

PEACE4YOUTH NEWS-ISSUE 4 SUMMER 2019



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Third Space: Enabling a Future Generation of Storytellers

by Caoimhe Hegarty and Colin Dardis

Our Digital Storytelling is all about giving our young people a voice to let their stories be heard- regardless of whatever that story may be. Through filmmaking, podcasts and sharing reading, we explore exactly what a story can be, and how best to help people share theirs. So far in our programme, we've been lucky enough to meet many young people whose inspiration and resilience shines through in everything they do. But we've also met young people whose true qualities are hidden just beyond the surface. From mental health issues, to stories about challenges of accepting their true selves, our young people have at times shared with us their innermost struggles. Sometimes all it takes is patience and trust and their stories to emerge.

Our young people are motivated to share their story "to try and make a change" or "to help others". The Third Space programme is designed in such a way that it places the young person at its centre, as they strive to find their voice and make a difference.

To allow people to do this, the creative sessions are supplemented with our Reading Rooms strand, delivered by Verbal's trained shared reading facilitators. By looking together at poems and stories, and reacting to the issues that arise, we find effective ways to promote and instigate 'health literacy' (resilience, mindfulness, empathy, problem solving, etc).

Reading Rooms use selected texts to help promote discussion and reflection on particular themes, relevant to the needs of the particular group each session is delivered to. The text and annotations aim to foster organic conversations, based on the individual beliefs and behaviours within a group. Within the safe space of literature, a step removed from the real world although reflective of it, participants can explore issues that may be a source of anxiety or remain unanswered for them.

These initial reading sessions help inform what issues the participants might want to explore through their short films or podcasts. They may wish to tackle a social issue such as lack of employment or drug use; talk about school or youth group; or simply create an original, creative story of their own.

Over the past number of months, our current intake of young people has embraced their new roles of storytellers, sharing their thoughts, experiences and hopes for the future. We look forward to sharing some of our young people's latest digital stories so other communities can get an insight into these amazing lives.



breakthrough

Broadening Horizons

We have a very exciting opportunity to offer to young people who have engaged with the Breakthrough Programme. From the 9th – 17th of June 2019 we have had two Breakthrough graduates, and one current participant, participating in the cultural exchange and nature experience programme 'Building Walls – Breaking Walls'. This exchange took place in a picturesque area of Tschier / Val Müstair, in Switzerland. This a programme that focuses on connecting young people from divided societies together to share their culture and identities. The programme has two core elements.

In the mountain and nature experience element of the programme participants will spend 9 days learning from professional staff how to build traditional stonewalls on the mountains while experiencing the authentic and basic mountain life. This will provide an opportunity for young people to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of daily life and technology, and instead connect with nature and those around them.

The next element involves the facilitation of inter-cultural experience with young people from the Northern Ireland, The Republic of Ireland, the mountains of Switzerland and the Middle East. This provides young people with the opportunity to discuss challenges around division and segregation in their countries and share their experiences with others. Participants will each host a cultural night to showcase traditions, food and music that represent them.

All updates of the group's progress and experiences will be shared on the Breakthrough Programme Facebook page so be sure to check it out. We will also provide an update of the participants experience upon their return.

<https://www.facebook.com/breakthroughbelfast/>



Cancer Has No Borders



When young people in our North Belfast Alternatives group began co-designing their programme they quickly learned that almost two thirds of the group had been affected by a cancer related death in their family. A few of the members loved ones had been cared for by NI Hospice and the care they had received had left an impact on them and a desire to promote awareness and raise funds for the amazing work of the NI Hospice. Quickly it was decided that they were going to arrange and host a Charity Football Tournament.

North Belfast Women's Initiative & Support Project (NBWISP) came on board to support the project. Alex, their Community Worker, brought her wealth of knowledge and contacts in the 'football world' as she was a professional player and women's football coach. The group were extremely motivated by organising this event. As they were still at school it meant they weren't available during the day to do the organising, so meetings were arranged in the evening during their Strive nights.

Crusaders football ground was secured as a venue, on Saturday 30th March from 5 to 7pm. The young people met NI Hospice to find out how their funds would be used. Trophies were organised and referees were booked. A bucket collection at Tesco raised £540 and a raffle was held for a signed NI jersey donated by Alex. The group worked with David the Strive Comms Officer to redesign the Strive logo with a lavender ribbon to represent all cancers to be used on the jerseys on the night. Other Strive teams came on board from Include Youth Donegal, Youth Initiatives Derry/Londonderry, Strive Staff and Expert By Experience volunteers and friends, and the tournament winners - Blue Houses (Youth for Christ).

Strive Youth Worker Kelly Gill said "Reflecting on the tournament, I believe it was a massive success, it genuinely seemed that all young people, Strive staff and their family/friends that came along thoroughly enjoyed themselves and had a positive experience while raising vital funds in aid of NI Hospice."





