

Project 23 AGM Report

Project 23 has had a great year with lots of really positive events and happenings. We're also looking forward to the forthcoming year and the hope that we can continue to make an impact on young people in Ards.

Youth Drop-In

Drop-In remains a big part of our work. We open from Monday to Friday from 3:00-5:15 and on Tuesday night from 7:30-10:00. Activities range from pool and computer games to baking and craft. This year we have also added circus skills to our list of activities on offer through the influence of Roisin, our temporary Women's Worker. The young people have really taken to Diablo (spinning two cups connected by an axle on a length of string tied to two sticks. This description means little, just look at the photo) and have progressed really quickly.



Two facilitators connected with the Circus Sanguine worked for 8 weeks with the young people on Diablo, juggling, unicycling and stilt walking. The young people engaged well with the facilitators who remarked that they had had to learn more tricks to teach the young people as they had learnt the initial tricks so quickly. The young people really gained a lot from the workshops especially in terms of confidence and self-esteem. Our numbers in Drop-In have remained around 20 young people with boys making up most of the number of young people

Medi-Link

Every Tuesday we hold a youth advice clinic through Drop-In. A youth advice

nurse, Gillian McCullough, spends time in our Drop-In answering our young people's questions in an informal way. For many of our young people there is a certain amount of stigma associated with seeking health advice from anyone, so health concerns tend to go ignored until something is at its worst possible stage. This new intervention is a lot more user friendly for our young people. Gillian has also started to work with them around looking at their BMI and a stop smoking group took place around September.

Schools work

This year we have started to work out in some of the local schools. Movilla High School has been the main focus of this work. We have been able to deliver the Real Men course to a group of students. This went well and was a challenge to both our staff and to the young people as they explored their mental health. We have also been able to set up a satellite Drop-In on a Friday afternoon in the school. Initially this was to deliver part of the circus skills programme but has grown to include other programmes looking at self-esteem.

We have also been running the Real Men course in Strangford College. The course has been run with all the young men in year 11. They have responded well to the course and the school have been positive about the impact that it has had.

We would like to thank both Strangford College and Movilla High School for their help and support in the work that we have been doing with their young people.



Detached Work

Detached work is about spending time with young people on the streets, without them necessarily coming into the centre. The work can be difficult and very taxing, as well as frustrating. Groups can disappear after having built up a relationship over the course of many months. However, this has proven to be an important strand in our work. Ryan has done a lot of work developing a monitoring tool and running the detached programme. At present we are going out on Thursday nights but come April that will hopefully extend to a Saturday night as well.

Young Women's Work

Anna decided this year that she had had too much sleep, so added baby Ronan to rectify this situation. With Anna out on maternity leave we needed to find someone of equal stature to cover her absence. Step forward Roisin Mohan! Roisin has been a great addition to the team and has done an excellent job developing the young women's work. She has brought to the work, her love of circus skills and her general enthusiasm! We also welcomed our new YAV for the year in the form of Joan Lanigan. Joan is the most positive person known to man and although she lost in the official competition, she was heard to say she was happy just to compete! As already stated, one of the developments has been a satellite Drop-In set up in the school which has got a good following. Tuesday nights still see the girls coming down to take part in their own Drop-In and discussion group. Topics this year have included mental health, body image and healthy eating.

Peer Educators

6 young men and 2 young women have been asked to take part in a programme to train up some of our young people to take a more active role in Drop-In. So far they have done a good job but we will be looking to develop their role over the coming year. The idea is to give them responsibility, a sense of purpose and in return to help develop leadership skills.



Future Projects

This summer sees a team of 36 MARC and Project 23 people heading to Hungary for 10 days to take part in a cultural exchange programme. For the young people this programme is called "Football as a Foreign Language" and will be looking at how football can act as a bridge between different groups of young people. Everyone is excited about the programme (I say excited the leaders are terrified).

We are also this year looking into developing a mentoring project for our older young people. We have been concerned for a long time about how best to help our older young people to develop and we feel that mentoring could be the answer. We are all excited about this possible extension to our programme and feel it could make a real difference.

So there we have it. Hopefully this has given you a flavour for what we've been up to. I would like to thank both the staff and volunteers for helping to make all this happen. Feel free to drop in and chat with any of our staff if you feel you would like to help. We would also ask you to keep us in your prayers as we try to show God's love to our young people.