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youth

promoting best practice with young people at risk

**Include Youth
Strategic Plan
2009 – 2011**



you

Contents

Item	Page
Background	4
Strategic Assumptions	5
Include Youth Strategic Plan	7
Outcomes	8
Policy	10
Policy Advocacy	10
Young Voices	11
Risky Children or Children at Risk	12
LACE	12
Practitioner Support	14
Practitioner Forum	14
Training	15
Direct Service to Young People - The Give and Take Scheme	16
Internal Management and Administration	18
Organisational Chart	19



Background

Include Youth is a not for profit organisation that actively promotes the rights, best interests of and best practice with young people in need or at risk.

The organisation was established in May 1979 as the NI Intermediate Treatment Association (NIITA). The Association (then and now) advocates for the introduction of policies and services for children and young people that keeps them within their communities.

The young people we work with and for include those from socially disadvantaged areas, those with special needs, those who have had poor educational experiences, those from a care background, young people who have committed or are at risk of committing crime, misusing drugs or alcohol, undertaking unsafe sexual behaviour or other harmful activities, or of being harmed themselves.

Include Youth believes that effective policies and services for children and young people can only be achieved through the full realisation of their rights. The objectives are achieved through policy advocacy that both informs and is informed by our direct practitioner and young people support services.

Include Youth Strategic Plan 2009 - 2011

The purpose of this document is to lay out the organisation's strategic intent for the next three years – 1st January 2009 – 31st December 2011. In this plan we identify the parameters and purpose of our work. This includes activities which both consolidate and develop existing work whilst also considering the possibility of introducing new areas of activity and in turn other work may end.

This plan outlines Include Youth's strategic aims and objectives and is supported by a range of indicators and supporting Operational Plans for each of the three years.

Strategic Assumptions

Include Youth remains effective by taking full account of our external and internal operating environment. The dynamic social and political environment within Northern Ireland presents particular opportunities for the organisation as we attempt to be responsive to this environment.

Our philosophy is rooted in children's rights and is informed by international instruments particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular the general principles of best interests, non-discrimination and participation of children and young people.

Northern Ireland is a society emerging, to varying degrees, from conflict. The impact this has had and continues to have on the communities that the young people live in cannot be under-estimated.

Include Youth anticipates the following for 2009 -2011:

- ❖ **NI Assembly** – we will need to ensure that the quality of our interactions with MLAs and Assembly bodies are robust and have integrity
- ❖ **Devolution of Policing and Justice Matters** – it is anticipated that during the life of this plan the NI Assembly will take responsibility for justice matters. Include Youth hopes to closely inform the deliberations of the Assembly in matters concerning young people, policing and justice
- ❖ **Funding** – resources may be limited for the promotion of the rights of children and young people who are in conflict with the law
- ❖ **Competition** – one of the impacts of limited resources is that we may find ourselves in competition with partner organisations in the voluntary, community and statutory sectors. We will only ever enter into such competition when we genuinely believe that such actions will further the rights of the children and young people we work with



- ❖ **NI Economy** – following a period of growth there is uncertainty with regards to the economy. Include Youth must ensure that we are able to prepare ourselves and young people to have realistic expectations with regards to availability of work. Additionally cognisance must also be taken of the fact that the young people we work with have often experienced poverty and deprivation
- ❖ **Youth Participation** – there is increasing interest in ensuring the views and direct experiences of young people are included in the decisions of public bodies. Include Youth must be able to maximise these opportunities for young people in the criminal justice system as well as in the areas of education, training and employment for looked after children and young people
- ❖ **Challenges as Organisation Grows** – during 2008 the organisation experienced growth of approximately 25%. The period will be one of consolidation ensuring our ethos, values and performance remains and indeed improves
- ❖ **RPA and New Health and Education Arrangements** – as the new administrative arrangements begin to take effect we must be able to constantly review both our relationships and our ability to adapt and respond to new processes
- ❖ **Media and Public Perception** – it is unlikely that the media and public will develop a more tolerant or accepting attitude to its most challenging and disaffected young people. Recent rhetoric from the media and politicians has seen the use of the language of punishment and justice imposed on children in need and at risk. Include Youth has to be sure that it can appropriately and effectively respond and challenge these perceptions
- ❖ **Legislative Developments** – government is constantly bringing forward legislation that impacts on the lives of all children and young people. Criminal justice changes in particular have the potential to have a huge effect on young people and Include Youth has to be prepared to be able to engage with these processes at a variety of levels.

