

Communities In Transition

Participatory Design Process – Reporting Template

Please complete this report following each participatory design session (i.e. one per session) to record the key of the discussion. Please use the sections below to structure the report. If any area was not covered during the discussion, please note that in the relevant section.

Please return the completed report to cit@cooperationireland.org within one week of each participatory design session.

Area: Lurgan

Theme: Personal Transition

Date: 30/01/19

Number of attendee's: 6

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

- Participants from the community expressed a strong desire for an external organisation with experience of working with ex-prisoners and ex-combatants to come in to hold public information and knowledge exchange sessions with the community and key stakeholders.
- Conversational style events within the community to ascertain the most appropriate interventions for each area, as selected by key stakeholders within the community once they have learned more from a delivery agent (again Coiste were suggested as a possibility) on what is available.
- Some support for the suggested intervention from phase 1: Any person convicted of a scheduled offence in connection with the affairs of Northern Ireland should be eligible to ask the PSNI for formal confirmation that they have no current involvement with criminal activity or issues of a security concern for 3 years or more. Formal confirmation should allow them to participate without hindrance in the affairs of any community organisation on the basis of full and equal membership, including employment. This includes the receipt of public money by organisations in which they are employed.
- Participants supported interventions that involved ex-combatants engaging in leadership and mentoring programmes with young people to challenge myths and 'romanticisation' of the conflict.

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

- Current capacity is low and awareness of possible intervention programmes is scarce but community representatives in the room expressed a desire to learn more. They felt that the nature of this work and

theme generally was appropriate for an external organisation (such as Coiste) to engage with the community. There was consensus among participants that this was an important theme for the areas given that historically service provision for ex-combatants and ex-prisoners has been sorely lacking.

3. Outcomes that participants suggested these interventions would achieve?

- Building community capacity by counteracting the isolation and loneliness experienced by ex-combatants and enabling the community, on individual and collective basis, to address the trauma that continues impact the areas on an intergenerational basis as a legacy of the conflict.
- Challenging 'romanticisation' of the conflict for those young people (particularly young males) who may be on the fringes of joining dissident republican groups.

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

- Participants felt that a difficulty in measuring interventions under this theme was considering the intangible progress in social conditions and experiences, for example in tackling loneliness, mental health and addiction.
- A possible measurement however could be the uptake of service provision (by ex-prisoners and ex-combatants) in the area.

5. Target beneficiaries/participants of the suggested interventions?

- Ex-combatants
- Ex-prisoners
- Family members of ex-combatants
- Family members of ex-prisoners
- Young people

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

Participants questioned how a 'Fresh Start' programme can be fully transitional if the legacy impact of conflict experienced by individuals and the community on an intergenerational basis is not addressed. The ongoing trauma within the communities of Kilwilkie and Drumgask needs to be addressed and not remain hidden; to enable the conditions necessary for the community to build capacity and to transition from conflict.

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

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

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

- Participants highlighted personal transition as a key issue for the communities of Drumgask and Kilwilkie. In particular, concern was expressed over the loneliness and isolation experienced by ex-combatants not only from society but also politically, economically and from their families as well. This demographic of ex-combatants was identified as a cohort for whom little or no programmes have previously been targeted at in the community. By tackling social issues of loneliness, isolation and addiction ex-combatants can be afforded the opportunity to discuss their associative mental health issues. It is important to note that in phase 1 this 'vulnerable' cohort of ex-combatants was signposted as being particularly susceptible to being targeted by criminal gangs/paramilitaries for recruitment (particularly males aged 40 and above suffering from a variety of issues such as trauma, addiction, mental health issues and family breakdown).

8. Any dependencies identified by participants?

- Participants felt it was important to get the 'right' delivery partner with authenticity and credibility to practice in the area – participants highlighted one as a potentially appropriate service provider.
- The lack of physical space for an organisation to establish a base in either Kilwilkie or Drumgask was posited as a barrier to successful engagement. It is important to note a participant who works with ex-prisoners highlighted that a core element of the work is best undertaken in a neutral and comfortable space within the community.

9. Any risks identified by participants?

- Participants from Drumgask, whilst keen to engage and learn more about the work with ex-combatants, stated that they are behind Kilwilkie on the transition narrative and as such, having had no experience of projects for ex-combatants, would need more bespoke and Drumgask specific interventions and activities.
- With regard to the suggested intervention: 'any person convicted of a scheduled offence in connection with the affairs of Northern Ireland should be eligible to ask the PSNI for formal confirmation that they have no current involvement with criminal activity or issues of a security concern for 3 years or more' – Participants welcomed the essence/spirit behind this intervention, but queried whether the PSNI were the right partner to control the granting of this formal confirmation. In addition, participants expressed concern about how effective can this confirmation be if it wasn't respected and observed by companies, employers and the community/State generally? It was also noted by one participant that the proposal may be more applicable for loyalist ex-combatants who may face more difficulties

within their own communities in terms of legitimacy than republican ex-combatants do.

10. Any other comments made by participants?

- Participants who had been involved with funded interventions/programmes in other areas for ex-prisoners noted the success of the 'From Prison to Peace' programme. It is important to note that participants stated that such projects had not been introduced to Kilwilkie and Drumgask.
- Participants discussed how long an ex-prisoner has to carry the label and stigma of being an ex-prisoner and agreed that the physical (inability to travel/ get jobs/ apply for funding etc) and mental barriers facing ex-prisoners are stark.
- Participants felt that the mental health needs of ex-prisoners and ex-combatants (and their families – inter-generational trauma) are becoming more acute within communities still facing the legacy of the conflict.

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

- No follow-up required.