

BUILDING CAPACITY TO SUPPORT TRANSITION IN BRANDYWELL AND CREGGAN IN DERRY/LONDONDERRY

FIELDWORK REPORT FROM PHASE 1 – BUILDING CAPACITY IN COMMUNITIES IN TRANSITION

AUGUST 2018



The
Executive Office

Foreword

In July 2016 the Northern Ireland Executive published an Action Plan setting out 38 actions it would take to address some of the most difficult issues which continue to disrupt peaceful and democratic society, in particular, the issues of continued paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime.

This plan seeks to achieve four ambitious outcomes; a society where citizens and communities feel safe and confident; where paramilitarism has no place; where the public support and have even more confidence in the justice system; and where those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures are supported to do it.

The Executive Office has responsibility for delivery of Action B4 of the Executive Action plan through the Communities in Transition project, which aims to support eight areas where there has been a history of paramilitary activity and coercive control to transition into open and accessible communities where paramilitary activity no longer plays a role.

The Tackling Paramilitarism Programme Board, which oversees delivery of the Executive Action Plan, commissioned independent research which identified the eight areas of focus for this project that have been most impacted by paramilitary activity and associated criminality. The report will focus on Brandywell and Creggan in Derry/Londonderry.

In September 2017, we appointed a Consortium, led by Co-operation Ireland in partnership with the Mitchell Institute (QUB), INCORE (Ulster University) and the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) as Strategic Partner to develop a two-phase project to build capacity to support transition within these communities.

A partnership approach sits at the very heart of this project; we recognise that delivery on the ground needs to include those people who are most affected by these issues.

Phase 1 of the project consisted of extensive consultation with local communities and key stakeholders in each of the areas. This report provides a summary of the findings from Phase 1 and our proposed next steps as we move forward.

We recognise and value the extensive range of important and often challenging work that has already been undertaken by individuals and groups at local level in tackling these issues. This project gives us the opportunity to further drive forward with a new and innovative approach to tackling paramilitary activity and we look forward to continuing to work alongside the communities involved, who are often best placed to propose and deliver solutions to the problems they face.

The Executive Office, in partnership with the Communities in Transition Consortium

Introduction

It has been twenty years since our society said YES to peace. Although much has changed, there are still many challenges as we continue to transition into a peaceful society.

The Executive's Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime recognizes the role communities must play in tackling paramilitarism by developing a culture sympathetic to the rule of law and addressing the systemic issues that these groups seek to exploit. Lawfulness is binding on all, extending across communities, the justice system and statutory agencies. Many of the actions within the plan seek to promote culture of lawfulness across society.

ACTION B4

seeks to provide programmes to build community capacity so that they can move beyond the coercive control and malign influence of groups involved in criminality. As such, Action B4 will **'Support ambitious initiatives aimed at building capacity in communities in transition, including through developing partnership across civil society and across community divisions.'**

OUR AREAS OF FOCUS:

- Antiville and Kilwaughter in Larne together with Northland and Castlemara in Carrickfergus
- Brandywell and Creggan in Derry/Londonderry
- Kilcooley (Clandeboyne 2&3 SOA) and Rathgill (Conlig 3 SOA) in North Down
- Drumgask and Kilwilkie in Lurgan
- Lower Falls, Twinbrook, Poleglass, Upper Springfield, Turf Lodge and Ballymurphy in West Belfast
- New Lodge and Greater Ardoyne in North Belfast
- Shankill (upper and lower, including Woodvale) in West Belfast
- The Mount and Ballymacarrett in East Belfast

Between November 2017 and March 2018, the CIT consortium conducted an engagement process in each of the selected eight areas as part of the phase 1 of the project.

The process included a desk-based review of the locality in conjunction with interviews and focus groups with a range of stakeholders in each area, including services providers, community groups, faith-based groups, elected representatives, the business sector, residents and others.

