



**THIS REPORT IS AN OUTLINE OF
THE DEVELOPMENT OF
“WOMEN MAKING CHOICES II PROGRAMME”
2001 - 2003**

Report compiled by Nuncie Murphy



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is a pilot project initiated by Access 2,000 Wexford Ltd., The funding received by the Dept. of Education and Science under the Education Equality Initiative (EEI) has made this financially possible. Many individuals and agencies have contributed to its development, however without the support and contribution of Annie Dillon, Ann Kinsella, and Margaret Martin from the National Women's Council of Ireland, Brona O'Donnell National Training & Development Institute Wexford, Matt Sutton Wexford Area Partnership, and the on-going support from the Employment Guidance Network, this project would not have experienced the success it has. Also the endless financial reports, which were administered with professionalism by Marian Donegan. The learning I have gained as my role of project development worker/ programme co-ordinator and from developing this report has been enormous.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1. INTRODUCTION.	4
2. HISTORY OF ACCESS 2,000	5
2.1 Women Making Choices 1 Programme.	5-6
3. METHODOLOGIES	7
4. RESEARCH FINDINGS	8.
4.1 Past Participants of Wexford programmes.	8
4.2 Wolfe Tone Women's Group	8-9
4.3 FAB Women's Group.	9
4.4 Management, Staff, Facilitators and administrator.	9-10
4.5 Conclusion from the Wexford Workshops.	10
4.6 Past Participants & Women's groups from Waterford.	11
4.7 Management & Staff from Waterford.	11-12
4.8 Conclusions of Waterford Workshop	13
5 INTERVIEWS WITH MODERATORS.	14
6 INTERVIEWS WITH STATUTORY AGENCIES & COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS.	15
6.1 Wexford Area Partnership	15
6.2 FAS	15
6.3 Home School Liaison & Community Activists.	15
7 RESEARCH FINDINGS ON ACCREDITATION	16-17
8 RESEARCH FINDINGS ON EXISTING PROVISION OF EDUCATION / TRAINING.	18
8.1 Full-time courses	18-20
8.2 Part-time Courses	20-22
8.3 Conclusion	22
9 SECONDARY RESEARCH FINDINGS.	23
9.1 External Evaluations	23
9.2 Internal Evaluations	23
9.3 Funding Applications	24
9.4 Extracts from Reports.	24

10.	PROGRAMME DESIGN.	25
10.1.	Outcomes of Workshops.	25
10.2	Accredited programme	25
10.3.	Programme Supports	26
10.4	Programme Framework.	26
10.5	Outreach work.	26
11.	PROGRAMME DELIVERY	27
11.1	The Participants	27
11.2	Tutors / Facilitators.	27
11.3	Programme Content	27-28
11.4	Programme Timescale.	28
11.5	Facilities.	28
11.6	Administration.	29-30
11.7	Financial Budget.	30
11.8	Programme Co-ordination	30
12	EVALUATION.	31
12.1	Tutor / Facilitators.	31-32
12.2	Participants Evaluation	32
12.3	Work placement	32
12.4	End of Programme Evaluation.	32-37
12.5	Conclusion of the Evaluations.	37
13.	PROGRESSION OF PARTICIPANTS.	38
14.	END OF PROGRAMME PRESENTATION.	39
15	CONCLUSIONS	40-41
16.	RECOMMENDATIONS.	42

APPENDIX 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education and Science under the Education Equality Initiative allocated funding for projects directly involved in addressing educational disadvantage for women and men.

On the 14th July 2,000, Access 2,000 Wexford made an application under this initiative, to address an need identified for a progression route for women who had participated on Women Making Choices 1. Programme in Wexford.

The application identified the target group as, women who had completed the Women Making Choices Programme 1, and women who had participated on pre-development training programmes. From evaluations carried out with the women participants Access 2,000 had found that the 8-week programme (Women Making Choices 1), was not sufficiently long enough to meet their needs. The application identified a possible progression route, that would have an extension of the modules already covered e.g. Job Seeking Skills, Literacy Development, an introduction to Community Development, Social Analysis, and Women in Leadership. The programme was hopeful to incorporate practical work experience, through placements and on-going information and guidance regarding pathways of progression. It was envisaged that the programme would run for 6 months and include supports which are part of the pre-development programme e.g. childcare, flexible timetabling, delivery in local communities, training allowance, supports and guidance. The aim of the intended project was to *“develop, design, and deliver an accredited education and training programme that will provide a progression route for women who have already participated in pre-development training. The programme will be based on the outcomes of consultation with the target group and operate on the values and principles of community education and community development. It will seek to fill a gap that has been identified by Access 2,000 between pre-development capacity building training and further mainstream education provision. It will aim to address areas of literacy difficulties and social and educational disadvantage”*. Access 2,000 was successful in its application and funding was secured on the 10th November 2,000 for the total sum of £100,000 (€127,000). The National Women’s Council of Ireland was employed to support the 18 projects funded under the initiative. As Access 2,000 philosophy is that of working with the principles and values of community education the training that is delivered is experiential and designed to meet the needs of the individuals.

This report will outline the development work carried out over the last three years (April 2001 – Dec 2003). It will highlight the consultation process, outcomes of research undertaken, evaluations and documentation which has been part of the development of Women Making Choices 2 Programme. It will outline the programme content, which was developed as a result of the research and an overview of the participants and their progression after the programme. This report will also document the learning gained from this pilot project and make recommendations for future Women Making Choices 2 programmes.

2 HISTORY

Access 2,000 is a women's education and training project that is core funded as a Community Development Support Programmes under the department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht. It was previously a two-centre project based in Wexford and Waterford and was funded under the E.U. Initiative N.O.W. (New Opportunities for Women). Women's groups from Waterford and Wexford worked in Partnership with Department of Social Community and Family Affairs, FAS and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) to develop a response to the educational needs of women identified by them. Since its inception in 1995, the following are only some of the aims which have been achieved:-

- A National Certificate in Community Education and Development has been designed with and delivered to 18 community activists in 1996
- A National Diploma in Community Education and Development has been designed and delivered to 12 community activists in 1999
- A BA in Community Education and Development has been designed and in the process of being delivered to 9 community activists.

These third level programmes are now being accessed through Waterford Institute of Technology and through other colleges nationally on an on-going basis.

The 18 women who originally participated on the National Certificate have each received employment in prominent positions in their own local communities. While some of the women participating on the National Diploma felt that in order to support women's participation into training/education and employment, an essential element of pre-development training needed to be undertaken. A foundation programme called **Women Making Choices 1** was designed and delivered by Access Facilitators through consultation with participants. The Open College Network in Belfast awards 4 credits at level 1 for successfully completing the programme. Two credits are awarded for the Personal Development section of the programme and 2 credits for the Job Seeking Skills element.

2.1 "Women Making Choices" 1. Programme

The Women Making Choices 1 Programme was designed in consultation with women who had identified that their lack of confidence and low self-esteem became a barrier to accessing information or/and participating on mainstream training, education or employment opportunities. Therefore the programme needed to empower women to develop their confidence, analyse and value their skills and previous experience, while also developing new skills, which could be used in a multiple of settings. The content of WMC1 programme is as follows:-

- Verbal and Non-verbal Communication Skills
- Listening Skills
- Assertiveness training,
- Handling criticism
- Life Map.

- Stress Management.
- Developing awareness of gender equality.
- Skills Analysis
- Interview techniques
- C.V. Preparation.
- Accessing Information on Education and Training provision.
- Developing an Action Plan.
- Art.
- Workshops, on the provision of local community services.

From evaluations carried out during and after each of the programmes over the last five years Access 2,000 Wexford, have incorporated an Introduction to Computers and a Craft module as a response to the needs of the participants. The programme has also been extended from its original 6 weeks delivery time scale to 8 weeks. The programme runs over five mornings per week, for 4 hours per morning, at a time most suitable to the participants. FAS provide the core funding for the programme, with financial input from the local Partnership Companies. Match funding is received from the local community where the programme is being run, e.g. premises may be offered free of charge from the community centre where the programme may be held, or the renting of a computer room may be offered by the local school. Access 2,000 also match fund the programmes by providing administration and co-ordination of the programme.

