

An Evaluation of the

3rd level Bursaries Programme

(Precursor to the Millennium

Programme)

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Section 1 Overview of Partnership's *current* Community Based Youth Initiative Strategy (CBYI)

Education is one of the *seven strands* of Blanchardstown Area Partnership's (BAP's) current area action plan. This plan recognises the importance of equality of access and how those inequalities, both in education and society at large, contribute to educational disadvantage. A key priority is to target the education and additional supports required for those most at risk. The strand focuses on an inclusive approach and recognises that some are excluded from education due to their cultural background, age, income or disability. It also acknowledges that certain target groups may not access existing provision and are at a great distance from any educational interventions. The education strand places a strong emphasis on integrated models of intervention by voluntary agencies, the statutory services and the community. It seeks to promote complementarity between programmes with the needs of children parents and the community interlinked. It priorities preventative programmes, but also includes extensive provision for the most marginalised in the community to re-engage with educational services.

1.1 CBYI Aims of the strand

To provide intensive supports to those at most risk of early school leaving and their families
To develop comprehensive models of support at all levels of education within schools, community groups, organisations and social support services, deploying models of integration
To develop and mainstream models of good practice at all levels of education

1.2 Objectives

To reduce the likelihood of early school leaving
To improve the attendance rates at school
To target specific marginalised groups
To increase the level of additional supports thus maximising the education opportunities for those who need them

Section 2 Conditions that led to the selection of the 3rd level support programme as a strategy and how this fits in with the CBYI strategy

In January 1998 BAP's Education Working Group (EWG) met for the first occasion. This internal BAP body was representative of a broad range of educational expertise and stakeholders throughout the Blanchardstown area. There were consistently high levels of attendance, which only goes to demonstrate the commitment of members. Members of the group spoke of the importance of being part of the decision-making process both in agreeing priorities and also in allocating resources.

Formal Education Sector

- Adult Education Organiser
- Department of Education Representative (local inspector)
- Student representative (6th year)
- 1 local primary school principal (presenting the 7 primary school)
- 2 School Principals representing the two-second level schools
- Home School Liaison Officer

Voluntary Sector

- Blanchardstown Youth Services
- Barnardos
- Youthreach

Community Sector

- Greater Blanchardstown Development Project
- WEB Project (Garda Diversion Programme)
- Travellers Support Group
- Member from the Jesuit Order representing local committee concerned with young offenders
- Parent from Corduff
- Parent from Blakestown/Mountview
- Blakestown and Mountview Neighbourhood Youth Project

Business Sector

- Local Employment Service
- I.B.M.

Blanchardstown Partnership

- Education Co-ordinator
- Partnership Board Representative

With the establishment of the EWG, the process began of identifying more clearly the key issues in relation to educational needs in Blanchardstown. A series of meetings were arranged and the group was facilitated to undertake a number of tasks, which included:

- Developing a clear overview of education provision at all levels in the area
- Assessing needs and identifying gaps
- Identifying key issues
- Agreeing priorities for action by the Partnership
- Identifying possible responses/actions
- Agreeing a programme of actions as an overall education strategy

The E.W.G. review of educational provision highlighted concern about the following categories

- ✓ Education and long term unemployed
- ✓ Early school leavers
- ✓ Ex-offenders
- ✓ Travellers post primary education
- ✓ ***Third level support for students***
- ✓ Pre-school provision, speech therapy and language development training
- ✓ School Attendance/Absenteeism

As part of the Partnership's *original* Area Action Plan 1996-1999 the Preventive Education Programme consisted of 7 distinct actions:

1. After school project-focus of concentration for this case study
2. Support for students at second level access in order to encourage third level participation
3. P.E.S.L Project
4. Discipline for Learning
5. Early School Leaving Research
6. Early School leaving Working Group
7. Education Forum

Over a series of meetings *two strands* emerged as key pillars of BAP's approach to educational matters

- Prevention of early school leaving
- *Plus third level access for adults.*

Section 3 Introduction to the 3rd Level Bursaries Support Scheme

3.1 Aim and Objectives

Aim 1998

To give practical assistance to adults who are disadvantaged and wish to pursue a third level education. A bursary scheme will be set up to assist students. Assistance may be in the form of grants, vouchers for books; travel; etc. The service will be confidential in nature and needs related.

Unfortunately when this action was originally planned the objectives and expected outcomes were never fully recorded as would now be set standard practice when BAP submits its annual programme of activities to its funding agency ADM Ltd. In practice this meant that an examination of the programmes *effectiveness* (how far the programme's impacts contributed to achieving the objectives) was not possible.

