

PEACE4YOUTH NEWS- ISSUE 3

SPRING 2019



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An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige

Department of
Children and Youth Affairs



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‘Personal Development Packs a Punch!’ **by Chelsie Sparks, YMCA Ireland, MPower Youth Project** **(Belfast).**

“Don’t count the days, make the days count”

There are endless Muhammad Ali quotes that can be employed for inspiration, but this one in particular really drums home a message about commitment, perseverance and importantly, resilience.

Personal development is a journey that Peace4Youth projects encourage participants to take - and for this particular group of young people, boxing has become their vehicle. This article will look very briefly at how personal development is being strengthened and maintained through experiential learning, in an out-of-school setting.

MPower Youth Project (Belfast team) is currently working with and engaging a group of 15 young men from a west Belfast secondary school via one-to-one mentoring, small groupwork and fitness-focussed activity days. We work on all of the core themes via groupwork, but personal development in particular shines when we take the group to their weekly boxing session. In these sessions, we see these young men really thrive. They are challenged and pushed to new limits, they’re learning a new skill which requires great discipline and they’re discovering how to make themselves feel ‘high’ through hard work and determination.

The project has been working in collaboration with St. Paul’s ABC, a west Belfast-based club, and so the young men have been also connecting back in with their community. This is an important aspect of the project, because they have the opportunity to continue on their development path beyond the time constraints of the project, and out of school hours.

We as youth workers, have taken only positives from these sports-based sessions, and the young people involved have reiterated that sentiment in their actions. Their behaviour post-boxing is calmer, their confidence in groupwork sessions is growing and they’re opening up to us, allowing themselves to be more vulnerable in mentoring. Sport is a powerful catalyst in bringing about change in young people’s lives, and this is no different. Providing young people with opportunities to learn in unconventional ways can open their minds to new, positive ways of thinking and YMCA Ireland MPower, via Peace4Youth is doing exactly that.

Futures Project "New Directions, Brighter Futures"

In February 2019, 100 young people celebrated their completion of Futures Project at Belfast Met.

Futures is a partnership between Belfast Met, Start360, NI Housing Executive and Southern Regional College. The project kicked off in June 2018 in Millfield campus, Girdwood Community Hub, Oasis Youth Centre, Start360s regional centres in Belfast and Ballymena and in a social enterprise called Sweet Sound Café in Inspire Business Park in Dundonald; working with young people with learning disabilities. We have also been working with Year 11-13 in St Ronan's College, St. Louise's Comprehensive College and St. Colms High School.

Seven of our participants came to Northern Ireland as refugees from Syria and have been learning English alongside Futures Project. They say that Futures was vital in helping them to integrate with society, make new friends, learn English and figure out how to make their career dreams into reality.

Sean, 18 from Belfast, won the award for Futures 'Mr Personality', he brightened up each class with his sharp wit, humour, saying exactly what he thinks and having the confidence to be himself no matter what! Sean struggles with autism but he doesn't let that hold him back. He says, 'I know I have autism but it's Sean... nothing else. I respect my autism; I love my autism but it does not define me.'

To hear more of Sean's story - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4CjBLQz9e0&t=7s>

Thomas, 20 from Ballymena, said that Futures became a part of his week that he looked forward to. He benefited a lot from the programme but also started to see the benefit for others and made him realise that he wants to become a youth worker to be able to pass on what Futures has done for him. He says, 'Everybody has a voice, and everybody has a time to use that voice. There's a lot of people who come from places where they don't get to speak or feel that their voice isn't needed or wanted. You can see their confidence growing and see people being proud of themselves which makes me happy. Even though I've grown myself, it's nice to see other people in a similar situation flourish like they should, because they deserve it.' Thomas is doing his Level 2 OCN in Youth Work Practice and wants to go to UUJ to study Level 4 Certificate... watch this space!