Include Youth Strategic Plan

Vision: A Northern Ireland that respects the rights of **all** it's children and young people.

Mission: Include Youth works with and for children and young people in need or at risk to promote and protect their rights and where their best interests can be realised.

Values: Include Youth believes that all young people

- have undisputed dignity and worth
- have the right to justice, care and protection
- have the potential to make positive choices for themselves and their lives
- have the right to be valued as active members of society.

Strategic Aims:

- To enable and encourage young people to actively participate in society and influence the issues and decisions that affect their lives
- To contribute to improving the health and well-being of young people
- To influence and create opportunities for young people to learn and achieve
- To work to ensure that policies, legislation, services and interventions improve the lives of children and young people
- To enhance the employability skills and prospects of young people in need
- To challenge, inform and influence the criminal justice system to promote and protect the best interests of children and young people
- To work with all relevant stakeholders in a way that supports young people to achieve social and economic sustainability
- To challenge, influence and support young people and their families
- To challenge, influence and support practitioners across all sectors
- To sustain, develop and support the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers
- To ensure sufficient resources to sustain and meet the strategic aims and objectives of the organisation.



Outcomes

Include Youth believes that it has its own role to play in ensuring that the outcomes of the ten year Strategy for Children and Young People are achieved. This will be achieved in the following ways:

- **Respecting Children's Rights**

Include Youth passionately believes and will work to ensure that all children regardless of their age or behaviour will have their rights respected. Every aspect of the organisation's work is to achieve this outcome

(Include Youth)

- **Health and Well-being**

Include Youth will contribute to improving the health and well-being of young people considered marginalised particularly those in the care and criminal justice systems through:

- ◆ programmes/education
- ◆ individual advice and guidance
- ◆ advocacy for individual young people
- ◆ policy advocacy

(Give and Take Scheme and Policy)

- **Achievement and Learning**

Include Youth will promote inclusive education through policy advocacy and will identify individual and collective learning needs of young people at risk and promote life-long learning through:

- individual learning programmes
- advocacy and awareness raising
- partnerships

(Give and Take Scheme and LACE)

- **Experience Economic and Environmental Well-being**

We are committed to enhancing the employability skills and prospects of young people in need or at risk by providing:

- ◆ work experience
- ◆ training
- ◆ education
- ◆ life skills
- ◆ personal development

(Give and Take Scheme)

- **Contributing Positively to Community and Society**

Include Youth will continue to develop youth participation in all aspects of the criminal justice system as the route to excellence. Additionally by being a *critical friend* to all structures and systems that affect young people we will attempt to create and sustain a safe environment in which positive relationships can be built and the best interests of young people be realised by:

- challenging
- encouraging and supporting
- negotiating
- listening to others
- advocacy.

(Young Voices)



Policy

Outcome: To ensure public policy and practice is informed and shaped by children's rights principles.

Include Youth seeks to influence the development of public policy in the best interests of children and young people. Include Youth is one of the lead agencies in advocating for policy developments for marginalised children and young people particularly those involved with the criminal justice system.

Our policy activity is core to the organisation and is informed by both young people directly affected by the implementation of policy decisions and by professionals from all sectors across Northern Ireland who work directly with these children and young people. We use their collective experiences to inform policy positions which are well-researched and underpinned by children's rights principles.

Achieving a shift in the focus of government policy or changing legislation is something which seldom happens overnight. Include Youth's strength is its patience recognising the importance of working at the pace of government and other bodies. In this context it is important that Include Youth sustains the ability to inform, make relevant contributions and generate interest and debate.

Policy Advocacy

Aim: To continue to provide policy advocacy promoting the rights of and best practice with children and young people.

Objectives:

- To engage, inform and influence responses to challenging behaviour by young people
- To promote and widely disseminate the "Include Youth Manifesto for Youth Justice in Northern Ireland"
- Promote protective and resilience factors through the sharing of information and best practice advice

- To challenge negative images of young people and present an accurate view of young people at risk and in need
- To work in partnership with agencies in the voluntary, community and statutory sectors
- Engage with NI Assembly and UK government
- Engage with relevant policy consultations.

Young Voices

The Young Voices Project seeks to involve young people who have had some experience of the criminal justice system in attempting to influence the decision of policy makers and services planners. To achieve this Young Voices has developed particular expertise in working with young people in custody, the community and with policing structures.