Section 4 Selection process of candidates and organisation of programme Scheme A

The third level support scheme was available to students:

- Who are aged between 17 and 21 years
- Where families are in receipt of Social Welfare or FIS payments
- Who live with the BAP area
- Who have accessed a 3rd level grant from a local authority
- Who will be engaged in full time education at a recognised 3rd level or PLC College

Scheme B

The third level support scheme was also available to students:

- Who are over 21 years of age
- Who live within the Partnership area
- Who will be engaged in full-time education as a recognised Third level or PLC College or attending a Third Level Access Course

In general support will be given to those:

- Who are in receipt of Social Welfare or FIS payments
- Who have accesses a Third Level Grant from the local authority of VEC

Section 5 Assessing Impact

5.1 Methodology and its parameters

Types of Data and Information

1. Documented information from **secondary research** e.g. annual reports, committee minutes, Performance Monitoring System and SCOPE
2. Factual information from **primary research** via postal questionnaires. Sixty-six from the original ninety-nine beneficiaries were sampled by way of a questionnaire to establish what the impacts of the programme to date had been. Twenty-eight people **42.24%** (composed of eight males and twenty females) responded to the questionnaire. Therefore one can be confident that the findings are an accurate reflection of those who choose also not to participate in the survey.

Core Findings

The key issues ¹, which the evaluation examined from the 3rd Class Support Programmes perspective were as follows.

Deadweight- Is really programming in-efficiency. Effects that would have taken place as a result to fail and target the intended beneficiaries sufficiently well. As a result other individuals who are not included in the target population end up as beneficiaries.

Substitution and displacement are two closely related terms, which are used to describe situations where the effects of a programme on a particular individual, are only realised at the extent of other individuals.

Relevance- to what extent are the programmes objectives and strategy still pertinent in relation to the evolving needs and priorities, social and economic both at a local and national level. Try to identify the added value of the programme.

Efficiency- how economically have the various inputs been converted into outputs and results?

Utility/Equity- how do the programme's impacts compare with the needs of the target audience?

¹ A Guide Ex Post and Intermediate Evaluation January 1997 European Commission

Section 6 Systems to monitor change

The individual details of all the clients' e.g. previous education status, age, gender etc who received supports in one form or another were entered onto the Partnership's *performance monitoring system*. This system can help track clients' progress over time and so quantifiably capture outputs. This data extracted from this database informed the evaluation.

Table 1

Age and Gender Profile of Candidates

Age	Number	Gender	Number
Below 21 years	43	Male	39
Above 21 years	56	Female	60
Total	99		99

Section 7 Supports Provided to Respondents on the Scheme and Barriers to Access and Participation in Higher Education

Ninety-nine individuals composed up of thirty-nine males and sixty females received financial support under the scheme over its duration from BAP in total. A budget of €55,700 was spent on the action. Recognition should be given to both IBM and the County Dublin VEC who co-funded the Programme to the tune of £10,000 and £5,000 each.

€25,649.13 was allocated to the twenty-eight people who responded to the survey or €916 per head. The lowest amount received by any one individual was €55 and the highest €2,405.45.

On balance clients indicated that the contribution to:

- ✓ *Travel expenses* was the most important individual component of Partnership support
- ✓ Followed by *books*
- ✓ *Course fees* and
- ✓ Finally other barriers.

“The instruments for my course were quite expensive”

“Books are extremely expensive and without the Partnership grant I would not have been able to buy them and study my course material as a result”

“Travel and books can become very expensive and it put your mind to rest, especially travel expenses”

“It allowed me to pay the course fees, which I wouldn't have been able to”

“Travel funding is very beneficial but books funding is crucial, books can be hard to get in the library or can only be borrowed for a short period, therefore funding means you can buy your own copy”

The costs of going to college continue to rise perennially for students. Attached in the appendix are the results of a survey conducted by the **Union Students of Ireland in 2003**. They estimate that the cost of attending college over a nine month period is approximately €6290.64 which excludes the college registration fee of an additional €670.

Justification for the roll out of the 3rd level bursaries programme in Blanchardstown

Data from the 1996 census in table 2 overleaf allows us to examine the participation levels at 3rd level for people in the eight District Electoral Divisions of Blanchardstown individually, collectively and to compare these with Dublin and for the rest of the State. What is striking is that the percentage of people from Blanchardstown attending college (16.1%) is well below that of Dublin (25.4%) and for the State (19.7%) as a whole. The 3rd level bursaries programme was established to help counteract this predicament.