To hear more from Thomas and some of the other Phase 1 participants - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Az_6XBixGY&t=2s



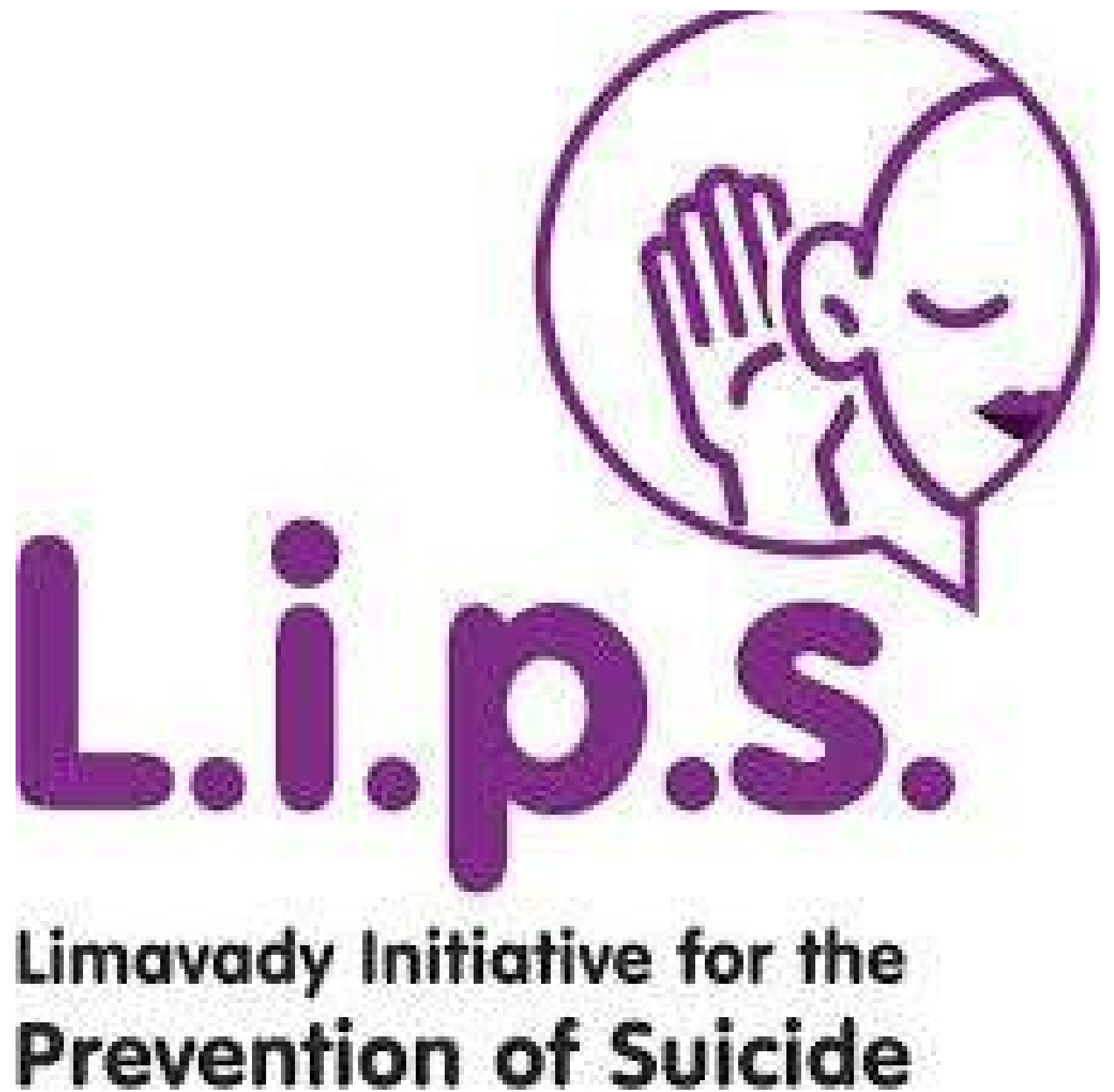
Third Space—“Under Pressure”

Twenty-two young people from Third Space (Limavady group) took part in a six week personal development programme called “Under Pressure” which was funded by L.I.P.S (Limavady Initiative for the Prevention of Suicide).



L.I.P.S is a new charity set up to help those struggling with mental health or thoughts of suicide. Of the 48 deaths by suicide in the WHSCT area in 2016, 17 were from the Limavady area.