Aim: Increase the capacity of young people at risk to effectively engage with public policy and the issues that affect them.

Objectives:

- Build capacity of Young Voices group to effectively engage with public policy developments
- Young people inform the development of Include Youth's public policy work
- Demonstrate to public bodies and other organisations the benefits of such engagement
- Promote and disseminate the model for engagement to agencies and others who wish to support young people having their voices heard
- Promote the Young Voices North Belfast model for improving relations between police and young people
- Contribute to the development of mechanisms to link organisations needing to consult young people with those who have young people to consult, in a permanent but flexible structure.



Risky Children or Children at Risk

The Risky Children or Children at Risk Group is an ad hoc inter-agency group convened by Include Youth and whose membership includes specialist projects, Area Child Protection Committees, Social Services Inspectorate, Criminal Justice Agencies, voluntary organisations and Education. The group is concerned with policy and practice as it relates to children and young people who display sexually harmful behaviours.

Aim: To ensure that public policy and professional practice concerning young people who display sexually harmful behaviour enhances the life chances of young people, contributes to the protection of their victims and reduces the likelihood of further behaviours.

Objectives:

- To advocate for the introduction of structures which ensure best practice with these young people, their victims and families
- Influence and inform the development of policies and procedures across sectors concerning these children and young people.

LACE

The Looked After Children and Education Project seeks to enhance the educational outcomes for children and young people who have experienced state care. LACE is a coalition of government, statutory and voluntary agencies working together across NI to raise awareness of the need to provide cohesive and co-ordinated policy and service responses in order to improve the educational experiences of looked after children. It also works with looked after children and practitioners to ensure their views are included.

Aim: To improve the educational outcomes for children and young people in public care.

Objectives:

- ◆ Looked after children can express their views concerning education
- ◆ LACE partnership will inform strategic policy and service development
- ◆ Effective models of intra-agency and inter-agency practice will be reviewed and agreed
- ◆ Relationships with all key stakeholders will be established and maintained
- ◆ A better understanding of the structures and systems as they relate to the education of looked after children
- ◆ Provide strategic support and advice to Fostering Achievement Scheme.



Practitioner Support

Outcome: Young people receive services that are informed by evidence based practice and children's rights principles.

Include Youth has always been a practitioner-led organisation and we directly support practitioners from all sectors by involving them in policy debates as well as providing training and information.

Practitioner Forum

This forum is for practitioners from all sectors who interact with young people in need or at risk between the ages of 10 and 21.

Aim: To ensure that all practitioners are supported and kept informed of developments that have an impact on young people at risk and/or in need.

Objectives:

- To provide formalised systems to collect and disseminate evidence based practice
- To maintain relevant information systems
- To provide opportunities for practitioners from all sectors to share experiences and information
- To provide opportunities for involvement in policy and practice consultations and development.

Training

Include Youth has developed a reputation for hosting workshops, tailored training and conferences which provide excellent networking opportunities for practitioners to meet with others from different disciplines, settings or agencies working with the same or similar young people.

Aim: To contribute to the skill base of the agencies and individuals working with young people and provide high quality tailored training, workshops and conferences for all stakeholders.

Objectives:

- To deliver tailored high quality events
- To respond to training requests which are aimed at promoting best practice
- To deliver training as part of the Fostering Achievement Scheme in partnership with the Fostering Network.



Direct Service to Young People - The Give and Take Scheme

Outcome: Young people are able to live independently and safely in their communities.

The Give & Take Scheme provides supported volunteering placements to marginalised young people (aged 16 – 21) who are unable to participate in mainstream training and employment opportunities. The scheme aims to improve the self-esteem and confidence of young people so that they can learn to live independently in the community and secondly to improve their long-term employability by giving them appropriate support and access to work experience and training. Each supported placement is individually tailored to address the specific needs of the young person, so there is a great deal of variation in the type of placement and the hours and days worked according to individual circumstances. New Leaf is a specialist project within the scheme working with young people who have displayed sexually harmful behaviours and have successfully completed therapeutic interventions.

Aim: To improve the long-term employability of young people who are at risk of long-term unemployment.