3. METHODOLOGIES

Access 2,000 Wexford Ltd., have worked in partnership with statutory and community providers to deliver the Women Making Choices 1. Programme. This partnership has been made up in the past of FAS, Wexford Area Partnership, Home School Liaison Officers, more recently County Wexford Partnership, and local community activists. Our sister project in Waterford, i.e. "Waterford Women's Resource Centre," have also delivered the Women Making Choices 1. Programme to women in Waterford. The participants of the Women Making Choices 1 programme will be known throughout this report as the past participants. Therefore the following workshops were carried out –

- ✓ Workshops with the past participants of WMC 1 programme, and women's group's both in Wexford and Waterford.
 - ✓ Workshops with the Facilitators, co-ordinators and administrators of the WMC Programme both in Waterford and Wexford..
 - ✓ Workshops with the Management and Staff of Access 2,000 and Waterford Women's Resource Centre.
 - ✓ Interviews with the internal moderator and external moderator of WMC Programme.
 - ✓ Informal interviews with Statutory Agencies. e.g. FAS, Partnership Companies, and Home School Liaison Officers..
 - ✓ Informal discussion with community activists.
 - ✓ Desk research on the Accreditation Routes.
 - ✓ Desk research on the Existing Provision of Training and Education programmes within the Wexford area..
 - ✓ Secondary research including ;-
1. External evaluation carried out in 1998 of Women Making Choices Programmes
 2. Internal evaluations on each of the programmes delivered both in Wexford, and one from Waterford Women's Resource Centre.
 3. An external evaluation carried out covering five of the programmes in 2001.
 4. Two Funding proposals made to the dept., of Social Community and Family Affairs, and FAS.
 5. Documents relating to education and training from women involved in Access 2,000 Wexford.

It was feared that the natural flow of ideas and views might be hindered by pre set questions especially when discussions were encouraged. However the questions, which were put to each group during the workshops were on the content, timetabling, length and accreditation of a further education/training programme, which they would like to participate on.

Informal questions with the statutory agencies covered their input on supporting this programme both financially and on ideas for input for a progression route.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS.

Consultation workshops were held in Waterford and Wexford with all involved in developing and implementing the Women Making choices 1 programme. Workshops were also held with the past participants and those interested in a training programme. The workshop aimed to establish the training needs of women. No set order of questions were asked, however it was important to establish what the participants enjoyed doing most on the Women Making Choices Programme, what they would like to do more of, and if there was anything they would like which should be part of a follow on programme.

4.1 Past Participants from Wexford programmes.

A workshop was held in Wexford on 28th November 2001. All of the women that took part on the previous three Women Making Choices Programme were invited to attend. The programmes were delivered over a three-year period from 1997 to 2000. From a possible 47 women who received invitations, 12 women took part in the consultation workshop. The majority of these women were interested in doing some more training and expressed an interest in accessing something like the WMC Programme again over a longer period of time. Additional recommendations were made for the following to be included; -

- ✓ First Aid, especially geared towards children, and what to do in emergencies.
- ✓ More Computers, although two of the participants did not want a continuation
- ✓ DIY that could be of benefit to working in the home, woodwork, interior decorating / design, sewing and embroidery.
- ✓ Irish for some would be an advantage to help with homework.
- ✓ Maths especially around the euro would be very beneficial.

It was also recommended that the programme would last between 6 to 12 months. A training allowance and accreditation were deemed very important.

4.2 Wolfe Tone Women's Group

A workshop was held in both Wolfe Tone and FAB community centre with women who meet on a regular basis. The aim of this workshop again was to gain an insight into a desired content for a training programme for women already involved in meeting as a group. The following is the outcomes of the Wolfe Tone workshop:-

- Aromatherapy, Beauty therapy and Alternative medicine could be explored.
- Basic English, covering spellings, letter writing both informal and formal. This could be done by hand writing letters, making out shopping lists, reading a book and talking about it, giving a critical view.
- Computers,
- Creative Writing, Calligraphy.
- Work Placement = place of your choice.
- Pottery,
- Exploring Child Behaviour / Parenting
- Gardening
- First Aid.

- Sign Language

Each day should have different things on.

It was recommended that the course should be run over a period of 6 months 3 to 4 mornings a week. A training allowance and certification should be included.

4.3 FAB women's group.

Two of the members of this group were past participants of the Women Making Choices programme. Eight women altogether were present at the workshop. The group discussed at length the individual training they had participated in to date. The group were asked what they enjoyed most about the training they received and given an opportunity what training would they like to participate in. The following is their response.:-

- Meeting People, Getting out of the House and away from the children is essentially what women need most from training.
- More computer training and typing skills should be explored..
- Euro changeover could be an area that needs to be covered..
- Stress Management.
- Communicating with children.
- Health Issues.
- First Aid.
- Childcare.
- Healthy Eating.
- Job Seeking Skills
- English Vocabulary and Grammar could be developed.
- Personal Development.
- Information regarding entitlements.
- Group work.
- Craft, Art and sewing.
- Networking with other groups.
- Clear Progression Routes.
- Women have children in common, so therefore this could be the topic to work with.

Length of time;- 6 months with discussions with the group on what days it should be on. Possibly three mornings from 9.30 a.m. -1.00 p.m.

Accreditation and training allowance were deemed important. Singular modules facilitated in blocks were thought to be an advantage.

4.4 Management & Staff

The Management, staff, facilitators, co-ordinators and administrator of the programme were invited to a workshop. The aim of the workshop was to give an overview of the work completed to date, the existing provision in Wexford as known at the time and an overview of the information collated. The response from the group covered the development of the a programme as well as content suggestions as follows;-

- A programme, which would give participants more time to embrace the learning would be beneficial..
- In-depth of modules and widening of choices
- Pitched at the right level, more specific focus.
- Community Development where the participants could develop a profile of their own areas and present the findings this could link to Social Analysis.
- Women Studies.
- Craft
- Computers from Introduction to accredited learning outcomes.
- Job Seeking Skills with career guidance and work placements (e.g. community projects)
- A women's group supported and facilitated after the programme.
- Women's Health issues.
- It was recommended that the facilitators give on-going support, challenge motivation and encouragement towards achieving accreditation.
- Information input on literacy development and possibly on childcare.
- Elective modules – if each module was done separately then the participants could choose to be present or not, although they would have to be present for a certain amount of the modules. This would cater for those who did not want to participate in certain modules e.g. computers, or craft.
- Communication skills with more challenge and input
- Exploring Enterprise.
- Women in Leadership
- It was also suggested that a qualified councillor could be put in place for referrals and that the facilitators could provide listening support / Mentoring.

Timeframe.

6-12 months or term time 30 weeks.

Many ideas were thought of e.g. 3 full days per week with Monday and Friday off, or 5 mornings per week, or 4 mornings with a home study morning included in the programme if a full-time allowance was accessible

4.5 Conclusions of the Wexford workshops.

An extension of the Women Making Choices 1 programme with more challenges, content and delivered over a longer period of time seems to be the need arising from the workshops. The communication module could include more reading, writing and Basic English with possible emphasis on communicating with children. Job Seeking Skills module could include work placement within it, with clear progression routes and career guidance for the each of the participants. Computer training could include the development of typing skills. Personal Development could include craft, art, health and self-care. Group work practice, which develops confidence and leadership skills, was also recognised as important. Information workshops on entitlements was also recognised as an important input to the programme. Women also identified that on-going support to them after the programme finished and until other routes were identified was thought to be necessary. The length of the programme could extend over a term time with contact time less than 5 mornings per week.

4.6 Past participants & women's groups from Waterford.

The past participants of Women Making Choices Programme in Waterford plus local women's groups were invited to a workshop on progression ideas. Again all of the participants from two previous programmes were invited and also women who were identified by the Resource Centre who may be interested in training and education. The following is the recommendations made by 14 women in attendance on 14th November 2.001.:-

- ✓ An extension of the content of WMC 1 with an extension of the Personal Development module.
- ✓ Typing skills.
- ✓ Computers, possibly ECDL accreditation
- ✓ Relation of Personal Skills to employable skills.
- ✓ More support after sessions for those that had personal issues arise and people became upset.
- ✓ Crafts
- ✓ Fun.
- ✓ English = essay writing.
- ✓ Creative writing.
- ✓ Maths.
- ✓ Study Skills.
- ✓ Literacy being addressed = e.g. multi-intelligence (possible workshop)
- ✓ Stress Management.
- ✓ Life Map .> Broad Plan > Skills Acknowledgement > Coaching and Mentoring.
- ✓ Leadership Skills.
- ✓ Confidence Development.
- ✓ Work Experience. = Panel of workplaces, must be supportive, payable, and a definite training situation, possible community work.
- ✓ Meeting arranged after programme, for supporting women.