Celebrating Diversity in Co. Armagh

Futures Project works to challenge stereotypes and reduce the tension in communities which are becoming increasingly more diverse. One of our projects is with 19 Bulgarian Roma young people in Armagh, through a partnership with City of Armagh High School (CAHS).

A 'newcomer' is defined by Dept of Education as a young person who has enrolled in a school but does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum and wider environment. The number of 'newcomer' young people attending post-primary schools has risen from 463 in 2001 to 3119 in 2018 and now represent 4.4% of the overall school population. The number of newcomers in CAHS has increased by over 50% and a large number of these young people are Bulgarian Roma.

All of the young people came to Northern Ireland with their families for better employment opportunities and 'to find a better life.' One of the young people said that in their previous hometowns; even with a good education, the best they could hope for would be a job in McDonalds. They have big dreams and aspirations and hope that the prospects in Northern Ireland will help them to realise those dreams.



'My hope is to go to university and have a good education, my dream is to be an architect or fashion designer. I would like people to know about us. We are very kind, we don't like to hate people. We like to help them if they have needs. We are very happy people. We want to help them and at the same time, be friends and family.' – Mani

Roma communities have been the subjects of racism, discrimination and oppression over the years, they have difficulty in accessing healthcare, face issues with housing and there is a focus on small business entrepreneurship but not on formal education.

CAHS approached Futures due to their struggles with low attendance and retention from the Roma young people and the school were not content to accept the reality that many of them would leave school without reaching their full potential. Futures is working with a group of 19 Bulgarian Roma between age 14-17 to facilitate informal education to enable them to achieve a qualification and also to help them integrate into their school and be part of the fabric of their local community. The young people do activities together as a group to explore their own culture but also integrate with a group of local young people in Armagh to break down prejudice and stereotypes and reduce the barriers in the way of forming relationships with other young people in their communities.



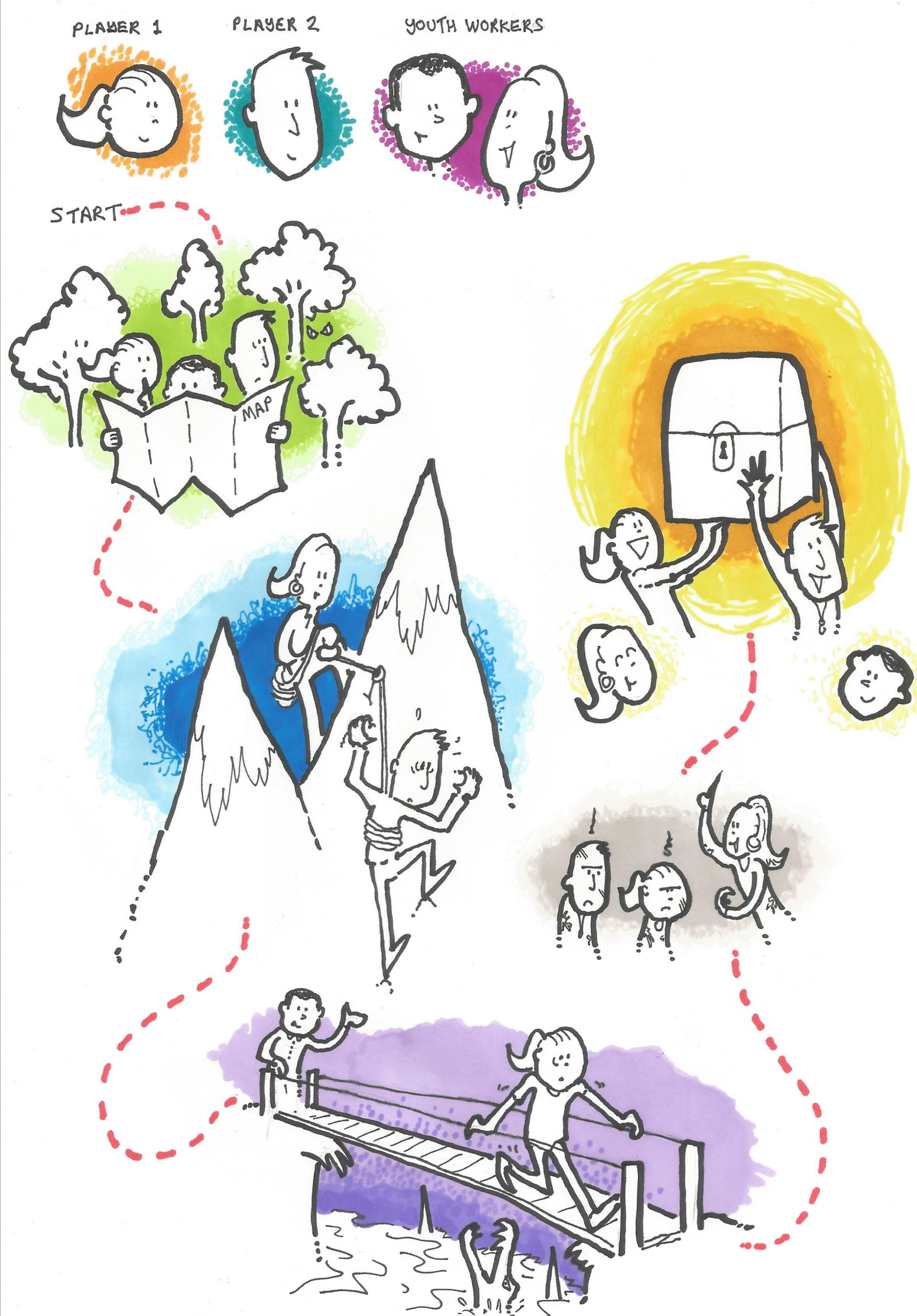
'We were the first Bulgarian people in our school and we can't speak the language. That was a problem for me, because I can't talk to the people. Futures is helping me with my English.' – Shezhana