However more worryingly the situation is far worse in certain electoral wards in Blanchardstown. It is no co-incidence that these DED's also happen to be the most disadvantaged using the Rank Scoring Factor (RSF) scale on a grade of one to ten. The RSF is an index that allows us to compare the relative affluence and deprivation of DED's. Many different variables are taken into consideration. One of the variables included is education attainment. In Mulhuddart for example just 3.3% of individuals held a third level qualification. Therefore one of the factors we need to determine for the purposes of this evaluation is whether or not the clients who benefited under the programme came from the disadvantaged areas. This allows us in turn to explore deadweight and equity issues.

Table 2**3rd level educational attainment in each of the Blanchardstown DED's**

DED	Pop 3 rd level education %	Deprivation Score of each DED	Weighted Population % of each DED 1996
Abbotstown	26.8%	3	3.97%
Blakestown	15.9%	2	39.18%
Coolmine *	10.4%	9	20.63%
Corduff *	7.5%	9	12.24%
Delwood	30.2%	1	10.97%
Mulhuddart *	3.3%	10	3.25%
Roselawn	28.3%	1	5.96%
Tyrrelstown *	2.8%	10	3.8%
APC	16.1%	4.7	100%
National	19.7%	4.6	

CSO 1996**Gender Proofing Issues**

Just over 60% of the entire bursary recipients were female, which is justified given that a higher percentage of males locally in 1996 held 3rd level qualifications. Similar data from the 2002 national census will be available by the summer of 2004. It will be interesting to detect then whether this scenario has changed in the intervening years. If this is indeed the case then *BAP may have to deliberately skew the Millennium fund so as to attract more males to 3rd level education in future.*

Table 3**Percentage of males and females in Blanchardstown with a third level qualification**

DED	Males 3 rd level Education 96	Females 3 rd level Education 96
Abbotstown	27%	26.6%
Blakestown	16.9%	15%
Coolmine	11.1%	9.8%
Corduff	7.2%	7.8%
Delwood	33.5%	27.2%
Mulhuddart	4.9%	2%
Roselawn	31.3%	25.6%
Tyrrelstown	3.1%	2.7%
Total	17.2%	15.1%

Equity

Table 4

Percentage breakdown of survey respondents who received a bursary living in each electoral ward

Addresses of beneficiaries	% Breakdown of survey respondents residing in relevant areas
Abbotstown	0%
Blakestown	53.6%
Coolmine	14.28%
Corduff	10.71%
Delwood	0%
Mulhuddart	10.71%
Roselawn	7.15%
Tyrrelstown	0%
Other	3.57%

The table above details actual addresses of the beneficiaries *who responded to the survey*. This is a useful exercise from a poverty proofing perspective. It aids with the efficient allocation of resources according to real need. So what were the actual findings?

Finding 1

- ✓ Please note firstly that none of the survey respondents actually came from the Abbotstown, Delwood or Tyrellestown wards (0%). This is encouraging as the first two wards if you recall from table 4 *are not* areas of deprivation. Local knowledge would also indicate that in relation to Tyrellestown no one utilised this ward as a postal address between the years of 1996-2001. Instead they used Mulhuddart.

Finding 2

- ✓ In contrast the numbers of people from Mulhuddart and Blakestown (64.31%) who received supports are over represented on the basis of population and 3rd level completions.

Finding 3

- ✓ Given that Coolmine and Corduff wards accounted for almost one third of Blanchardstown population between them in 1996 one might have expected to find that more than 25% of the programme beneficiaries were actually from these two areas.

Deadweight

To determine whether there were any deadweight effects (programme in-efficiency) clients were simply asked *in what way* did the availability of Partnership funding affect their choice to attend the course. In addition clients were asked on the questionnaire to state what their status was *before* receiving their bursary.

Findings 4

- ✓ 29% of respondents (8) indicated that they still would have completed their course without the bursary but nevertheless some of this same group pointed out that the funding was of some help.

Finding 5

- ✓ 14.28% (4) of respondents left this question blank altogether.

Finding 6

- ✓ Several clients received bursaries perhaps two or three years into their course

Finding 7

- ✓ Of concern perhaps is the fact that up to 28.56% of the beneficiaries ² who received a bursary was already in full or part time employment. *They therefore did not strictly qualify under the immediate target groups outlined under the Local Urban Rural and Development Programme guidelines 1994-1999.*

Finding 8

- ✓ 17.85% of clients indicated that they were on the live register for less than one year.