It was also recommended that the programme could be between 6 months to 12 months long. Three to Four days a week would be sufficient contact time, possibly starting at 10.00a.m.- 2.00p.m, with a recognised accreditation. A training allowance was thought to be very important with emphases on a training allowance for the work placement training.

4.7 Management & Staff in Waterford.

The Management, staff, co-ordinator and facilitators of the Waterford Womens Resource Centre were invited to a workshop for their input. An overview of the content of the Women Making Choices programme, outcomes of evaluations carried out, and information gathered to date was given as a brainstorming mechanism. The following was recorded as their response. Each area was acknowledged as being relevant and important. The following suggestions were thought to be ways in which they could be facilitated.

- Computers; are so important it needs to be included, but at a slower pace. Most programmes run through computers too fast and can be too heavy, but if it is done at a slower pace it will work for people.
- Childcare / Information on raising children.; Draw on the experience from the group about childcare / parenting / policies for child protection and theory on why slapping affects children.
- Job Seeking Skills and C.V. Preparation; - typing skills need to be developed. Goal setting should be developed throughout the programme especially around personal goals, professional, community and society. A jobs board would be beneficial to have.
- First Aid / Health Issues are an important part of women's lives.
- English Grammar / Vocabulary is a subject which could also be incorporated into literacy development. Waterford offices are thinking of developing a pre Women Making Choices Programme in order to develop literacy skills.
- Supporting the group is an essential part of keeping the group together until something else happens for them.
- Personal Development and Politics are areas that are not usually requested although they were given a very favourable thumbs up, it could simplify the mystery around it.
- Information on entitlements.;- OPEN have undertaken research on this subject and could be a good resource to have. This is a vital element as every participant can be affected especially if the course will run for full time period.
- Creative Writing was also suggested especially for those with literacy difficulties.

The group were then asked about the structures of the programme;-

It was thought that a training allowance should be provided.

The programme could be accumulated into three stages pre- Women Making Choices - Women Making Choices and post Women Making Choices over a school term, four hours a day by four days a week. It was thought that one day off could facilitate the participants who needed to pay bill's or to do other necessities.

Shadowing is a vital element to the ongoing development of the participants, facilitators and trainers. This element keeps the community development process going, its perceived as quite radical and it's a model developed by Access 2,000. It is expected that this element could be included in a follow on programme.

It was felt that a modular basis would not work, as it is possible that the cohesiveness that is usually built up in a group could be lost.

4.8 Conclusion of Waterford Workshops.

As identified from the Wexford workshops the women requested an extension of the Women Making Choices I programme. The topics covered within the programme has been recognised as valuable and relevant and a more in-depth content could be covered over a longer period of time. Accreditation of the computer module with the development of typing skills was also felt to be important. Also the Job Seeking Skills element could include work placement that was supportive and paid. The communication element should include literacy development, essay writing, creative writing and study skills. Emphasis again on Personal Development with more support during and after the programme as needed. Again the time span of the programme could be over a term time with contact time 3 to 4 mornings a week. The Management, facilitators and staff made valuable recommendations about the inclusion of training/shadowing facilitators within the programme. Concerns were expressed about having participants choosing which modules to participate on, it was felt that this might affect the cohesion within the group.

5. INTERVIEWS WITH MODERATORS

There are two moderators for the Women Making Choices Programme for Wexford. The role of the moderators is to oversee that the accrediting procedures lay down by the Open College Network in Belfast are adhered to and implemented throughout the programme. The internal moderator has facilitated part of the delivery of the Women Making Choices 1 programme and is also a voluntary management member with Access 2,000. Due to her role with Access 2,000 her views and ideas on progression ideas have been incorporated into the Wexford workshops. However the internal moderator enjoyed the role though only moderated on two of the Wexford WMC programmes. However she found great opportunities for learning as well as gaining an insight into the women's learning.

The external moderator is the Adult Community Co-ordinator with Waterford Institute of Technology(W.I.T.). The external moderator believes if the progression route was in line with the foundation course offered by W.I.T. for Adult returnees, this then could be accredited by or exemptions made from modules within it. If the content covered Personal Development, Communication skills, Study Skills, Computers and how Society works, this knowledge and experience, plus all previous experience could be developed into a portfolio in order to receive exemptions. This model has already been developed by Maeve O'Grady of W.I.T. as a way of building a comprehensive C.V., which allows participants the opportunity to document knowledge and gain exemptions for prior learning. This module is being delivered over a 10 week period one night a week. Although the college recognise the value of the accreditation received from the Open Collage Network, it would see prior learning being incorporated in this way as a progression route into third level.

6. STATUTORY AGENCIES & COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS.

6.1 Wexford Area Partnership.

The Partnership Company have offered some financial support for the Women Making Choices 1 programme, and also offer on-going support to the participants to facilitate progression into employment. The mediator of the Support Guidance Network would like to see more time given for the training needs of women who may not be ready for the job seeking skills element. Some of the participants from the Women Making Choices 1 programme did not avail of the employment service in the Wexford Area Partnership and it is not clear if this was because they progressed without the need for further assistance or was not ready or able to take this step on their own initiative. It was suggested that clear identified next steps for each participants should be an element for a progression programme, and one to one support on an individual session with the Employment Service could be built into the programme. This would develop better links with the individual and more time for them to absorb the information.

6.2 FAS

Without the core financial support from FAS the Women Making Choices 1 Programme would not have a training allowance, travel allowance and more recently Childcare allowance incorporated into the programme. The core funding from FAS covers the co-ordination, administration and facilitation of the programme. As a partner in developing this programme, the aims of FAS training programmes are to develop skills for the labour market.

The Community Officer of FAS believes that a follow on course should incorporate personal development, skills development with paid support. The success of the programme needs to be measured in terms of outcome and progressions. The task of Access 2,000 would be to identify the progression route and draw on potential partners so that it is planned and delivered in a co-ordinated way.

6.3 Home School Liaison Officers and Community Activists.

As part of Access 2,000 outreach strategy many links are made with organisations, community projects and schools to develop responses to identified needs of similar target groups. The participants of the Women Making Choices 1 Programme have included many women who have been targeted using this strategy. From consultation and evaluations undertaken with these organisations it was felt that the programme is so beneficial, for the participants, for their families and the community. It was stated *"for some though the programme is just too short to address life situations, which have been very challenging over a long period of time"*. On -going support after the programme is necessary until the participants are confident about their own progression route. Another programme could include Personal Development and practical ways for participants to deal with life situations. Arts and Crafts were enjoyed and perhaps more of this could be included.

7 RESEARCH FINDINGS ON ACCREDITATION

In 1996/97 Access 2,000 looked for accreditation for their programme "Women Making Choices" 1. At that time FAS required recognised accreditation through the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) system, however this system was ***"not conducive to the ethos and principles of community education and development" at the time, (Brennan 1998 P13)* and Access 2,000 looked to their Transnational Partners for guidance in acquiring accreditation from the Open College Network. Access 2,000 has now two programmes that are accredited, i.e. Women Making Choices I Programme & Training for Trainers Programme also designed from a need identified by women.

The Open College Network, although valuable accreditation in itself, is not widely recognised in the Republic of Ireland. The college in Belfast serves Northern Ireland only. On enquiry regarding accreditation for new programmes the college stated that they are unable to accredit any more new programmes in the Republic, as they see the education framework in the South must address the need to find mechanisms to accredit learning such as ours.

The accreditation system in Ireland was under reconstruction, which had an influence on the development of accreditation for new programmes. The objective's of the Qualifications Act 1999 for Education and Training were to facilitate lifelong learning and promote and maintain procedures for access, transfer and progression. To implement these objectives, and others, the National Qualifications Authority was set up to develop a national framework of qualifications with the following principles.

"The formal recognition and valuing of all learning is an integral part of the work of the Authority. The emerging vision of the framework and the learning that it will facilitate is that of a diverse and complex process. In addition, the structure and management of the provision of education and training is changing and subject to major influences from societal developments and from communications technology and the market place. For the first time in Ireland, the framework will aim to facilitate all learners to receive recognition and facilitate progression. The framework will be totally open and accessible to all learners."

Consultation workshops were held on a national basis and the Authority developed discussion documents. To incorporate all further education and training programmes such as FAS = City and Gills, CERT programmes, NCVA, Youth reach and VTOS programmes among others under the FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council, body).