Objectives:

- To ensure effective and full engagement and participation of young people
- To provide appropriate support and access to work experience
- To develop stronger links with private and public sector employers to enhance placement opportunities

- To ensure effective move on opportunities for young people leaving the scheme
- To design and deliver accredited training courses for young people
- To develop mentoring and personal development for young people across all regions
- To ensure young people have access to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and have the support to complete awards
- To continue to develop the New Leaf programme working with young people who have displayed sexually harmful behaviours
- To monitor, evaluate and review our work to ensure a high quality service for our young people.



Internal Management and Administration

Outcome: Include Youth operates efficiently and effectively

As with all organisations the management, finance and administration systems of Include Youth are our backbone and as such must be maintained efficiently in a way that meets the needs of the organisation, our stakeholders and of course all legal requirements.

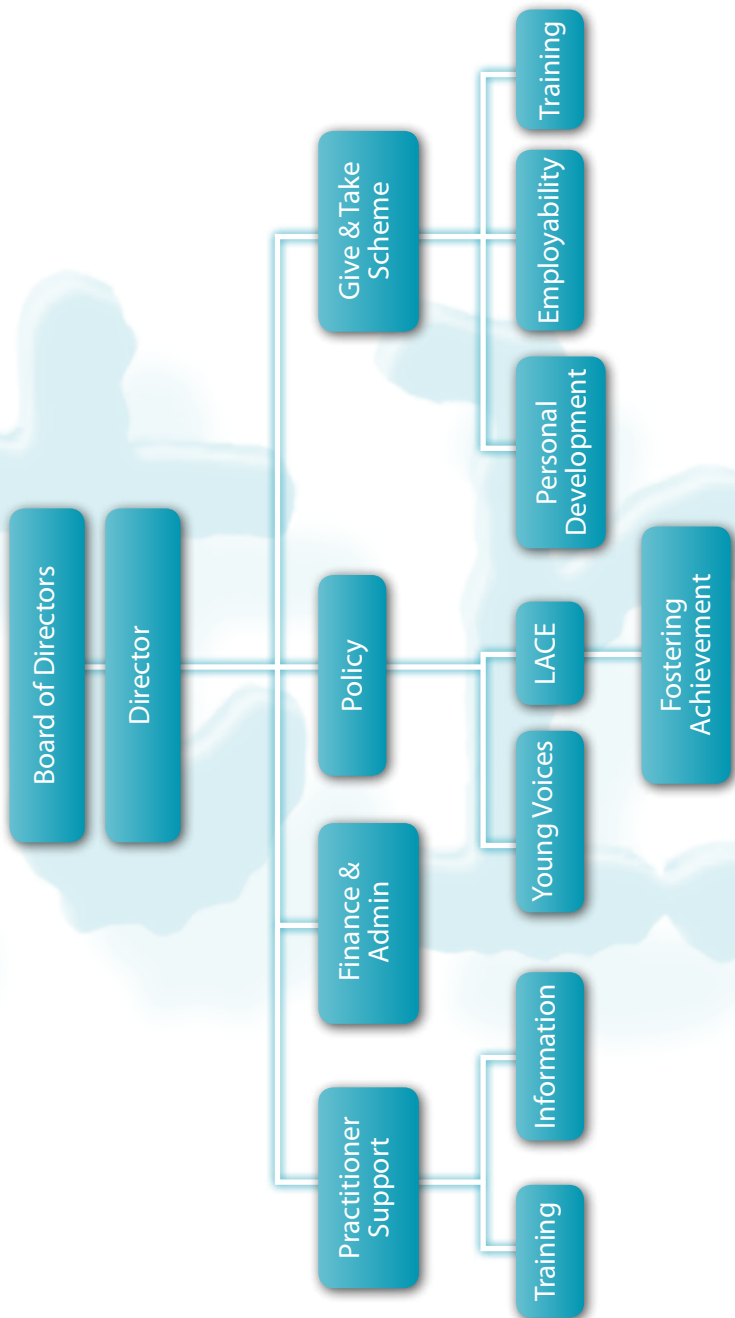
Aim: To ensure excellent governance of the whole organisation thereby supporting staff to undertake their work to the highest standard.

Objectives:

- To ensure that Include Youth has robust systems that can measure the performance of the strategic and business plans
- To provide effective administration services to the organisation
- To ensure that human resource policies, procedures, terms and conditions reflect best practice
- To improve internal information and communication systems within the organisation
- To ensure that the organisation is efficiently run and complies to all legal requirements
- To ensure that Include Youth is properly resourced through the period of the strategic plan and beyond.



Organisational Chart 2008





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