These findings on the whole point towards the existence of deadweight. One could further argue the case therefore that because on the face of it the screening process wasn't as strict as it could have been (28.56% of beneficiaries were in jobs) some genuine individuals lost out who should have received a bursary or an increased allocation i.e. substitution and displacement.

“Would have still done it, determined to go ahead”

“I was in 3rd year when I got it so it didn't”

² When the 3rd level bursaries Programme criteria was drawn up by Education Working Group the then Adult Education Organiser of County Dublin VEC requested that greater flexibility and accessibility be provided to adults over 21 years of age. This deliberate policy was so as not to preclude working adults in this age category from the possibility of obtaining a third level qualification.

“It did not influence me. I had taken on an Aontas ‘NOW’ course in NCIR which was geared to community women. The course had in built supports and career guidance which influenced me to go further”

“Didn’t effect my choice but made it more secure given that I had little financial resources”

Positive outcomes as a consequence of the 3rd level bursaries programme

What is clear is that many of the remaining clients would simply have been unable to attend their courses without the bursary. For many others it could be argued that the bursary indirectly enabled them to attend the course.

Table 5

Client’s status *prior to and after* receiving 3rd level bursary

Status of Clients	Before %	After %
Student at home	42.86%	
Working full time	10.7%	21.43%
Working part time	17.86%	10.7%
Further training or education	10.7%	17.85%
Unemployed but not on live register	7.14%	3.57%
CE	7.14%	3.57%?
Other	3.57%	3.57%
Still on original course *		21.43%
On live register >12 months		17.85%
Total	100%	100%

Finding 9

- ✓ Over 32% of individuals are either now in full or part time employment

Finding 10

- ✓ 17.85% of all the clients progressed onto further training or education

Finding 11

- ✓ Over one fifth of clients were still attending their courses which is a positive indicator

“As someone with three dependant teenagers and separated I would not have been able to access 3rd level. I feel that Partnership enabled me to do so.”

“It allowed me to pay the course fees, which I wouldn’t have been able to”

“If I had not received the funding I could not have gone on the course. I have 5 children and would not be able to finance education for myself”

“Without the Partnership providing funding I would not have been able to pay the course fees”

“Funding made it possible to reduce my hours of part time work so that I had more time to concentrate on course work”

“It was great as I got a monthly bus ticket for the time I attended the course”

“I am now in permanent employment within logistics and distribution”

“I now work for myself two evenings a week in a colleagues practice. My options for work have greatly improved and the money I can earn”

“I have my certificate and currently employed and training to become an engineering technician”

Evaluation Conclusions

The third level bursaries programme *enabled more people from disadvantaged wards in Blanchardstown attend* a third level institute than would otherwise have been the case.

The programme also helped *retain* higher number of pupils in college as the costs of college increase year on year.

More females received a bursary under the programme. This was justified given the higher percentage of males in Blanchardstown with a third level qualification.

Each beneficiary received on *average a contribution of €916 per head* towards attending college.

Given the population levels of *Coolmine and Corduff* vis a vis other wards *more pupils from these areas could have received a bursary*.

There *was a level of deadweight* associated with the programme.

The number of people achieving a recognised third level qualification in Blanchardstown is behind the Dublin and State levels especially in certain disadvantaged electoral wards.

Recommendations for the Millennium Programme Committee to consider based upon the 3rd Level Bursaries Support Scheme Evaluation

Recommendation: The ‘positive discrimination’ of funding targeted at people attending Riverdale School from the Coolmine and Corduff wards should be maintained so as to encourage greater ‘equality of opportunity’ for individuals from these areas.

Recommendation: The allocation of funding under the Millennium Programme should be gender proofed to encourage equal representation of males and females at 3rd level, based upon census data. A systematic analysis of funding patterns to clients should be periodically carried out as part of this task.

Recommendation: A designated person within the Partnership should contact clients six months after completing a course to discover their status. Former clients may find themselves unemployed and in need of additional supports from a separate wing of the Partnership e.g. LES.

Recommendation: With the Millennium Programme experiencing an increasing demand by disadvantaged groups for bursaries, in only exceptional circumstances should people who are already a few years into a course subsequently receive financial supports so as to avoid the risk of displacement occurring.

Recommendation: BAP target groups such as ex-prisoners and Travellers should be positively targeted wherever possible.

Recommendation: A definition of success should include not only ‘open employment’ but also progression onto further education/training and course completion. Correspondingly the objectives of the Millennium Programme should be broadened to reflect this.