THIS REPORT REFLECTS THE MAIN FINDINGS THAT EMERGED FROM THE FIELDWORK AND THE PROPOSED NEXT STEPS.

The information presented in this document represents the views and suggestions expressed by the participants in Phase 1 of the project. We are conscious that there will be other views and perspectives on the document and the purpose of the publication is to stimulate discussion and promote debate on issues that are of utmost importance to the continuing development of your community. In addition, as stakeholder conversations took place over a limited period of 3-4 months, it was not possible to speak to everyone within the community.

With this in mind, it should be noted that the suggested interventions are therefore not funding commitments but the starting point for continued dialogue on the possible options moving forward.

Outline

The first section of this report presents an outline profile of the area, the headline findings from the fieldwork and the relevant context for successful transition in the area. The second part of the report provides a detailed thematic description of the findings and possible solutions as suggested by various participants. Although each area is unique, seven common themes arose as the major issues regarding building community capacity for transition – Community safety and policing; Young people; Health and well-being; Environment and culture; Community development; Restorative justice and restorative practices and; Personal transition. The final section outlines the next steps in the project and the timeline for their implementation.



Area Profile and Headline Findings

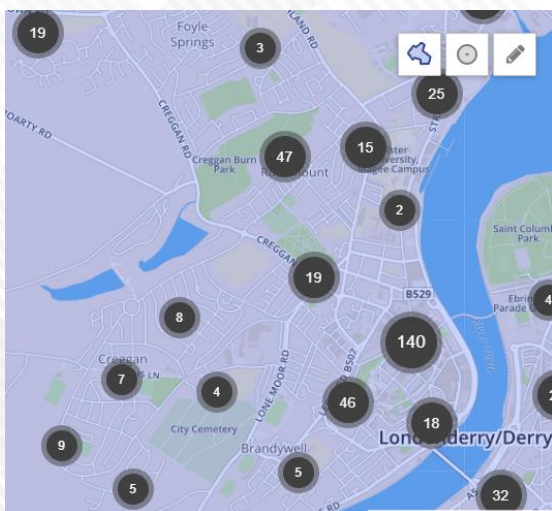
Area Profile of Brandywell and Creggan in Derry/Londonderry

Politics

The Brandywell and Creggan areas are within the Foyle constituency area used for Parliamentary and Assembly elections. The constituency is represented by Elisha McCallion MP (Sinn Féin) along with the two Sinn Féin, two SDLP and one DUP MLAs elected in 2017. The areas are located within The Moor District Electoral Area (DEA) of Derry & Strabane District Council. In 2014 The Moor DEA elected three councillors from Sinn Féin, one SDLP and one Independent.

Crime Statistics: REPORTED crime in September 2017

(The provided police statistics are for the entire Strand Road Policing District)



Total	861
Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	371
Theft	40
Burglary	14
Criminal damage & arson	82
Drugs	43
Possession of weapons	3
Public order	17
Robbery	0
Shoplifting	42
Vehicle crime	21
Violence & sexual offences	211
Other crime	17

Social and Economic Issues

The statistic is based on the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017.
The results are out of total of 890 Super Output Areas (SOAs) across Northern Ireland.

Deprivation Domains	<i>Brandywell</i>	Creggan Central 1	Creggan Central 2	Creggan South
Overall Multiple Deprivation Measure	13	10	69	33
Income	18	20	58	54
Employment	13	16	61	14
Health Deprivation and Disability	32	23	65	35
Education, skills and Training	98	31	165	57
Proximity to Services	516	695	719	675
Living Environment	141	82	181	302
Crime and Disorder	50	198	254	238