The work of this project included monitoring this process and inputting to the discussions on developing a model that has been the experience of the process used by the Open College Network for community education programmes. There are many benefit of having an overall framework of qualifications on a National and International basis for Ireland. It is hoped that employers, institutions and communities could work from a collection of starting points towards a lifelong learning process, which could be validated and widely recognised.

This process takes time and until discussions and the consultation process is complete there is no mechanism where community education programmes can be accredited in its own right.

This had a major influence on the design and the development of a new programme, and research was undertaken on the accessibility of accredited programmes and the existing provision in the Wexford area. It was established that although accredited programmes are being delivered few are delivered on a part-time basis. The National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA) have modules already developed. The modules aim to develop skills for vocational training and cover foundation level, level 1, level 2, with newly developed level 3 modules being undertaken.

Foundation level, is on a level of the junior certificate, and does not have any entry requirements. Level 1 is on the leaving certificate standard and requires entries at junior cert standard. Level 2 is a post – leaving cert standard and requires entry at leaving cert standard. The modules cover a wide variety of areas and can be downloaded from the Internet. The modules can be delivered from a registered centre and support services are provided. The centres that deliver the modules can determine by what methods are used in delivering the modules and over what time frame.

8 THE EXISTING PROVISION OF EDUCATION / TRAINING.

There are many and varied training and education programmes available in Wexford. This research will focus on the training and education opportunities for adults in Wexford town. Although the list could include distance learning especially through the Internet, the following list will only include programmes that are being delivered on a regular basis and through a facilitated process or tutor style delivery.

8.1. Full-time Courses

FAS, The national training agency has a training workshop in Whitemill Industrial Estate. The workshop provides premises for the training of Secretarial and Administration course, which is a yearlong programme and includes work placement. The programme is full time and a training allowance is provided for those eligible. Another training programme that is provided on the premises is Engineering Multi – Skills. Other training from FAS is delivered in Waterford.

Eligibility;- In receipt of Social Welfare Payment.

Age;- 21years upwards.

Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS)

Adult learning centre under the auspices of the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) The centre provides;-

- Leaving Cert,
- Computer course covering ECDL, MOUSE. Computer Maintenance
- Business training.
- Study Skills programme.

The centre also tries to provide programmes designed to meet the needs of those attending. Generally the programmes that generate the most interest are provided. The programmes are accessed by a first come first served basis. A two-week introductory programme is delivered in the summer months and those interested are advised to attend.

Eligibility – Must be signing/ receiving of Social Welfare.

Age;- 21 years upwards.

Wexford Vocational College VEC

Post Leaving Certificate Courses for access to Waterford Institute of Technology and Selected Leaving Certificate subjects may be offered in conjunction with PLC courses subject to approval by the Principle. The Courses include;-

- Art & Design.
- Interior Design.
- Science & Technology.
- Childcare DCHSC
- Community & Health Services
- Nursing Studies DCHSN
- IT training in MOUS
- Information Processing.

- Business Studies.

The college also offer evening courses in September and January. The courses are for fee paying Adults and mainly concentrate on leisure activities e.g. carpentry, furniture restoration, yoga, guitar playing, interior decorating, and interior design.

Eligibility;- Over 18 years, no other criteria.

Wexford Campus – Outreach of Carlow Institute of Technology.

Full time course in the following;-

National Certificate in Business Studies & Computing

National Diploma in Business Studies (Marketing)

Architectural Technology & Fine Art. (based at Gorey)

Degree in Early Childhood Studies

Evening Courses in ;-

ACCA Professional Examination,

Diploma in First- Line Management (Supervision)

Diploma in Management & Employee Relations

Diploma in Legal Studies,

Certificate for IT users

Computerised Accounts

Business French.

Eligibility;- Over 18 and fee paying. Depending on choice eligibility will determined by the choice made.

National Training & Development Institute.

Pathways; programme covering;- Communication, Business and Administration, & ECDL in Computer Training.

New start programme;- Vocational Skills Training Course.

Chalkboard to Keyboard;- Computer Skills through Distance Learning.

Options Programme;- Exploring areas of Communications, Computers and Employment Preparation.

Eligibility;- Learning Disability.

Youth reach

Leaving Certificate Applied.

Eligibility;- For youth aged 16 – 18

Youth Train

Training in FETAC and ECDL programmes covering Communication Skills, IT, Work Experience with a work placement element.

Eligibility;- 16 to 24 years.

FDYS

Youth Work Level 2 FETAC programme.

Including IT, Working with Young people, Substance abuse, Art, Youth & Society, & The work place.

Eligibility;- Those working or thinking of working in the area of community youth projects.

Local Employment Service, Wexford Area Partnership.

This service generally links with other training providers to provide training programmes, which would be beneficial in accessing employment in Wexford, e.g. Retail Sales Training, working with FAS

CERT training programme, working with CERT and FAS

Waterford Institute of Technology, developing career paths.

Eligibility;- Those who are registered with the Employment Service and looking for work.

8.2 Part-time Courses**Waterford Institute of Technology.**

Outreach programmes;- National Certificate in Community Education & Development.

The college also offer a summer school for mature students to give a taste of third level courses.

Regional Guidance Service, which can be accessed for career & occupational choices.

Eligibility;- Over 18 and depending on choice.

WERRC UCD.

Women's Study courses can be outreached from the Women's Education Resource and Research Centre of University College Dublin. The courses will be designed with the participants and will be certified by the college.

Eligibility;- Courses provided to groups who cover the costs.

National Adult Literacy Agency.

Literacy awareness training for staff and policy makers whose work has an impact on people with literacy difficulties.

Tutor Training for volunteers wishing to develop literacy skills.

Many course are on offer once you become a member / volunteer of the organisation.

The organisation has also designed a National Certificate and Diploma in Literacy Management and Tutoring with WIT.

Eligibility;- A member of the National Adult Literacy Agency

Young Women's Project.

Community Education programme designed around the needs of the participants. The aim of this initiative is to bring young Mothers together.

Eligibility;- Young Mothers or expectant women aged 15 to 25 years.

IPASS.

Payroll Qualifications

e-mail courses@ipass.ie

Eligibility;- Fee paying.

Career Guidance

Interest / Aptitude Tests

CAO & College Choices

Gardai & Mature Nursing Applicants

C.V. and Interview Skills.

Seamus Whitney 054-43030.

Eligibility;- Fee paying.

Westgate Computer Centre.

Teaching Computer skills at all levels.

Certified courses include ECDL, MOUS & Microsoft Official Certification.

Eligibility;- Fee Paying.

Community Training and Education Centre.

FETAC / NCVA, Microsoft,

ECDL,

JEB.

National Certificate in Business Studies,

National Certificate in Childcare, Level 1 & Level 2.

National Certificate in Youth Work.

Rachel or Patricia 053-21036

Eligibility;- Fee paying, with special provision for those unemployed.

SIPTU.

Peoples College - Short courses.

Eligibility;- Fee paying.

Pitman Training Centres

IT Training for all levels.

Office Training

Business Skills,

Financial Accounting systems.

Certified by Pitman Training or National Diploma

Eligibility;- Fee paying.

Wordtrax

IT training.

Eligibility;- Fee paying.

Allen Technology

I.T training with Certification in ECDL & MOUS

Eligibility;- Fee paying.

Once off **Training Programmes** which may be on offer when resources are accessed and the need arise.

- Parents in Education, initiated by Scoil Mhuire, Coolcotts.
- Health Promotion Unit, South Easter Health Board, Training Course for Community Workers to promote Health in the community.
- Women Making Choices Training Programme, Access 2,000 Wex. Ltd.,
- Training for Trainers Programme, Access 2,000 Wex. Ltd.,
- Access 2,000 is a register FETAC centre that can deliver Foundation, Level 1 and Level 2 of the FETAC (NCVA) modules.

Eligibility;- determined by each initiative.

Centre for the Unemployed.
Job Seeking Skills,
Peoples College – Distance Learning Programmes,
Eligibility;- Unemployed.

8.3 Conclusion.

There are many training and education courses being provided in Wexford Town especially in computer training. The provision covers short course to full time training for young adults upwards. However the shortage in Wexford are courses with National Accreditation that are part-time and with no criteria for accessing the courses e.g. fees to be paid and social welfare recipient eligibility, and the development of a programme with the participants rather than a prescriptive programme. *Brennan Maria 1999 believes that there are gaps in the provision of training courses, which would enable women to build on the skills many have developed through voluntary work at local levels, and to capitalise on the emerging new employment sectors such as Community Development. These should include their expectations, quality of accreditation, progression routes into further education, on-going Personal Development and Work Experience.* It is also evident that little of the education provision in Wexford is community education. The community education process empowers the participants to take control of their own lives and participate fully in their own community. This process can be used in the delivery of accredited programmes once it's responding to the needs identified by the participants rather than being prescriptive, and that the agenda is person focused as well as task focused.