The “Under Pressure” programme was developed in response to address emotional wellbeing through personal development and life skills. The intended outcomes were to teach resilience and better ways to cope with life’s ups and downs “I like the fact that it recognises that young people’s mental health is sensitive and an issue. It teaches how to break damaging thoughts.”



Week 1 focused on steps to living a healthy lifestyle and cultivating habits of happiness “In future I will eat healthier and relax more.”

Week 2 focused on understanding your strengths and becoming more self-aware “I learned that I need to take more time to check in with myself because my mental health is just as important as my physical health.”

Week 3 taught young people new ways to relax, recharge and recover and ways to cope with stress “I liked the idea of catching negative thoughts and turning them around. I now regularly practice thinking about 3 things I am grateful for when feeling down.”

Week 4 focused on ways to develop self-confidence “I learned that I have a lot of positive qualities.”

Week 5 young people developed future goals through a story board.

Week 6 allowed young people to develop an ‘ouch kit’ which helped teach them ways to cope when they are hurting.

Young people have also improved their personal development throughout their time in Third Space by taking part in meditation to teach them new relaxation techniques and laughter yoga which has numerous health benefits such as increasing happiness, reducing pain and lowering stress. They also have received numerous training opportunities through The Cedar Foundation offering Disability and Autism Awareness training, The British Red Cross offering basic first aid training and Cara Friend delivering LGBT training.



Valentines Day, 2019: Five schools came together to share 10 Ways to Love Yourself....

#dayon

The participants of IGNITE group in the Journeys project, whilst participating in a number of workshops focusing on Personal Development came together to explore ways to take care of their wellbeing and what they could do to help others look after their own personal wellbeing. IGNITE, which is based across five schools in the Belfast area, decided they wanted to take a stand and begin to start the revolution of loving yourself!

“Stop. Think. Talk”

Inspired by Martin Luther King, the young people participated on a ‘#DAYON’ and not a ‘day off’ event which saw the young people raise an awareness of issues that are affecting their schools, communities and themselves. And they wanted to do something about it....

“Be Kind to Yourself”

On 14 February, Valentine’s Day the day of love, IGNITE participants wanted to spread the message that the most important person you can love is yourself. “Loving yourself is the greatest revolution.” It may feel a bit strange but the beauty of looking after you means you can help others love themselves too.

“Exercise can help with body and mind!”

Being a youth led project, the young people came up with the simple but powerful idea to hand out pocket sized cards with ‘10 Ways to Love Yourself’ to the pupils within their schools and to the public in Belfast City Centre. Over 1500 cards were handed out alongside leaflets and contact information for mental health and wellbeing services where further support can be provided and of course a packet of love hearts (It was Valentine’s day after all!) and it certainly was one to remember.

“Breathe, take things one step at a time.”

The hope is that this small simple act will ripple across schools, pupils, families and teachers and inspire us all to look after our wellbeing or to support others who need that help or just the realisation that they are not alone.

“Surround yourself with positive people”

YouthPact Citizenship Seminar

28th February 2019

“To take no part in the community's affairs is to be either a beast or a god.” Aristotle

A key purpose of the seminar was to look at what citizenship means in the context of the Peace4Youth Programme, create the space and time for workers to reflect on and share examples of their practice in this key area of work, and enhance their understanding of the concept of citizenship.

Forty workers from across the Peace4Youth programme joined YouthPact staff to hear the hear keynote input from Professor Duncan Morrow (Ulster University) which led participants through various perspectives, constructs and components of citizenship. These included concepts such as Status, Voice, Decision-making, Law & Rights, Civic, Place, Act & Contribute.

To encourage the sharing of sharing of practice, the second part of the seminar took the form of small group discussions with peers from different Peace4Youth projects. Evaluation sheets highlighted that workers welcomed the opportunity to hear "the different experiences others have had with citizenship" and reflected that "it was great to hear practical ways to give young people a voice when they haven't had it in other places."





STRIVE- Experts by Experience

Strive 'Experts By Experience' from Phase 1 receiving their Millennium Volunteer award. The Event took place in the Guildhall Derry/LondonDerry on Thursday 21st February.

