

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: New Lodge / Ardoyne

Theme: Personal Transition

Date: 01.02.19

Number of attendee's: 5

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

There were two key areas of discussion at the consultation on this theme.

The first was the need to ensure that the concerns of people released from prison under the early release scheme of the GFA would be fully addressed. It was accepted that local need did not allow for a local intervention, but there was a strong suggestion that a regional service aimed at supporting and addressing the needs of ex-prisoners was an essential contribution to B4 and the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme. All participants accepted that the issues for individuals in B4 areas are sufficiently similar to allow for a single service regardless of the geographical area. Given the political background however, it was important to draw on the knowledge and expertise of the relevant stakeholder constituency, especially in:

- Supporting engagement with statutory authorities or on issues of policing and community safety;
- Countering negative pathways for young people in each locality;
- Articulating an alternative narrative to those advocating armed violence;
- Advocating and championing the needs and rights of the ex-prisoner constituency and their families i.e. there are a number of unresolved issues from previous agreements; and
- Supporting ex-prisoners and their families in terms of mental health issues, employment and education.

The second theme was the need to address ongoing evidence of the distorted picture of masculinity, especially as it impacts on boys and young people who might be attracted to violence or supposedly 'heroic' forms of anti-social behaviour. Participants spoke about a sub-culture of attraction to violence, an association with drugs and alcohol and a sense of alienation from mainstream society which includes schools and the established youth services. Combined with an attraction to bonding and an offer of support, this easily turned into a kind of 'gang' identity which could be manipulated by those with an interest in violent activity for organisational or semi-political ends.

Participants suggested that there should be a project aimed at engaging alienated young people. This had to be located with services which were able to reach and work with those outside the mainstream and could not be a mere extension of existing youth services. However, it was also important to see this within the wider purposes of the programme and of B4 as a mechanism to ensure focus on the most at-risk young people.

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

- There is self-organised regional body that works with/for the former prisoner constituency but it has limited resources. There is currently no programme of work that is working on issues around the promotion of the peace and political process and exploring avenues for working with individuals considering 'moving away from supporting armed violence'. It is important to ensure that this work is aligned to the purposes of B4.
- The current provision of youth services by definition does not always reach those considered anti-social. Care should be taken in tendering that any agency undertaking this work has the knowledge and capacity to do the work and engage at an appropriate level with the young people. This is skilled and complex work.

3. Outcomes that participants suggested these interventions would achieve?

Project One:

- Increased support for the peace process and the normalisation of society;
- Community advocates for the rule of law in a vulnerable constituency;
- Improved community cohesion and sense of identity.

Project Two:

- Young people at risk of paramilitary activity;
- Community capacity to address issues of alienation and violence;
- Criminal justice system through encouraging pro-social attitudes.

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

Project One

- Increased support for the peace and political processes;
- Increased support for the rule of law and engagement with the criminal justice system;
- Increased commitment to building a shared and cohesive society.

Project Two

- More young people engaged in pro-social activity;
- Early intervention available for young people at risk;
- Less violence and fewer issues of drug and alcohol related ASB;
- Alternative pathways to violence identified in individual lives.

5. Target beneficiaries/participants of the suggested interventions?

- Ex-prisoners and their families;
- Individuals currently engaged or at risk of becoming involved with armed groups;
- The wider community by engaging with the most at-risk constituencies.

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

- There was consensus among participants that this was an important theme for the areas given that historically service provision for ex-prisoners had been minimal. It was suggested that there was currently little support/provision for ex-republican prisoners in any of the areas, and that by introducing services to support ex-prisoners, this would improve confidence in these communities, which feel a sense of loss and abandonment. This intervention would also provide a platform to begin to engage with this constituency on wider (and more ambitious) *Fresh Start* objectives. It was also noted that this programme would encourage wider participation with the criminal justice system and go some way to reduce the narratives advocating for the use of armed violence. Such interventions would also challenge the 'romanticisation' of the conflict for those young people (particularly young males) who may be on the fringes of joining armed groups.
- The ability to intervene early and creatively with young people at risk, especially those excluded from school or youth services is critical if the 'pipeline' of young people vulnerable to paramilitary, gang, anti-social or illegal behaviour is to be interrupted.

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.**

There was some frustration with the language and terminology used in the Fresh Start process. Defining paramilitarism is not easy, nor is there consistency in how people interpret 'embedding a culture of lawfulness'. Furthermore, clearly articulating what a 'community in transition' equates to is problematic. However, in terms of the objectives, interventions could achieve the following:

- Communities feel safe and confident

This programme will begin to create new space for the community to debate, challenge and critique the impact of the peace process and the role of ex-prisoners. This will also challenge the narratives and rationale for the continued existence of armed groups.

Engagement with at risk young people is an important contribution to ending any romantic associations with violence.

- Paramilitarism has no place

These interventions will offer alternative perspectives on the role of violence and conflict in 2019 and argue for the role of peaceful and democratic approaches to managing difference.

The alternatives to intervention by engagement or enforcement by law or lawlessness. This project seeks to reinforce the alternatives.

- Those who want away from paramilitarism are supported to do so

There will opportunities to consider and reflect on the methods required to distance oneself from armed violence and the support required to chart an alternative pathway.

Good youth work saves lives.

- People have confidence in the benefits of democratic development in the justice system

The programme will encourage vulnerable constituencies along with their personal and professional networks to reflect on the societal transformation that has taken place and the progress that has taken place as a result of a less violent society.

8. Any dependencies identified by participants?

It is crucial that other areas of the action plan are implemented and co-ordinated with the rest of the programme, especially around the systemic issues facing the ex-prisoner community, young people at risk and vulnerable communities. There is a role for the police and criminal justice system in the second project, and this needs to be properly co-ordinated and responsibilities identified.

9. Any risks identified by participants?

- **Risk:** There was recognition that if the other departments responsible for actions do not work in partnership then the impact of B4 would be limited.
- **Risk:** The language associated with the programme of 'tackling paramilitarism' and 'promoting 'lawfulness' could limit the effectiveness of any interventions and that those associated with community development fail to see the connection.
- **Risk:** Competition rather than cooperation is encouraged among local organisations. The programme should seek to build relationships between community organisations and between the community and statutory sector – not to divide them.
- **Risk:** That this intervention is seen to simply replicate other work streams funded through other sources. However, this is a bespoke programme that is specifically focused on working with a constituency that has the potential to encourage support for the rule of law; advocate for policing, and challenge a number of the negative cultural issues that exist around both tolerating and supporting armed violence.
- **Risk:** This intervention could be seen as giving money to groups who are unsympathetic with the aims of the programme, and needs to be closely monitored.
- **Risk:** The successful bidder for the tender either does not have the reach to engage appropriately with young people at risk, or is identified as unwilling to engage with statutory supports. This needs to be monitored appropriately.

10. Any other comments made by participants?

N/A

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

No