9 SECONDARY RESEARCH

This section will include all documentation available to the researcher, which made recommendations towards the development of a further programme. The documents are a selection of internal and external evaluations carried out on Women Making Choices 1 programmes from both Waterford and Wexford. Funding applications and reports, which were carried out on, programme content.

9.1 External Evaluations

In 1998 an evaluation was carried out on the first two women Making Choices Programmes, delivered in both Waterford and Wexford. It was recommended that a "*Training for Trainers programme which was designed by Access be delivered as a progression route for participants wishing to work in their own communities or similar type of work*" (Brennan. Molly 1998 P19). The report also highlights the need for a longer programme and recommends that pre-training should be extended to 12 weeks, and incorporate all the supports that were provided in the WMC1 programme. It was also established that the facets most enjoyed by the participants were Personal Development, Communications and Job Seeking Skills, however it was suggested that more time was needed on these modules.

More recently however an external evaluation was carried out on a total of five Women Making Choices programmes, two delivered in Waterford and three delivered in Wexford. The evaluation aimed to establish the impact, benefits the process used and to inform further progression. "*Feedback from participants and project partners indicated that the WMC programme is too short to adequately facilitate women's participation in and through the content*" (2002 Hennessy P60). It was recommended either to reduce the content, or extend the timeframe by another four to eight weeks. It was also identified that the need for a well-defined progression route to be in place prior to Women Making Choices 1 Programme.

9.2 Internal Evaluations

An internal evaluation of the Women Making Choices in Waterford from September to November 1999 indicated that the participants and facilitators felt that the duration of the course was a problem. With one participant recommending that it should last one year.

An internal evaluation of the Women Making Choices programme delivered in the Fayth in 2001 highlights the need to make the course longer with more content. Recommendations of course content could be an extension of Job Seeking Skills, Computers, Art, and possibly include something on Politics, and Information input on raising children. The portfolio building for accreditation purposes was recorded as a very positive experience and could be part of another programme or progression route.

9.3 Funding Applications

After the first external evaluation, which took place in 1998, Access 2,000 made an application to the Dept. of Social Community and Family Affairs and to the local FAS office to access funding so that a follow-on programme could be offered as a progression route for women in Wexford. The application outlined the course content of;- Self-Awareness, Oppression, Group Work Skills Communication, Media, Goal Planning, Community Development Theory & Practice, Drugs Awareness, Leadership Skills, Job Seeking Skills, Enterprise, and Networking. It was also proposed that the programme would run over a six-month period. However the applications were unsuccessful.

9.4 Extracts from Reports.

In a report of "Development Journey of Women" Casey recommends that content should include an introduction to issues such as Gender, Patriarchy, and Power.
"Many women are working in the home because of oppression and there is a need to look at what oppression is and what keeps it in place. This would then bring the personal to the political, so that women could challenge the status quo".

Brennan Maria (1993/4) believes that there are gaps in the provision of training courses, which would enable women to build on the skills many have developed through voluntary work at local levels, and to capitalise on the emerging new employment sectors such as Community Development. These should include their expectations, quality of accreditation, progression routes into further education, on-going Personal Development and Work Experience.

10. PROGRAMME DESIGN.

The programme was designed as a result of the research outcomes; the following is an accumulation of information and consultation, which influenced that design.

10.1 Outcomes Of Workshops.

This research has highlighted the consultation workshops that took place in order to establish what the training and education needs of women were. As a result of these workshops it was unanimous that the content of Women Making Choices 1 was valuable and relevant to the women. However more in-depth content that could be more challenging over a longer period of time was recommended. The modules most requested were Job Seeking Skills, Computer training and a work placement element within the programme with elements to include Personal Development, and Communications. National accreditation was deemed important as a means of valuing the learning achieved. And the programme needed to run over a period of at least 6 months to 12 months. The delivery of modules with the process of Community Education would ensure community awareness, empowerment, confidence development and supports to ensure access.

Out of the sixty-six women who received invitations, twenty-six women expressed an interest in participating on a follow on programme. Women identified themselves through participating in the consultation workshops and also through personal contact.

10.2 Accredited Programme.

Since the Open College Network was no longer accrediting any new programmes in the Republic, Access 2,000 were hopeful that the new accrediting body would look at the Open College Network as a model of good practice for the community sector. As the National Accreditation system was under review it was important for the project to monitor its progress, especially from a community perspective. However as any consultation process takes time it was not likely that the new accrediting body would have any system in place before the start date of this programme.

Access 2,000 became a registered centre of NCVA, which was endorsed by FAS. As a registered centre the project could now deliver NCVA modules at foundation level, level 1 and level 2. It was also possible to develop modules at level 2 with the support of the centre. A framework of modules were identified that would incorporate as many of the identified needs as possible. Seven of modules at level 1 were selected as follows, Communication, Work Experience, Drawing, Information Technology, Personal & Interpersonal Skills, Maths, and Teambuilding at level 2. Each module has 1 credit award and eight credits will gain the participant a full certificate. As the Teambuilding module was at a higher level it carried 2 credits at level 1.

10.3 Programme Supports

As a training allowance was not incorporated into the core funding from the Department of Education, the project tried to source this funding from other agencies. As previous training allowances for programmes were sourced from FAS, and as the project was given a verbal indication that the progression route would be financially supported, the project sought to provide a training allowance for the participants. However FAS were unable to provide this support due to their own lack of funds. However other areas to source funding was explored e.g. from ZEST, but again were unsuccessful. As time was running out it was decided to present a framework of the course to potential participants and establish if anyone could participate without the provision of a training allowance.

10.4 Programme Framework.

A framework of modules was presented to the women who participated at a workshop. Ten women in total participated and the content was discussed. It was agreed that as the programme did not include the training allowance, three mornings per week would be sufficient contact time over a thirty-six week period. The modules selected were FETAC level 1;- Work Experience, Information Technology, Communications, and Drawing. It was agreed that the programme would not commence until after the summer holidays so that no long breaks could be incurred.

10.5 Outreach work

Contact was made with the remaining women through outreach work. Some of the women identified that the lack of training allowance was the reason for them not accessing the programme. However for others no reasons were given. Outreach work continued over the following months and the Local Employment Network referred women for interviews. Relationships were developed and the content of the programme was agreed. The programme commenced on the 9th September 2002 with 16 participants. Only eight of the original Women Making Choices 1 participants actually registered on the first week of the programme start date.

11 PROGRAMME DELIVERY

This section will outline the women who participated in the programme and the reasons for those who did not fully complete. It will also give an overview of the tutors / facilitators involved in delivering the programme content and the additional content which was delivered because of the community education process used. The timescale of the programme, administration required and the difficulties with the financial budget for delivering this programme is documented.

11.1 The Participants.

The original WMC women were;- Teasy Murphy, Trish O'Leary, Maureen O'Connor, Geraldine Kavanagh, Vicky Browne, Yvonne Shorten, Mag O'Brien, Jacinta McMahon. However after the first week Jacinta and Geraldine were unable to participate due to financial circumstances and childcare difficulties. Later on into the programme Vicky took maternity leave and Maureen left due to ill health. Trish Leacy did not return after the Christmas break due to family commitments and Teasy who had participated until the last few months was unable to complete due to personal difficulties. The other members of the group namely Eileen Mordaunt, Martha Nolan, Fionnuala Thompson, Angela Heffernan, Patricia Nolan, Ann Redmond, also from the original WMC Mag O'Brien and Yvonne Shorten, completed all the FETAC modules. The Adult Education Co-ordinator of the WAP referred Patricia Wallace, and Maria French to the programme, as they needed to develop their computer skills as part of their community employment scheme training.

Angela Iyam (a foreign national) took part in the computer module for only a short period of time. Although all the participants were encouraged to actively participate in all of the modules it was identified that the option of participating on a module or not should be given.

11.2 Tutors / Facilitators.

The Wexford Area Partnership agreed to deliver the computer module, provide the computers (laptop) and premises. As we had previously worked with one of their tutors on the WMC1 programme we requested that Geraldine Redmond tutor the group on the computers training which was agreed. The other tutors and facilitators who delivered the modules were as follows;-

Work Experience – Nuncie Murphy Facilitator.