Celebrating young people's volunteering achievements with the Strive programme in Lifford, Co. Donegal. The EBE's have successfully supported staff to carry out recruitment plans, develop a programme plan for each one of the three key areas of the Strive programme and support young people through out the programme.

Included in picture above Lynda Conway (Youth Worker), Jesssica Mc Monagle, Katie Anderson, Paddy Mooney (Include Youth Director), Nicole McDaid, Tammy Mc Carron & Leanne Harte (Youth Worker)

Community Youth Work Practice and Autism Spectrum Conditions - Understanding, Inclusion and Participation

Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) affect the way a person communicates and relates to people around them. Community Youth Work courses in Ulster University have witnessed increased numbers of students and practitioners developing programmes and carrying out research on the experiences of young people with ASC. Emerging themes in Community Youth Work include gaps in training and provision, understanding need and ensuring participation and inclusion and issue such as mental health, isolation and emotional well-being. This was the background to the decision by Dr Breda Friel, to organise a conference in January at the Magee campus.

Community Youth Work (CYW), as a discipline, aims to be responsive to emerging trends in practice across the sector. The past number of years has witnessed the development of knowledge, interest and understanding of the needs of young people with Autism Spectrum Conditions and provision in this area of Community Youth Work practice.

Dr Breda Friel, Lecturer in the School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences, said:

“The key aim of the conference was to provide information, tools, and strategies in order to support young people with Autism Spectrum Conditions across the community youth work sector.

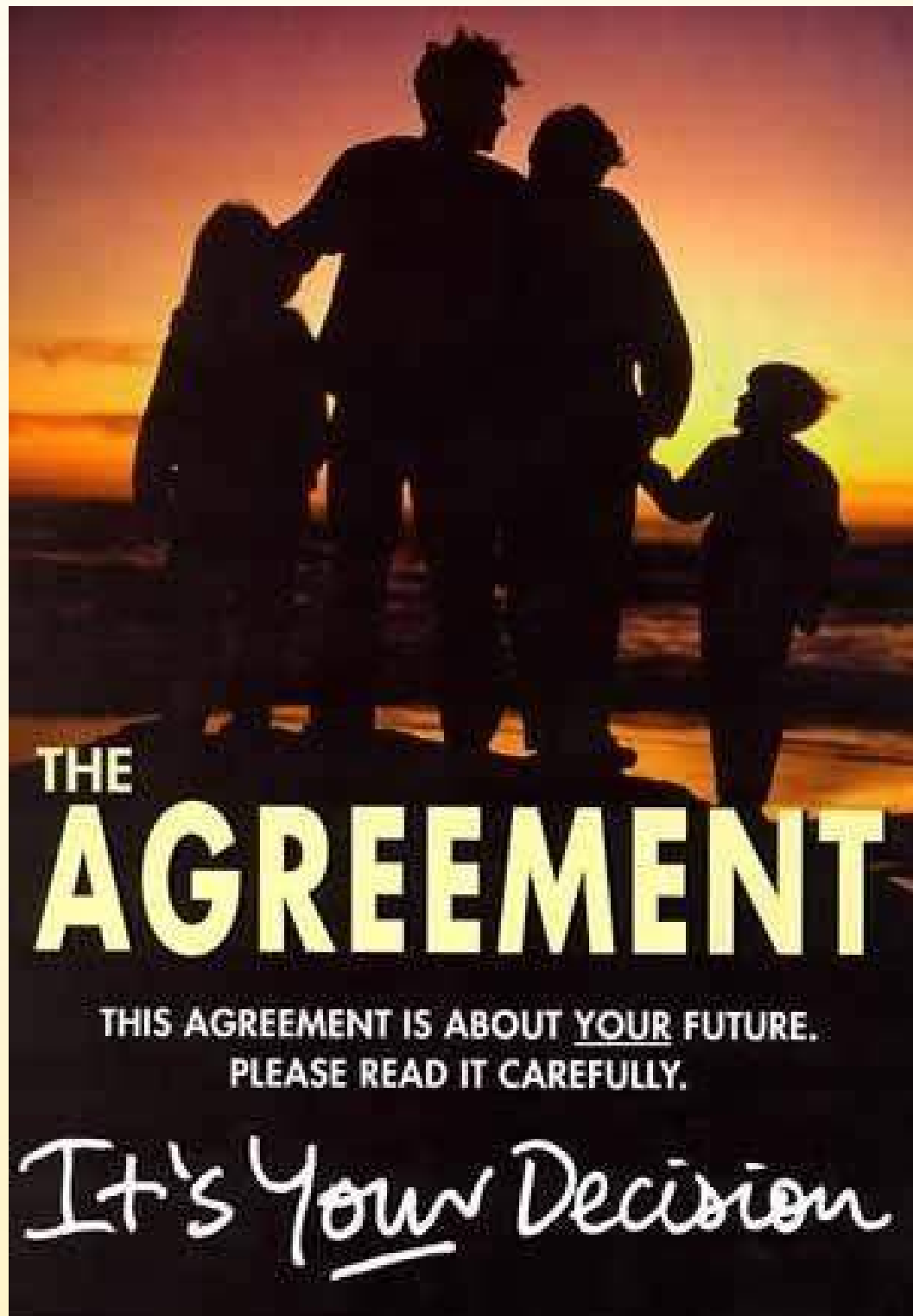
“We do our best to highlight the voices of people with ASC and in partnership with YWelp Erasmus colleagues from Melbourne, Finland, Estonia and Maynooth and supported by YouthPact Peace4Youth, we welcomed 180 delegates who attended a very successful conference.”