- For statistical purposes, the Brandywell and Creggan areas are divided into four SOAs, with the Brandywell SOA taking in a large section of the Bogside. All four SOAs are among the 10 percent most deprived in Northern Ireland.
- All four SOAs are marked by a high proportion of the population – around one-fifth – living in households whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of the Northern Ireland median.
- Three of the four SOAs – Brandywell, Creggan Central 1 and Creggan South – produce low educational outcomes and high levels of unemployment and employment deprivation.
- All four SOAs are among the 10 percent most deprived in Northern Ireland in terms of the proportion of the population whose quality of life is impaired by poor health or disability. This translates into lower than average life expectancy and extremely high drug and alcohol related admissions and deaths in The Moor DEA. Three of the four SOAs – Brandywell, Creggan Central 1, and Creggan South – are among the top twenty most deprived in terms of preventable deaths.
- The same three SOAs are among the 10 percent most deprived in Northern Ireland when it comes to combined mental health deprivation, while Creggan Central 1 is ranked 2nd in terms of the ratio of people on multiple prescriptions on a regular basis. The crude suicide rate for The Moor DEA is higher than the average for both Northern Ireland and Derry & Strabane District.

Context for transition:


Transition in the Brandywell and Creggan area continues to be shaped by:

- A legacy of underinvestment.
- A lack of confidence in government and statutory agencies to respond to and meet the needs of communities.
- Poverty, deprivation, high levels of educational under-attainment and unemployment.
- Low levels of aspiration and a growing sense of hopelessness particularly among young people.
- A growing sense of isolation, marginalisation and abandonment across the area(s).
- Acute physical and mental health problems including high suicide rates.
- A trend of increasing substance misuse.
- Broken trust and fraught relationships reflected in widening community divisions.
- The persistence of anti-social and criminal behaviour.
- The legacy of conflict and the wider political context.
- Declining levels of support, trust and confidence in the police and criminal justice agencies.

Headline Findings from Brandywell and Creggan in Derry/Londonderry

1. There is some frustration that the consultation has been initiated at too late a stage to maximise buy-in and shape the programme to the specific needs of the community, and that the lack of prior engagement and necessary preparatory work to build relationships may ultimately serve to undermine the programme's stated objective of building community capacity in a collaborative way.
2. There is also a widespread feeling that the focus, framing and language of the programme is negative, exclusionary and therefore unhelpful to those working to bring about transition in their communities. Furthermore, some have argued that the Action Plan is founded on party political considerations and has predetermined outcomes. Consequently, it is claimed that in its design and implementation the programme has alienated certain constituencies, which may prove counter-productive to its stated objectives.
3. It has been suggested that the methodology and language used by the programme has unfairly singled out Creggan and Brandywell thereby compounding the reputational damage suffered by the target area(s). Paramilitary style attacks and serious criminal behaviours such as drug dealing, for example, are not confined to the target area(s) but are just as likely to occur in, or originate from, other parts of the city.
4. It is widely acknowledged that the wider political context can act to restrict or harness the potential of any given community, with legacy, prison, policing, socio-economic and rights-based issues generating some disenchantment in the target area(s) even though the nationalist/republican community as a whole has moved into a more comfortable and confident space. The local political landscape in Derry's Cityside has shifted somewhat in recent years with the election of three independent republican councillors, who are representative of broader republican constituencies, and a number of republican parties organising with some success.
5. Social and economic conditions are at the forefront of people's minds, many arguing that the absence of a 'peace dividend' has compounded the legacy of underinvestment experienced by large parts of Derry.
6. There appears to be a broad consensus that the numbers committed to political violence are diminishing with several groups and individuals engaged in community dialogue and community development initiatives to take tentative first steps towards transition. However, the problem of criminal elements operating on the fringes of paramilitary republican groups remains.
7. Relationships between the community and PSNI are said to have deteriorated considerably in recent years. A lack of confidence in policing and the criminal justice system has translated into historically low levels of reporting and a discernible increase in hostile attitudes towards the PSNI. Common criticisms relate to the sporadic nature of police involvement in communities, the turnover and withdrawal of knowledgeable and experienced police teams and the perception that the police do not appear to act on or respond to information provided by the community. Resource constraints and security concerns also appear to be a factor in explaining changes to neighbourhood policing in recent years.
8. It is clear that the detention of senior republican figures coupled with the use and alleged abuse of stop and search powers are huge, burning issues in Derry, generating sympathy for traditional republican views and hostility towards the police.

