

RP Implementation Report - BYC - March 23

Introduction

The implementation of Restorative Practices in Belvedere Youth Club started a few years ago with the training of some staff members with the National College Of Ireland. However, the process became a strategic priority in 2020. James Bowes was hired as RP coordinator in spring 2021 and was tasked to implement the RP Strategy designed by the Board¹.

The plan had two core components:

1. Reconfiguration of the existing BYC premises to create an environment conducive to collaboration and access for all. This is complete.
2. Build a restorative environment within BYC and extending to the wider community. This is a work in progress.

BYC's ambition was to deliver a restorative practice environment over an initial timeframe of two years. The plan was to take an “inside-out” approach, with a focus for the first period on embedding RP in the DNA of the youth club.

Initially, five strands of work were identified to inform the model, each involving a series of activities and approaches. A sixth area of work was identified later on by staff.

Main actions and activities for the first two years

Strand A: Training and Development	Training in RP of all staff Introduction to RP to all board members, volunteers, interns Design of a Restorative model to encapsulate the vision Various awareness-raising sessions with local stakeholders, funders, community groups... Pilot RP training with young people Daily modelling of RP by some staff members in one-to-one and group work Training of all staff in Trauma Informed Approaches
Strand B: Embedding and Supporting	Community of Practices and one-to-one training/debrief sessions with staff Listening circles, problem-solving circles, restorative processes to deal with conflict, grievance Daily modelling of RP by some staff members in one-to-one and group work Check-in circles in all staff/board meetings and in most young people groups. Focus on outreach with an RP lens: diversification of membership
Strand C: Communication and Engagement	Use of Restorative Language and circles to communicate better Various meetings with with local stakeholders, funders, community groups...
Strand D: Organisational Structures and Ways of Working	Rewriting of all policies with a restorative lens and implementation of restorative meetings to deal with conflicts Implementation of restorative processes in all meetings: check in and out
Strand E: Branding and Visibility	Design of a Restorative model to encapsulate the vision Visual and signage in place Video for CFI and SMBC
Strand F: Restorative Justice (RJ)	RJ meetings involving Garda and Community Safety

The focus was on four main outcomes, and following a survey and interviews with the staff, here is an evaluation of each outcome.

¹ See *Transforming an Inner-City Youth Club into a Restorative Practice Organisation*, Belvedere Youth Club (Link ?)

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Outcome 1: Role models are emerging

Strengths	Areas to be improved	Next objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All Staff and volunteers have undertaken at least an introduction to RP - Three staff members have agreed to be trained as RP 'champions' - Some young people have done training in RP - Staff have undertaken training in Trauma Informed work. - Most Staffs are modelling RP in their interactions with YP: use of RP language, circles and RP questions to deal with conflicts - Young people are starting to model RP when dealing with conflicts, are asking for circle check-ins, and are calmer and more respectful - Awareness of BYC's Restorative strategy is rising in the community and among partner organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents haven't been offered training yet and have only basic awareness of what RP is about - Not all board members are fully trained in RP - Resistance from some staff members and full buy-in still a work in progress. - Some staff members have difficulty being accountable - Diverse perceptions and conceptions of what a restorative approach is - No consistency and agreement in terms of offering direct training in RP to young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise awareness among parents and deliver training. - Complete introductory training with board members - Clarify BYC's role vs NCI's role in raising awareness in the community and among partner organisations and design actions from there - Keep offering training and Community of Practices for Staff and volunteers, balancing the need for buy-in and consistency and the inclusivity of diverse personalities and approaches - Complete the training 'Champions 'and Trainers among staff members - Keep offering adapted training to young people.