Lifemaps

...the youth work journey to
build mental health

Young people from within the Peace4Youth programme are presenting with acute and chronic mental health issues – from low-lying anxiety to emotional crises; on occasions, leading to self-destructive thoughts and behaviours. For youth workers, the skills needed to deal with the mental health needs of young people are complex and require a mosaic of interventions. But first, it requires an assets-based approach to mental health; which considers that building the mental health skills of young people is a more sustainable strategy than trying to stop depressive or suicidal thoughts.



LIFEMAPS is a strengths-based approach, which focuses on how youth work can build the mental health of young people. This is about working with young people on their skills and attitudes; but LIFEMAPS also recognises that issues of social exclusion and powerlessness have the potential to negatively impact on young people's mental health.

The LIFEMAPS model has been developed by Simon Ward, Senior Educational Psychologist in the Wirral; and Eliz McArdle; Ulster University Youth work team. This one-day training session was held on Friday 14th June, 2019 for Peace4Youth staff to focus attention on the why and how of mental health work at early intervention stages.

The LIFEMAPS model can be accessed on Cooperation Ireland's website at <https://www.cooperationireland.org/the-nature-of-youth-work> and further LIFEMAPS training will be available in the next year.

YouthPact Young Voices- Something to Say about....BREXIT

On April 10th 2019, two days before the then deadline for the UK to exit the European Union (EU), YouthPact brought together 50 young people and workers from across the Peace4Youth programme to share their thoughts, views and opinions, on Brexit – the practical implications and potential opportunities.



The event, in Dungannon, included a mix of interactive, reflective and participatory exercises, a factual and up to date presentation delivered by expert guest speakers from the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS), facilitated small group discussion, radio interviews (with RadioYNP.com) and a question and answer session. Young people also had the opportunity to ask the CCBS representatives individual questions regarding their current and specific circumstances. What emerged from young people was their expectations, hopes, concerns and fears for what Brexit would mean for them personally, their friends and family, the communities they are part of and wider society (north/south and east/west).



Perhaps unsurprisingly, when asked ‘what does Brexit sound like to you?’ the range of words used by young people could be considered as reflecting the dissonance in the wider press, media and social media and the world around them.

Unequal necessary
Isolation
Justice Head
Cooperation
Votes
Disaster
Worry Wrecking
Wisdom
nightmare
Honesty
Voice
Scary
Chaos Boring
Identity
Noise
Respect
Selfish

The Question & Answer session reflected young people’s desire to make sense of and seek reassurance amidst the uncertainty around Brexit. Questions included:

What will happen when shopping or working in Northern Ireland and living in the Republic, and vice versa?”

“Is there a need for stockpiling?”

“Will my rights as a migrant be affected?”

“How will Brexit impact integrated health and other services?”

Young Voices Continued...

In responding to the young people's questions staff from the Centre for Cross Border Studies highlighted how the impact of Brexit will vary depending on whether the Withdrawal Agreement or a political settlement is accepted or whether the United Kingdom leaves without a deal.

At the start of the event participants were asked to rate their knowledge or understanding of Brexit, and this question was repeated at the end of the event. This simple exercise revealed a dramatic increase in knowledge or understanding about Brexit for many participants.

| Knowledge / Understanding | Very good | Good | Not great | Very little |
|---------------------------|-----------|------|-----------|-------------|
| Before the event | 3% | 14% | 20% | 63% |
| After the event | 14% | 53% | 25% | 8% |

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