Headline Findings from Brandywell and Creggan in Derry/Londonderry

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9. The shifting political and community dynamics in the target area(s) and surrounding areas can be roughly mapped onto changes in the local environment and culture, for example the August bonfire, the proliferation of murals, graffiti, hoardings and banners, and the visible tensions around the Easter parades.
 10. The background conditions of children and young people's lives can lead them to become engaged in anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and low level criminal behaviours, with a small number at risk of 'graduating' to involvement in serious organised crime. In these circumstances, there is the risk that they will ultimately end up in the criminal justice system and/or fall victim to a paramilitary style attack. We have also heard of young people being recruited as willing, albeit vulnerable and naïve, 'community enforcers' around the issue of drugs.
 11. A not insignificant proportion of residents suffering the effects of anti-social or criminal behaviours are turning to paramilitary groups and individuals for immediate respite or redress.
 12. There is a proud tradition of self-help within the community, drawing on the history of trade unionism, welfare advice, adult education and employment support, community and social enterprises, tenants' rights campaigns and the civil rights movement. However, it is broadly acknowledged that the community suffers from broken trust and fraught relationships. This has its corollary in political divisions and the appearance of faultiness across different aspects of community life, visible animosity between some constituencies and the limited cooperation between others.

What does this mean for the Executive Action plan?

SUCCESS IN BRANDYWELL AND CREGGAN AREA IS LARGELY DEPENDENT ON:

- A whole community approach to transition whereby government and statutory agencies are seen to be listening to and working in genuine partnership with communities, with delivery underpinned by prior engagement, consultation, co-design and a sense of community ownership.
- Transition being understood and supported within a Cityside context.
- Improved standards of education, income and employment, physical and mental health, housing and other indicators of social wellbeing.
- Increased support and improved outcomes for adults, children and young people at risk, particularly in the areas of education, employment, mental health, substance misuse and addiction problems.
- Progress towards a resolution of legacy, prison, policing and rights-based issues that continue to undermine community cohesion and political stability.
- The fostering of an environment that is conducive to ongoing and future efforts to persuade and build the capacity of different republican constituencies and members of paramilitary groups to take positive transitional steps.
- The existence of mechanisms to support the transition and reintegration of current and former prisoners.
- Improved policing with the community, properly resourced and characterised by the presence of proactive, knowledgeable and experienced policing teams working in collaboration with local communities.
- The embedding of a wider understanding of justice which recognises that the best interests of those engaged in anti-social and criminal behaviours should not and do not conflict with the needs and rights of victims and communities.
- Enhanced civic engagement and increased resident and community capacity to play an active role in different facets of community life.
- The ability of trusted, effective and impartial actors within the community to play a supportive role.
- Restored trust and repaired relationships between and within communities in the local area.
- Greater collaboration and inclusivity in community development, with community assets and resources used in a complementary and integrated way.



Themes for transition

Although each area is unique with its own set of circumstances, needs and challenges regarding paramilitarism and associated criminality, seven common themes have arisen out of the fieldwork.

These themes have been used to frame the findings in this next section, which are based on the participants opinions and suggestions.

It is important to note that solving the issues raised by the participants will take a multi-faceted and collective response and it is beyond the scope of this project to solve on its own.

The process of transition will take time and cannot be achieved by communities alone. This project seeks to help build capacity within communities to forge their own pathways towards a peaceful, democratic society where paramilitarism has no place as part of a wider programme. The next section should be read within this context.

Community Safety and Policing

Key issues

There are negative sentiments and distrust in the PSNI and a growing disillusionment with the criminal justice system.