Communications – Pauline Ennis. Facilitator.

Drawing - Kevin O'Neill. Tutor.

11.3 Programme Content

As the programme commenced the facilitators recommended that as the group had many years of experience it might be possible to deliver level 2 of the Work Experience and Communication module.

The computer tutor commenced on Level 1 of the computer training and recommended that the whole group start at foundation level and work towards level 1 at their own pace. It was felt that some might choose to cover the learning outcomes on both modules and some may not.

Therefore the computer training was delivered on two mornings to facilitate both beginners and advanced. The computer modules were Computer Literacy and Information Technology level 1. Geraldine was unable to continue tutoring the group after the Christmas period and her replacement Shiela McArdle continued with the work.

Additional Course Content.

As the facilitators of the Work Experience and Communication modules were trained in the practice and principles of Communication Education, this therefore covered more skills development than specified by the FETAC modules e.g. Group work practice, Leadership skills, social and community awareness, confidence and literacy development, and networking. The skills of the facilitators helps the group to share and value their own life experience and learning, and build relationships in a safe and equal environment.

The research identified the need for on-going support for the participants after the completion of the programme. The group were encouraged to meet regularly and flower-arranging workshops were requested by the group and facilitated by an external trainee. The group participated in the workshops during July and August 2003 and were supported to access their identified next step.

11.4 Programme Timescale

The delivery time of the FETAC accredited training commenced on the 9th September 2002 and most of the portfolios were completed on the 26th May 2003. The programme was delivered over a period of thirty-six weeks not including two weeks Christmas break. While one woman did not fully complete her level 1 computer module her training continued throughout June and the women who wanted more practice on the computer were given the option to take part in the June training also. On two mornings per week (Monday and Thursday) the Communications, Drawing and Work Experience modules were delivered. Computers were delivered also over two mornings (Wednesday and Friday) although the group were divided into advanced and beginners and came on separate days. Therefore the majority of the participants attended three mornings per week while three participants attended one morning only for the computers.

11.5 Facilities

- The Swan training centre is part of the National Training and Development Institute. The premises are newly built and modern. The Manager offered the group the use of the premises two mornings a week for the duration of the FETAC training at a reduced rate. The cost covered the additional workload of the canteen worker and a small contribution towards the rent.
- The computer training took place in the offices of the Wexford Area Partnership (WAP), which are spacious and bright. There was no cost to the project for this service.
- The flower arranging workshops took place in Access 2,000 meeting room.

11.6 Administration.

When the project commenced in April 2001, the reporting requirements by the Department of Education were mediated by the support agency the National Women's Council of Ireland. Eighteen projects nationally were funded under this initiative and meetings were arranged every three months in a central location (mainly Dublin). The aim of the meetings was to share information, both from a networking perspective and to enhance the policy work of the projects.

The quarterly reporting requirements initially covered the following areas:-

- Project details e.g. name address, & worker details,
- Project Activities,
- Progress to date.
- Pre-development work.
- Participant & Supports.
- Statistical Reports.
- Financial Report.
- Suggestions & Comments.

However the reporting requirements expanded over the coming months and so did the work. In 2003 the reports required the following information:-

- Project details.
- Project Progress in the context of the original aim.
- Budgetary changes
- Participant profile statistics.
- Barriers experienced and how they were addressed.
- Evaluation Activities.
- Learning & Policy Implications
- Dissemination of Project Learning/ Models of good practice.
- Networking.
- Support Requirements and additional comments.
- Core Development Work
- Development work
- Developmental Learning Activities
- Course Learning Delivery
- Additional Comments.
- Participant Supports.
- Forward Plan e.g. activities for the year.
- Financial report.

As the Department of Education claim money from Europe under the European Social Fund for women's initiatives, additional financial reports were needed. A meeting was arranged in Dublin with the women's projects to inform them of the additional reporting requirements. Five women's projects in total were involved. The financial element of the projects were not supported by the support agency, this was monitored and controlled by the Department.

The administrator of Access 2,000 with the support of the project development worker completed quarterly financial reports and the financial reports requested by the Department.. The administrator has many years experience of financial management and could adapt to all the requirements needed. The administrator also monitored the expenditure during the delivery of the programme.

11.7 Financial Budget.

The financial budget of €138,020 was sought by the project in 2000, and the original application outlined the following breakdown of that expenditure;-

- Trainer Costs.
- Development worker.
- Participant costs.
- Resources
- Rent
- Materials
- Stationary
- Post, Phone, email
- Evaluation
- Staff Support & Supervision
- Management Costs
- Childcare Costs
- Transport Costs
- Networking
- Accreditation
- Documentation & Dissemination

However the project was notified in November 2001 that it would receive € 127,000 over the duration of the proposed project. This left the project with an initial deficit of €11,020. As the project developed over 2001 and 2002 an under spend occurred according to the Department. The under spend was calculated in terms of the expenditure outlined in the original application, e.g. the childcare costs for 2002 in the application was more than what was actually spent in 2002. A total of €9072 under spend from 2002 was withheld from the project and no negotiations were entered into by the Department. The original budget did not incorporate administration costs, wage increases and pension fund. The project has ended with a shortfall of €3,600 approx, which will have to be source by the supporting body (Access 2,000).

11.8 Programme Co-ordination.

The role of the development worker was to co-ordinate and monitor the progress of the programme, support the financial administration, report to the management on a monthly basis, report to the support agency on a quarterly basis, attend quarterly meetings, deliver the Work Experience module, support the participants, tutors and facilitators, participate in training with FETAC, develop and present the portfolios for the external assessment and evaluate the programme. The following is the evaluation, which were completed during and after the FETAC programme.

12 EVALUATIONS.

Evaluations are part of the process of community education programmes. An integral part of learning is through carrying out evaluations at regular intervals; this process develops confidence and skills in critical analysis. The learning gained from evaluations can have an empowering effect on the people involved once the learning has been implemented. The following will outline the evaluations carried out during the delivery of Women Making Choices 2 Programme.

12.1 Tutor/Facilitators Evaluations.

The first meeting with the facilitators and tutors occurred relatively quickly in the initial stages of the delivery, to capture the difficulties and benefits of the programme. All agreed that the learning outcomes needed to be clarified and training in the requirements and assessments for FETAC modules were needed. The support service sent out dates of upcoming training, which were accessed by tutor and facilitators. On-going verbal evaluations were carried out as we link together so often. Support was also given to the computer tutor.

12.2 Participants Evaluation

As part of community education programmes the process used ensures that the facilitators are constantly aware of the group relationships, individual contentment and the supports needed for full participation. The facilitators will usually start off by checking in with the group members. This allows the participants to build confidence in speaking out in the group, to verbalise their thoughts, share their ideas, and views on how things are going for them. This would generally give an indication to the facilitators what is going well and what is not. However written evaluations were carried out during and after the FETAC delivery, and also after the work placement the following is the outcomes from the written evaluations.

End of Term Evaluation Dec'02.

The group were asked to identify individually how things were going for them at this stage in the programme. The participants were in agreement that the course gave them a sense of belonging and a reason to get up in the morning. The information and learning they were getting was very useful. They also identified that their confidence had increased. For some "writing in the learning journal every evening is helpful for developing writing skills and recalling information"

The group were asked if anything hindered their participation, the following was their response:-

- Being out sick and coming back into the group realising how much was missed.
- Trying to cope with personal home situation and children being sick.

The group were asked what they were looking forward to next year from the programme?

The group acknowledged that they have a fear of doing the learning outcomes and the challenge of the work after Christmas.

Some are now looking forward to the work placement and the preparation for it. The group had some concerns about the support needed to get the placement and worried what would happen if they did not get a place. Some of the women are looking forward to project work and getting started on their own individual portfolios.

12.3 Work placement Evaluation

An evaluation was undertaken after the participants had completed work placements. The following questions were asked and responded to:- 1. What went well? 2. What didn't go well? 3. What recommendations / changes would you make to it.? The following is the response.

What went well?

2 mornings a week was ideal. Picked the right job. Got lots of information and learning from it. Being left alone, given the responsibility. Taken on board as one of the team.

What didn't go well?

Sometimes trying to communicate and get information from others was difficult. For learning purposes the days of work placement should follow one another or every second day and longer hours would have been more suitable, had forgotten what was learnt. Nervous about using the till afraid of making mistakes. No prospects of work afterwards. No breaks given (book centre) fitting in with work policy. Not enough to do at times.

What recommendations / changes would you make to improve your experience.

