDYSB frameworks. Clear and specific rationale and resources need to be established for any such expansion based on researched and defined needs.
- Development of targets, activities and services that identify and meet the needs of older young people in the area (over 16).
- Development of policy and planning around employment and progression issues for youth should be developed. Employer linkage and apprenticeship sponsorship, for example, should be

referenced. Employer involvement in Bradóg has significant potential from funding, profile and strategic perspectives and should be developed.

- Development of a plan, policy and resources for significant involvement in after schools services and supports and the potential role of Bradóg should be developed. Liaison with school and educational support projects should be developed and extended within Bradóg's role and mission.
- Development of a plan and resources for a significant expansion and professionalization of outreach services, mechanisms and recording procedures - which are regularly reviewed.
- Geographic expansion of service provision needs to be planned and implemented in a time-defined manner. It is recommended that Stoneybatter be incorporated in the near future. Clear and defined targets and policies in relation to access to after-schools programmes and facilities. This is a critical area for outreach and needs to be planned and achieved against an agreed timeframe.
- Development of a clear strategy for networking with regard to external agencies. This requires extensive planning and absolute clarity about expected outcomes, benefits and potential difficulties. A clear rationale for all such networking should be established to avoid ad hoc responses.
- In external networking a plan should be constructed with clear objectives regarding links. Particular attention should be paid to strategic linkage and interaction with: other youth service providers (city, national and European); professional youth worker development agencies (Colleges, professional networks); An Garda Síochána (especially local JLO service); Probation Service and BCI; drugs and rehabilitation agencies; FAS; Arts Council; community networks. This is not exhaustive but each network contact should be focused on defined outcomes and planned

strategy. The key point for Bradóg is competence development and the development of expertise.

- Sourcing, development and maintenance of a dedicated transport service should be developed.
- Development of a dedicated youth arts and media resource should be undertaken set against agreed targets and possibly in partnership with other agencies in the longer term.
- A clearer distinction between specialized projects and mainstream activities should be communicated to staff based on established rationale.
- Development of project management skills should be prioritized with training provided as appropriate. Specific attention should be paid to EU innovative project funding and exchange possibilities and liaison maintained with appropriate EU and Irish agencies e.g. Leargas)
- Development of position paper, policies and procedures on any possible advocacy role for Bradóg or its staff.
- Development of a plan that targets creation of a dedicated music resource (youth band).
- Specific resources need to be allocated to contact with and service provision to members of ethnic minorities and immigrant communities. A clear strategy should be developed and outreach and contact structured accordingly. Liaison with agencies such as NCCRI and ICI should be explored.
- The Bradóg website should be re-structured, re-developed and re-launched in the immediate future.

6. Research and planning

- Development of strategy on research and evaluation for approval by Board.

- Development of capacity within designated staff to undertake research, policy review and analysis of trends.
- Development of action research capacity among staff to document and highlight youth needs and issues.
- Development of household survey to create user profile and identify levels of need as a critical priority. Ideally this should be undertaken using existing staff.
- Develop mechanisms to regularly update household survey and to give feedback on results.
- Development of a database on user access of services and programme participation.
- Development of programme evaluation plan with clearly defined targets for medium and long-term review of Bradóg structures and services.
- Development of regular planning systems for services, projects and strategic operations that include measurable targets and outcomes.

7. Finance and resources

- Development of a funding strategy for approval by the Board.
- Continuation of core funding relationship with CDYSB, with regular reviews as to adequacy and effectiveness.
- Development of quality financial reporting mechanisms and projections for management purposes.
- Develop a plan and strategy for approval by the Board to investigate and follow up opportunities for potential corporate sponsorship, fundraising campaigns and donations.
- Develop structured investigation of opportunities for funding from alternatives to YPFSF annual grants. These sources to include the HSE, DCC, government departments, etc. Detailed plans and

targets should be developed by management with a clear rationale and submitted to the Board for approval.

- Development of clear strategy on potential EU funding around innovative projects or allied measures under eligible ESF strands. This should be systematically investigated with clear targets and outcomes communicated to all stakeholders.
- Focused strategy on collaboration and potential resource allocation from DIT Grangegorman campus.
- Development of an operational centre that is a facility to include offices, meeting rooms, storage, social space and youth information centre. This to be located in a place that meets as many community expectations as possible.

Summary

The key actions defined here underpin the **strategic** goals for Bradóg. If accepted, they will form the basis of operational plans that need to be developed for each action as a priority by management. These operational plans will be time-referenced and costed and with clear outcomes set against defined personnel responsibilities for implementation.