Relationships between the community and PSNI have deteriorated in recent years. One of the reasons given for this is the sporadic nature of police involvement in communities. Numerous examples have been cited as evidence of the past efficacy of a consistent, proactive policing presence working in collaboration with the local community. The withdrawal of knowledgeable and experienced policing teams from the areas is believed to have contributed to a spike in crime levels and undone the progress that had been made. There is concern that the pace of turnover of local police teams means community and political leaders constantly have to build new relationships with the police. Other key factors include: growing frustration that the police do not appear to act on or respond to information provided by the community; growing disillusionment with the slow pace of the criminal justice system; and, from the PSNI's perspective, resource constraints and security concerns which have led to changes in how it polices the areas. The overall effect is that people become less likely to report criminal behaviour to the police or cooperate with the criminal justice system, with increasing numbers viewing so-called punishment attacks as a form of immediate respite or redress.

A number of high level issues are having an adverse effect on attitudes towards the police. In particular, the detention of senior republican figures such as Tony Taylor coupled with the use and alleged abuse of stop and search powers are huge, burning issues in Derry, generating sympathy for traditional republican views and hostility towards the police.

At the same time, the multi-agency Concern Hub and the Community Safety Warden scheme are showing signs of addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and providing a visible, speedy and effective response to anti-social and low level criminal behaviours; the Community Safety Wardens are more acceptable to community leaders and residents who for historical, political or personal do not wish to work through official policing structures.

Possible solutions

There is a need to improve relations of trust, communication and collaboration between the PSNI and the local community, whilst building on existing and emerging community safety initiatives.

Moving forward the evidence suggested that a transition plan should include:

- An increased presence of proactive, knowledgeable and experienced neighbourhood policing teams working in collaboration with local communities, alongside opportunities for the most vulnerable to articulate how the police can support their needs.
- A mentoring programme or process to ensure that probationary officers are aware of the culture and dynamics of Brandywell, Creggan and surrounding areas, so that they can readily identify ways of working in partnership with communities towards a speedy and effective resolution of issues when they arise.
- A review of community policing to include a review of the use, efficacy and impact of stop and search powers in Derry.
- Community-led dialogue and bespoke mechanisms to develop knowledge and understanding of the role of police within the wider criminal justice system.
- A programme of engagement and training to build the capacity of residents to play an active role in existing and developing community safety and wellbeing initiatives.
- Enhanced support for the Concern Hub so that it can open up access and demonstrate its efficacy to the local community over the course of the B4 programme.
- Support for the work of Community Safety Wardens.

Young People

Key findings

There are a number of issues affecting young people that can lead them to get involved in anti-social/criminal behaviour and become susceptible to paramilitary influence or attack.

There are no strong indications that paramilitary groups in Derry are recruiting young people in significant numbers. However, it is widely acknowledged that there are a number of issues affecting young people in disadvantaged areas that can lead them to fall under the influence of paramilitary groups: social deprivation, educational under-attainment and poor employment prospects/opportunities; low aspirations and a sense of hopelessness; acute mental health issues; problems at home; inadequate family support mechanisms; isolation and exclusion from decision-making processes; the quest for identity and meaning.

The direct influence of paramilitary groups on young people can then manifest itself in two possible ways. Firstly, the background conditions of young people's lives can lead them to become engaged in anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and low level criminal behaviours, with a small number 'graduating' to involvement in serious organised crime. In these circumstances, there is the risk that they may ultimately end up in the criminal justice system and/or fall victim to a paramilitary style attack. Secondly, there is a risk that they may be drawn into paramilitary groups as willing albeit vulnerable and naïve 'community enforcers' to provide coercive responses to the issues of drug addiction and drug dealing.

It is clear that the trend of increasing substance misuse and addiction is having a hugely detrimental impact on young people and the wider community, exacerbating an already acute mental health crisis and contributing to the high incidence of anti-social and criminal behaviours.