Autism, according to the NHS Information Centre, is estimated to affect around 1% of the UK population. That’s 700,000 people who live with the condition which affects the way they process, communicate and socialise within society. This conference brought together local, regional, national and international speakers and community youth work providers working in the area of Autism Spectrum Conditions.

Conference speakers included Dr Breda Friel and Jane Hickey, Education Manager in Youth Work and Education Support at Victoria University (Melbourne). Keynote speakers included three young people and the short video of their input on inclusion has generated 3000 views on Facebook. The young people were from Crana College, Sonas Youth club for young people in Buncrana (Mr Dylan Clarke) and Project Sparks (Playtrail) talked about promoting positive outcomes through youth work with individuals with Autism Spectrum Condition, training and ASC in Schools. Dr Martin McMullan from Youth Action N.I. provided the closing remarks.



Bringing the Agreement Home



On 12 March, led by the Centre for Cross Border Studies, the “Bringing the Agreement Home: in all its parts” project was a timely look back over the provisions, institutions and bodies created the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and subsequent political agreements.

This YouthPact organised session was generously hosted by Start360 in its Belfast office and we were joined by 19 Peace4Youth workers and a Co-operation Ireland colleague from the SEUPB funded Open Doors project (<https://www.cooperationireland.org/open-doors>).

The session was timely as The Agreement "in all its parts" has become a core issue in the negotiations over the UK’s withdrawal from the EU. As well as discussing the perception that young people don't know about The Agreement, participants also explored whether or not it was still relevant 21 years on and what other democratic models might replace it.

