

## **Communities In Transition**

**Area: East Belfast**

**Theme: Supporting personal transition**

**Date: 12.02.2019**

**Number of attendee's: 10.** Two politicians; 1 TEO; 3 Red Cross; 1 Counselling; 1 Church food-bank; 1 Day Centre; 1 Alternatives

### **1. Proposed interventions discussed to address the issues identified in Phase 1 fieldwork?**

Focus on creativity and the arts was viewed as useful, but not the main means of change.

Some talked about needing accurate information about why young people were still joining paramilitary organisations, and the barriers to leaving.

Others talked about the need and the challenge of talking to existing leaders about why they were still active in a paramilitary group.

*Question: is anyone having these type of engagements?*

The concept of young people being 'claimed' was introduced – youth caught up in debt/drug use, then asked to 'do something' – 'criminality not paramilitary activity. Vulnerable youth want to belong, have sense of purpose, status – strong correlation between family breakdown/lack of school attendance and vulnerability – address this vulnerability, create resilience and opportunities.

There was a long discussion about the need for employment skills and jobs as a way of creating preventative goals.

One to one mentoring was favoured as a prelude and support for formal education classes.

Policing was mentioned as a key factor in addressing change, namely, dealing with low-level crime to create an ambience of lawfulness (which was declared lacking at this point in time).

Adult males between 24-50 were viewed as the most difficult to reach.

It was stated that there were few role-models from this age-group of men leaving the paramilitary groups and offering alternative life-styles. To leave often required leaving the area where they lived.

*Question: How to offer careers that paid as much as being a drug-dealer?*

Holistic process favoured – individual mentoring/interventions; family work; addressing multiple issues, not only the presenting conflict – this is time-intensive and working with low numbers of people.

*Question: What are other parts of the city doing to address these issues, and what can East Belfast learn?*

Politics in the East is fragmented and so has less overall lobbying power over key issues.

*Question: if a new initiative was started, how would we measure success?*

**2. Comments on current community capacity to address issues identified?**

Extend child-care for young parents (who can then attend sessions);

There are a lot of programmes existing in the East re- employability – Princes Trust; Extern; SIF; Start 360; Sport Changes Lives – but key issues are still remaining – youth with drug/mental health issues; influence of paramilitary groups

**3. Outcomes that participants suggested these interventions would achieve?**

Create gyms for men – gives purpose, direction, value, addresses physical and mental health – offers some training/employment opportunities

Extended child-care creates more opportunities for young parents (mostly women) who create more stability in the family and increase resilience and health

Mentoring programmes offering a holistic support seems the best methodology for addressing low-motivated, anxious, vulnerable youth

Research into why people 'join' and remain in paramilitary groups would assist in understanding the issues to be addressed.

**4. How did participants suggest we will know if these projects/interventions have succeeded? (indicators/measures)**

More stable families, reduced drug use, increased school attendance, less association with paramilitaries, increased skills/qualification – leading to greater employability, self-esteem and agency.

**5. Target beneficiaries/participants of the suggested interventions?**

Young parents; young men 'falling out' of school/family and presenting on the edge of criminal activity.

**6. How did participants suggest these projects/interventions will build the capacity/capability in the community?**

See answer 4.

**7. How did participants suggest these projects/interventions will support the overall objectives of the Tackling Paramilitarism Executive Action Plan...?**

a. Paramilitarism has no place.

New priorities for police re- low-level criminality; options for alternatives to 'joining' organisations

**b. Citizens and communities feel safe and confident.**

**c. The public support and have increased confidence in the justice system.**

Increased awareness of the justice system should make residents feel more confident that a PSNI response to an issue will be proportional.

**d. Support is available for those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures.**

Mentoring for young men; personal development for young parents  
(mostly female)

**8. Any dependencies identified by participants?**

Consideration given to other projects ie overlap and duplication including ones funded directly/indirectly by TEO and PSNI.

**9. Any risks identified by participants?**

Concern voiced about having direct conversations with paramilitary activists/leaders

**10. Any other comments made by participants?**

**11. Is a further follow-up workshop required? Please provide details.**

No.