- Felt more appreciated because I wasn't paid.
- To ensure good placements, flexible, friendly, equal.
- Days should follow each other or alternative days.
- Time of year to participate and get work experience was difficult.
- Job description before work placement is taken on would be beneficial.
- Longer time span for some jobs may be helpful.
- Choice of job most important and time you want to give it.

12.4 End of Programme Evaluation.

Ellie Hughes in her role as trainee facilitator facilitated the participants through an evaluation of the programme. Ellie recapped on each module so the participants could discuss and recall the content. The group were then divided into smaller groups and asked to discuss the questions and agree the feedback. The smaller groups fed back to the larger group the outcomes and the feedback were gathered. The tutors / facilitators were given individual questionnaires which were specifically focused on the modules. The computer tutor took home the questionnaire so that more thought could be given to it. The others filled out the questionnaire and discussed the difficulties and benefits. The following are the responses under each of the modules. The questions asked were; - 1. What went well? 2. What didn't go well? 3. What would you change? While considering the questions those participating were asked to consider the process as well as the task

COMPUTER MODULES

What did you like.

- Learning how to use the computer
- The facilitator
- Allowed to work at our own pace.
- Very helpful
- Use of wall screen
- Learning new skills.
- Venue
- Individual attention
- Small group

Facilitators input;- FETAC provides a progressive framework to gain qualifications, the assessment criteria is clear. Participants had a choice in the level that they wanted to do. The group worked well together and supported each other. Each member was facilitated to learn skills at their pace. There was a social element to the sessions.

Not like.

- Hard to remember
- Doing exams for some
- Some did not like using laptops.
- Class too long for some.

Facilitators input;- The transition stage from the previous tutor in gaining adequate knowledge regarding participants existing skills, but this was unavoidable. Nothing really the group were so easy to work with, they were able to articulate their needs and together we usually found a solution.

Change

- Laptops were difficult for some.
- Time for some was too long.

Facilitators comments;- Nothing really, the sessions provided adequate time to obtain the qualifications. I think the programme went well maybe the participants have suggestions.

Other comments;- The birthday cakes were great. The support from other tutors on the programme was evident through the conversations with the participants. As a tutor it was easy to gain access to the course co-ordinator, this in my opinion is a pro-active approach to promoting community education, as obtaining and working towards the same goal makes all the difference. Thanks for the opportunity to be part of the programme.

WORK EXPERIENCE.

What did you like.:-

- Good preparation for returning to work.
- Learned to work on our own and in a group.
- Confidence building and self-esteem.

- Facilitator.
- Going to the process of skill we had and didn't. Realise we had new skills.
Work placement = good experience.

Facilitators input;- I liked the module it was clear and step by step what needed to be achieved. Liked the full day on Thursday to deliver the module. I liked the inclusion of workshops from outsiders e.g. WAP, VTOS SIPTU Enterprise etc.,

Not like;-

- Difficult to put portfolio together – under pressure towards the end.
- Filling in questionnaires.
- First day in work placement – anxiety.
- Would have preferred work placement all together.

Facilitators input;- The amount of work to be done was hard to establish how long it would take. Not having support from the NCVA each time there was a query, hard to contact someone. Very isolated being the first time we did it.

Change;-

- Fill in handouts in class.

Facilitators input;- A better introduction on how to cover the learning outcomes and the expectations of the accrediting body. Much more support at the beginning. I think more creativity could be incorporated into the module. Other modules should be incorporated as much as possible to reduce the work. A plan of work done before the course begins is essential and each knowing what needs to be done.

Other comments.

I think that having external assessors is a good thing for a programme. If we don't know who they are we cannot have any influence on them and the work is assessed on its content. I think the learning outcomes do not rightfully capture the true development of each individual. Each person has their baggage to deal with through the course and the struggles and difficulties are not captured. I think the programme should have incorporated a training allowance to value the participant's time, however those that were interested continued through the programme for their own reasons.

ART MODULE.

What you liked;-

- Facilitator brilliant and helpful.
- Class was relaxing and enjoyable.
- Therapeutic.
- Made us use our imagination.
- Surprised at the outcome.
- Projects were challenging.
- New crafts – learned a lot of different skills.
- Fun and variety
- Learning process and outcome
- More understanding of art.

Facilitators input;- The concept of 2-3 modules helped to focus the group. Also the space we had was excellent – a sink would have been a plus. The fact that we had a full academic year to develop the skills involved was much better than the usual 8 weeks. We had the time to develop themes/concepts in a lively creative way. The opportunity for reflection and assessment of individual projects was a plus.

Not like;-

- Not enough time for colour and painting.
- Not enough time overall.
- Drawing
- Homework

Facilitators input;- To be frank – not well prepared with the written aspects and assessment procedure. As this was a novel experience no doubt things will improve next time around. Changing numbers was a minor problem. As before a sink in the room is a must really. Simple things like time given to collecting and collating source material. More changes in Media used = Preplanning.

Change.

- Learn to draw more and more about colour
- Time to show us step-by-step drawing and painting.
- More time longer classes.
- Like more crafts added.
- More exhibitions.

Facilitators input;- Perhaps a closer linkage of themes, content between courses i.e. drawing/communication are in some sense covering the same ground in terms of personal self-expression etc., Greater collaboration between tutors/facilitators = who is the computer girl? Overall we did well and it was a learning experience for us all. Self-confidence and self-belief were the big winners.

Other comments;-

Not yet!....

COMMUNICATION MODULE.

Went well; -

- Banner – teamwork- own input – end result – felt proud.
- Life map – going back on childhood – individual life map was different – Talking about it gave us confidence. Learnt a lot about each other. Listening skills.
- 15 min presentation – chance to talk out, bring out confidence – everyone's different.
- Aware workshop was interesting, listening skills, good advice – free pen.
- Kilkenny exhibition – good day out, interesting, emotional, singing on bus, good atmosphere. Challenge to here about something.
- Listening skills role-play – enjoyable but at times challenging.
- Banner (Barrier) – enjoyable learning, a bit drawn out. Creative physically and mentally.

- Interviews – brainstormed on ideas for interviews, enjoyable, educational.
- Swan centre was ideal venue. Parking facilities available, room was bright.
- Small group was ideal / easier to work together.
- Worked well together / supported each other / new friendships made.
- Build confidence – no pressure – worked at our own pace.
- Facilitator was very helpful, understanding, encouraging and treated us as adults and individuals (equals).

Facilitators input;- I liked the discussions of the group relating to the different tasks we had. I enjoyed the personal development aspect that was intergraded throughout the whole module. I enjoyed seeing the progression of the women in relation to being confident and safe enough to speak out and be honest within the group. The tasks I enjoyed were;- Presentations, listening skills, visual project, group discussions, questions and answers. I felt that the group were facilitated by all the tutors in a way that allowed them develop freely and confidently at their own pace which I think was one of the key factors in each individual progression. I liked the venue, the environment of the Swan centre definitely impacts on training that is delivered there.

Didn't go well;-

- Role play – first task – felt silly – no confidence.
- Homework – too busy looking after kids / domestic circumstances = no time – learning journal found a bit difficult..
- Interview – Radio – found it hard to speak out.
- Starting off found it hard to speak out, fear of feeling inferior, lack of confidence, feeling you couldn't do projects.
- Some people thought that the time span on a daily basis could have been longer.
- Module was well run but at times when overlapped with work experience was boring – repetitive.
- Check in was time consuming.
- Guest speakers not always as interesting as expected (depending on topic).
- Hard to think about what to write. – Getting the right ideas without being silly.

Facilitators input;- Structured report, did not devote enough time to it. Sometimes the group was too small, if people were absent it de-motivated the rest of the group. Not having enough time to finish the learning outcomes.

CHANGE.

- Check in good idea but 10 minutes max would have been ideal.
- Clear understanding of the use of learning journals, assignments and portfolios and the importance of detailed writing in the journal.
- More trips out visiting other groups – get some ideas from other groups.
- Not to waste time sitting around.

Facilitators input;- Next time focus more on the written collection of work that was needed. Attend more meetings regarding accreditation, but not necessarily the type that we did attend.

More useful to have workshop type meetings of FETAC so that tutors could share their knowledge, experience and examples of their learning outcomes. Change the size of the group . More interaction takes place and stimulation, which enhances the development of the group and possibly the individual. It would also help cliques not being too obvious and exclusive.

Other comments.