<http://crossborder.ie/bringing-agreement-home-parts/>

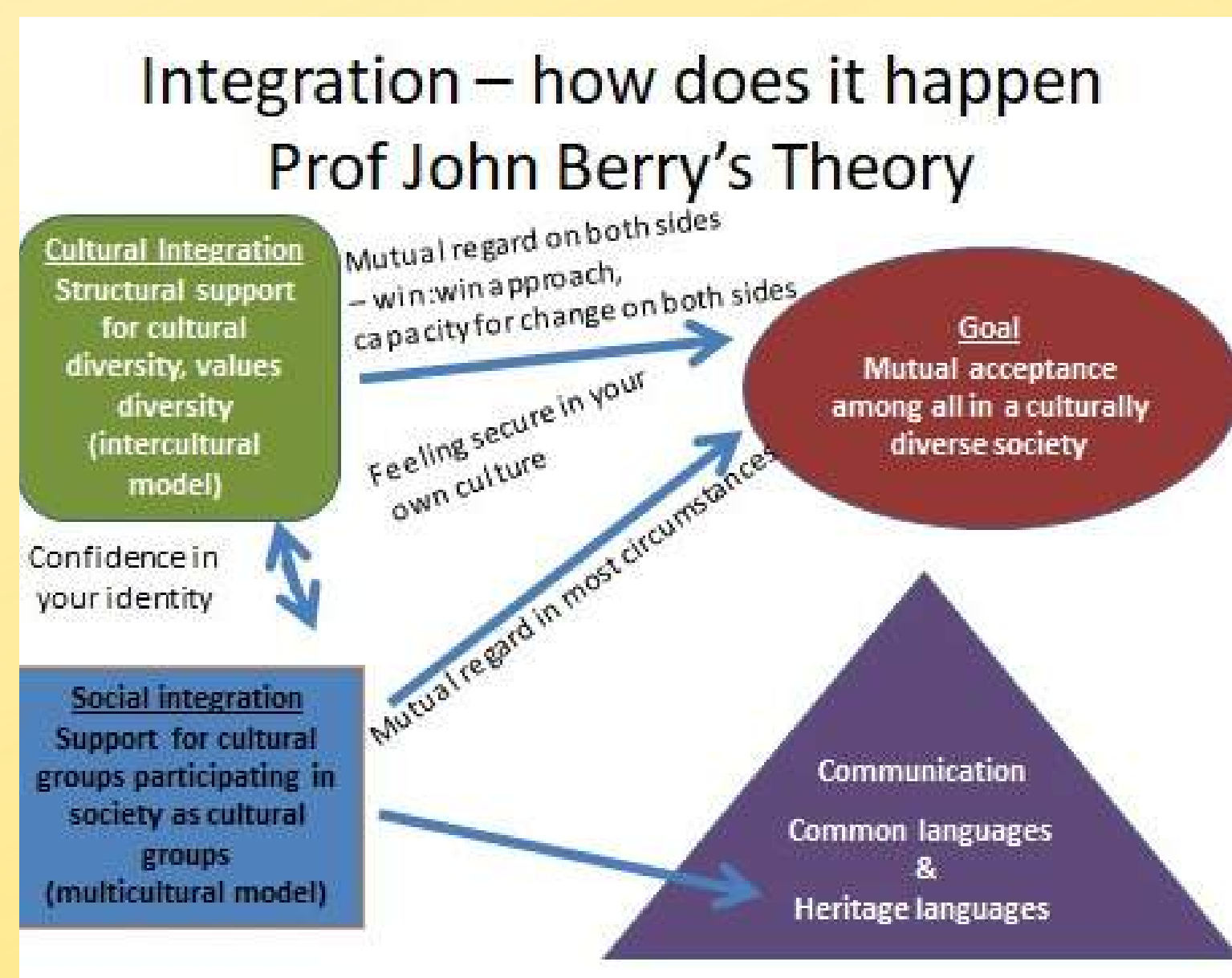
Conscious Use of Self in Transformative Practice

YouthPact, in partnership with the National Youth Council of Ireland, is in the process of developing a resource for Peace4Youth workers (with a working title of) ‘Conscious Use of Self in Transformative Practice’.

On Friday 8th March 15 workers from eight available Peace4Youth projects participated in a pilot training session to 'road test' elements of the resource. Using a theory to practice approach, and a variety of reflective and participatory exercises, the session involved workers looking at:

- Awareness of own values;
- Understanding self-identity;
- What is oppression?
- Engaging through compassionate communication/empathy; and
- Changing practice to change behaviours.

We anticipate the resource being finalised in the early summer and we will keep projects informed of its roll-out.



Congratulations!!!

Big congratulations to Grainne Stockton, a former Omagh participant. Grainne joined Cohort 2 of Youthscape and with her infectious optimism and great team leader skills, joined the Youthscape Youth Forum and ultimately applied for the first employed Youthscape Peace Apprentice role of the programme. We are delighted that she was successful, and wish her every success in her new role. We have no doubt that her experience on Youthscape and personal confidence will be a big contribution to the programme and all of the Youthscape team look forward to working with her.

Welcome Grainne!!



YouthPact is a project supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)



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