Outcome 2: Structures are inclusive

Strengths	Areas to be improved	Next Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restorative practices are used consistently during staff meetings. - Restorative practices are used more and more in youth programmes - Policies are in line with RP - Many conflicts/grievances have been successfully dealt with in line with RP - Diversification of membership: young people from migrant and foreign backgrounds - Two youth councils have just been set up - Young people seem more excited to come to BYC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More consistent use of RP in Youth Programme - Policies are not fully understood and applied - Some staff members don't trust the RP processes in place to deal with conflicts and grievances and perceive a lack of fairness - Sometimes lack of follow-up after RP processes - Lack of clarity of decision-making processes, roles and responsibilities in the leadership team - Lack of clarity of role, rights, duties and processes for Youth Councils. - No clear standards for young people's involvement in decision-making processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep offering training and CoPs - Clarify processes set out in policies - Clarify management lines and responsibilities - Clarify operational processes and commit to them - Clarify role, rights, duties and processes for the youth council - Agree on standards for young people's involvement in decision-making processes/participation

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Outcome 3: Positive Communication Techniques are integrated into BYC work

Strengths	Areas to be improved	Next Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RP levers are displayed in the building - Staff has been trained in positive and efficient communication - Communication among Staff and between staff and leadership team has improved (better clarity and inclusivity) - More dialogue between all involved including young people - Young people have more input in the design of the programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of consistency or clear strategy for communication on Social Medias - Gaps in commitments to use positive and transparent communication among staff members - Lack of consistency for young people's involvement in decision-making processes - No clear standards for young people's involvement in decision-making processes - Communication with parents is limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep offering training and modelling positive/transparent communication - Clarify standards of young people's participation in decision making processes and put structures in place - Work more with parents to improve communication

Outcome 4: Our community is being influenced by our restorative vision

Strengths	Areas to be improved	Next Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Various organisations have been invited and are partnering with BYC: ICON, Hill Street Family Resource Centre, Local schools, NCI/ELI, Mud Island Community Garden, Local community past members, Practical English Language School and the African and Islamic Community - BYC regularly engages with local stakeholders and the corporate sector - Young people are encouraged to engage in their community - BYC is hosting RJ meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harder to reach youth have not been reached yet - Difficulty to measure influence - Lack of clear strategy for community engagement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep collaborating and building partnerships - Build capacity, resources and willingness to work with harder to reach youth - Design clearer strategy in term of community engagement?

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Conclusion

These findings come from field observations, the strand reports to date, a lengthy interview with the RP coordinator, a survey filled out by ten staff members and semi-structured interviews with the General Manager, the Operations Manager, the Youth Team Leader, and three youth workers. The survey asked participants to state on a sliding scale how much they agreed (strongly disagree to strongly agree) if each item of the BYC Outcomes Map had been achieved at this stage. They were also asked to give examples or comments to justify their answers. Semi-structured interviews were led to share the survey results and check for inconsistencies or seek clarifications.

All people interviewed or surveyed agree that BYC has experienced significant changes and that the implementation of the RP strategy is well on its way. Practitioners and researchers agree that a full implementation can take 3 to 5 years, and the RP coordinator started its role two years ago during a pandemic. The first phase of the implementation focused on internal structures, processes, and practices in BYC. Although there is room for improvement, it is successful: RP Role models are emerging among Staff and young people, RP are implemented in the daily life of the Centre (language, circles, problem-solving and restorative resolutions of conflicts), communication and dialogue have improved, and BYC restorative profile is raising in the community.

There are a few main areas of improvement. These recommendations could help achieve full buy-in, improve and foster a relational and restorative culture in the Centre and support the 2nd phase of the Implementation:

1. Keep offering training according to needs, Community of Practices, and build capacity by training 'Champions' and 'Trainers.'
2. Agree on or clarify or implement more transparent processes for decision-making, conflicts among Staff, and grievances, and explore redefining management/leadership roles.
3. Agree on, clarify and implement more explicit standards and processes for young people's training and participation (including but not limited to the Youth Councils).
4. Design a more specific plan for the second phase of the implementation in the wider community, starting with Parents' involvement and mapping more specific objectives and outcomes when it comes to engaging with the various stakeholders and partner organisations in the area.