Against this backdrop, there are some young people in the area who have shown to be susceptible to forms of cultural and political expression that are accompanied by anti-social and criminal behaviours. And given the particular vulnerabilities of young people in the area, it is widely recognised that youth providers, youth programmes and bespoke youth interventions play an indispensable role in the life of the community.

Possible solutions

Improving services and support to increase the resilience of vulnerable young people.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- Expansion of existing youth provision balancing support for diversionary and outreach programmes with that for longer term, innovative approaches to community and youth work that seek to encourage young people to play an active role in community life and the democratic political process.
- Support for targeted mediation and engagement around issues of cultural and political expression.
- Targeted programmes of engagement and personal development with a particular focus on educational and employment support for young people susceptible to paramilitary influence or attack.
- The provision of bespoke, community-based mental health and addiction support for young people.

Health and Well-being

Key findings

Poor physical and mental health, substance misuse and addictions and long-term deprivation suffered by Brandywell, Creggan and surrounding areas have been exploited by paramilitaries to exert coercive control and influence

There is an urgent and palpable need to address these health problems, with appropriate support mechanisms put in place for the people who need them. Tackling the social determinants of these problems is also a priority for communities in these parts of Derry, with the overwhelming majority of stakeholders stating that paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime do not exist in a vacuum but in this specific context of marginalisation and social deprivation.

One near-term objective should be the provision of end-to-end, integrated services and referral pathways for vulnerable families, adults, children and young people, involving communities and statutory agencies working in closer collaboration. Much of the capacity, experience and expertise to provide these joined-up interventions can be found within the community and should be harnessed and supported towards that end.

Similarly, there exists within the community an appetite, impetus and certain level of capacity/expertise to address the trend of increasing drug abuse as a social and health problem with criminal symptoms, rather than simply a criminal justice issue. Significantly, this extends to individuals and organisations from the dissenting, republican socialist and traditional republican constituencies who have begun to explore innovative community-led pathways away from substance misuse and associated anti-social and criminal behaviours, promoting new ways of thinking about and responding to these issues in a way that challenges militant, coercive responses.

Possible solutions

Improved support and services for mental health, substance misuse and addictions could reduce levels of coercive control and influence.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- A community-based family support initiative to include support for integrated, end-to-end service provision and referral pathways for vulnerable families, children and young people.
- Expansion of community-based substance misuse and addiction support services to include better signposting to enhanced residential and non-residential provision, intra-community collaboration, integrated end-to-end referral pathways, closer collaboration with experts in research and education, and engagement/outreach activities.
- An engagement programme around the issue of substance misuse and addiction along with associated issues of anti-social behaviour, criminality and paramilitary style intimidation and attacks, involving roundtable discussions, a community conference, community fora and one-to-one meetings of key stakeholders.

Environment and culture

Key findings

The shifting political and community dynamics in Brandywell, Creggan and surrounding areas can be roughly mapped onto changes in the local environment and culture.

There have been a number of successful reimagining programmes undertaken in recent years, depicting the history and life of the community including a celebration of sporting heroes from the local area. Whilst these remain intact, there has been a proliferation of murals, graffiti, hoardings and banners in the past year. Some of these are political messages relating to different republican constituencies, some are related to policing- and prison-based grievances (e.g. stop and search powers and Tony Taylor), while graffiti and painted slogans in particular often take the form of expressions of support for paramilitary groups or sinister messages directed against drug dealers, informants and the PSNI.

The annual Easter parades are the highlight in the republican calendar, representing the main expression of strength, resistance and continuity for the various constituencies that make up the republican movement. For some the Easter commemoration has reprised its role as an expression of defiance against the status quo, coinciding with a state clampdown on those suspected of association or involvement with paramilitary groups.

The 15 August bonfires are a source of contention and can be mapped onto community and political divisions, with the main alternative bonfire associated with mainstream republicanism and other unapproved bonfires drawing their support from residents (young people in particular) connected to other republican constituencies. The bonfire issue and the disputes around it are clearly linked to questions of territoriality and control. Efforts at mediation and engagement have shown tentative signs of progress in recent years, however the issue will continue to present a considerable challenge in the context of political instability and deteriorating relationships.