On reflection it would have been beneficial to have more opportunities to meet with other tutors to discuss practical examples of learning outcomes. As a community education project, I think we have a lot to offer FETAC and a lot to learn. More support was needed from FETAC at the beginning of the course. I do think given a second shot at it I would be a lot more aware of what was needed;- planning, preparation time and overlap of different modules learning outcomes.

12.4 Conclusions from the evaluations

The process of community education was evident in this programme. The women who participated felt supported, included in its development, building confidence, and developing skills in a collective way. The programme also allowed for the different levels within the group and responded to the pace of each individual. The participants faced new challenges especially in developing academic skills and participating in their chosen work environment. The venue was an ideal setting and added to the development of positive affirmation. Also the length of the programme allowed time for reflection and development to take place in a supportive environment.

As this was a pilot programme the learning gained should influence the development of future programmes. More planning and preparation time is needed especially at the beginning of the programme. Having now had the experience of delivering FETAC accredited programmes this experience could only be of benefit in influencing the delivery in the future, especially around clarity for all involved and overlapping modules for the purpose of the learning outcomes. The work placement needs more consideration on timeframe. However the question must be asked "Is seeking accreditation truly reflective or hindering the process of community education.?"

13. PROGRESSION OF PARTICIPANTS

Ten women fully completed the FETAC modules and received their awards on the 4th October 2003. The women who were unable to complete the training were also awarded for their input and attendance to the programme. From the ten women who completed the course, four have accessed full time courses through the VEC. One of the participants has returned to complete her leaving certificate. Three of the women are participating on community employment schemes. One of the women has accessed full-time employment as a Special Needs Assistant, and the last woman is applying for part-time work as a retail assistant, which she knows she would be very suitable for.



14. END OF PROGRAMME PRESENTATION

The presentation of awards was a celebration night for the women and an invitation to share with others the development and completion of the programme. Most of the women had never achieved an award of their learning before, and were so proud that they invited their children along. The ex-Lord Mayor of Wexford Philomena Roche agreed to present the certificates and the press were invited to take photographs. Press releases were prepared and given to them on the night. Paul Leonard collated photographs and video presentations of the women, and transformed them into a visual display shown on the night, which was a great surprise for the women. He also captured the speeches and presentations made on the night which gives an insight into their journey on the programme. These videos were given to the women as a memory of their time on Women Making Choices 2 Programme. The venue for the celebration was the Heritage Park where a BBQ was enjoyed with Karaoke to finish. The most important part of the evening was the individual presentations the women made to acknowledge what the course meant to them. One of the participants opened the evening and introduced the speakers throughout the night, while also giving a presentation of her time on the course. This was a confident group who celebrated their achievements verbally in front of many guests. The success of the programme and the gratification of being involved in women's development is measured in terms of where the women started on the first day in terms of their self-esteem and where they finished on last day with such confidence.



15 CONCLUSIONS

This report highlights the research and consultation process which formed the programme "Women Making Choices 2". This pilot project has successfully designed, delivered and developed an accredited education and training programme that provided a progression route for women. The target group were women who had participated on the Women Making Choices 1 programme although the majority who actually participated on the programme were referred from other agencies.

The provision of the Women Making Choices 1 programmes would generally include the necessary supports so that those most disadvantaged could participate. However the training allowance was one such support that was not accessible and it seemed to have been the deciding factor for some women not to participate.

The programme was an extension of the Women Making Choices 1 programme, with more challenges and in-depth content. Although the programme responded to the needs of the past participants who already experienced an introduction to these modules one would question whether it was due to their prior knowledge of these subjects thus being comfortable with these options as opposed to modules which was not introduced to them. The funding applications to FAS and to the Social Community & Family Affairs sought funding for a programme with a content covering women's issues as well as an extension of the Women Making Choices 1 modules. Documented reports and recommendations from the Management, staff and facilitators also highlighted the need to explore oppression, community development, social analysis, and women's studies. These conflicting views and principles of community education may need to be questioned before future programmes are delivered.

The content of the Women Making Choices 2 programme included a work placement element, which was identified as beneficial especially to women who had not participated in the labour market for some time. Through evaluation the women recommended that the timeframe could be given more consideration. The tutors / facilitators highlighted the need to develop a structure to integrate the learning outcomes as well as to plan and prepare before the commencement of another programme. It was also highlighted the accreditation process brought difficulties for the participants and the facilitator / tutor which resulted in restrictions and challenges for some. This would bring in the question from the evaluation "Is seeking accreditation truly reflective or hindering the process of community education?"

The majority of the participants accessed all the modules on the programme. However two of the women only participated on the computer modules. Although this was identified through the research that the option to participate or not should be provided. These women were not included in any group work process and had no relationship with the group other than in computer training. Therefore these women did not participate in the presentation of certificates or other social activities that the group were involved in. Group cohesion could be affected when there are options to participate on modules or not as highlighted from the Waterford workshop.

The FETAC awards acknowledged the learning outcomes of each module yet the additional skills and personal development that was part of the community education process was not captured or acknowledged. However the women who did not complete the programme received acknowledgement from the project for their input and attendance.

The partnership approach in this project was very supportive. The links made and inputs from both statutory and community agencies had a very positive effect on the implementation of the programme. The National Women's Council of Ireland supported the overall project and the quarterly meetings with the other EEI projects were so beneficial for learning and networking. However the financial budget for the project came into question by the Department, which had implications to the project funds and the overall moral of the workers of the project.

The overall learning gained from this project was as follows:-

- Supporting participants after the programme had ended until they had accessed their next step. This was identified through the consultation process as a necessary support and resulted in all the women accessing other options.
- The literacy development tutor was introduced to the group and the women decided if they would like to access her service or not. This resulted in the women working through their learning outcomes as part of the programme on site. On previous programmes the literacy service telephone number was available to the participants and it was up to the individual to contact the service directly however this resulted in the women not making contact afterwards.
- The programme time span was ideal for reflection and capturing the learning, however during this time span personal difficulties and barriers arose for some women, which resulted in the provision of more one-to-one support and possible dropouts, which had not been encountered on previous short-term programmes.

16 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Women Making Choices 2 programme did not gain as many of the target group as set out to; this was mainly due to a training allowance not being available to them. It is recommended that Access 2,000 develop a policy on whether programmes should be delivered with or without a training allowance.

Needs based programmes such as the Women Making Choices 1 and 2 can be limiting. The content of such programmes are only based on what the women have experienced ("none of us know what we don't know until we know it") therefore only opting for what is familiar. If Access 2,000 develops a programme, which introduces women to social analysis, community development, women's oppression etc, then women can extend their knowledge and make more informed choices on progressions. It is recommended that a discussion and policy development relating to needs based programmes should take place.

The accreditation process raised the issue of hindering the practice of community education. It is recommended that an examination of this pilot project take place so that recommendations can be implemented for future programmes being delivered by Access 2,000. This work has already been commissioned by this project.

Evaluations of the program have taken place and are documented in this report. It is therefore recommended that Access 2,000 should implement the learning and suggestion made from these evaluations for future programmes.

Access 2,000 needs to decide if the cohesion of the group and the community education process is in danger when participants opt to be part of a module or not.

The additional skills gained from the process of community education should be acknowledged. Access 2,000 needs to acknowledge and value this additional work by addressing this gap.

The funding for this project was restrictive and not open to change. Clear guideline from the project funders regarding their policy on expenditure needs to be sought before the project begins. Flexibility should also be sought from funders, as plans when implemented are not usually viable.

The learning gained from this programme could be implemented in future programmes e.g. the support for participants after the programmes was beneficial; also the introduction of the literacy development worker was successful. However the programme time span was brought into question, especially when personal problems arose during a long programme. Access 2,000 needs to set up support structures for their staff so that this extra burden can be offloaded. Additionally the programme timeframe could be reduced.

APPENDIX 1.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brennan Molly (1998) Evaluation Report of "Women Making Choices Programme"

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. (2002) Towards a National framework of Qualifications, Establishment of Policies and Criteria. by

Ferrybank Women Making Choices. 1999 "Women Making Choices Course Evaluation".

Hennessy Deirdre Ms. 2001 "Women Making Choices Programme" An evaluation.

Access 2,000 Wexford Ltd., 2,000 Education Equality Initiative "Women Making Choices 11"

Murphy Nuncie. 2001 "Evaluation Report" Women Making Choices1 Faythe School,

Casey Gill 2000 "The Development Journey of Women"

Brennan Maria.1993/4 "The Progression of Women who participated on the Community Development module of the Horizon Programme"