It should be noted that the majority of stakeholders associate a transformation of the local environment with increased investment and regeneration, which they suggest would help to instil a greater sense of pride and hope in local communities.

Possible solutions

Continue to enhance community capacity to regenerate and invest in community appearance and in alternative forms of remembrance and commemoration promoting civic virtue and active citizenship.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- A reimagining programme to build on the successes of past programmes and address the issues of graffiti and murals in the Brandywell, Creggan and surrounding areas.
- A targeted programme of mediation and engagement around the issues of republican commemorations, parades and funerals.
- Support for creative forms of remembrance and commemoration that promote the universal republican values of civic virtue and active citizenship.
- Support for initiatives that seek to reclaim problematic spaces and use arts and culture to promote and instil confidence in the community, for example community festivals.
- Dialogue, mediation and youth engagement around the 15 August bonfires, to build on the tentative progress that has been delivered in recent years and begin working towards a resolution of community divisions related to the issue.
- Programme to promote local economic development and investment in the community.

Community Development Issues

Key finding

Despite well-developed capacity and community infrastructure there is insufficient collaborative, integrative or inclusive working, while community structures are perceived by some to be dominated by a particular constituency.

There is a proud tradition of self-help within the community, drawing on the history of trade unionism, welfare advice, adult education and employment support, community and social enterprises, tenants' rights campaigns and the civil rights movement. This is reflected in a well-developed community infrastructure, with a number of groups and partnerships operating in the area for a decade or longer. There has been a significant amount of community development work undertaken since the Good Friday Agreement and this continues with a range of community-based programmes, services and activities being delivered across the area(s).

However, this does not always translate into collaborative, integrative or inclusive working. It is broadly acknowledged that the community suffers from broken trust and fraught relationships. This is closely associated with political divisions and reflected across different aspects of community life: the emergence and growth of alternative community structures; the provision of advice and support services; youth engagement; bonfires; and approaches to community safety and wellbeing. There is visible animosity between some constituencies and limited cooperation between others. Some perceived established community structures to be dominated by a particular constituency. In some cases, individuals and organisations have absented themselves or their participation has become untenable due to personal or political enmities. It is important to sound a note of caution against unrealistic expectations regarding the potential for an immediate reconciliation, particularly in the context of escalating tensions and widening divisions between different constituencies. In light of these challenges the role of trusted, impartial actors within the community is becoming increasingly pivotal to the chances for successful transition.

Possible solutions

Improved collaboration, coordination and integration of community-based services alongside third party dialogue and interventions have the potential to promote community cohesion and reduce the potential for violence.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- The promotion of a broad-based community dialogue for Creggan, Brandywell and neighbouring areas, beginning with low level, one-to-one dialogue with a range of community stakeholders.
- Measures to promote a collaborative, holistic approach to community development involving networking and communication, better coordination or integration of community-based services and more effective utilisation of community assets.
- Stronger protocols to promote collaborative funding bids and an inclusive framework which gives a greater role for a wider range of community groups/interests.
- Support for greater resident participation in different facets of community life, backed by the good will of established political parties, community leaders and the actions of government and statutory agencies.
- Support for trusted, impartial actors in the community to play an active and supportive role in encouraging transition.
- A bespoke programme to promote opportunities for individual residents to play an active role in community life and build the capacity of existing community organisations.
- A programme of community-led dialogue aimed at building the capacity of communities to challenge paramilitary style attacks and the residual attitudes supporting them whilst working towards alternative community safety responses and strategies.

Restorative justice and restorative practices

Key findings

Despite the important role played by accredited restorative justice schemes there is a sense that these schemes are limited in their capacity to engage with certain constituencies leaving the majority of the hard to reach cases to alternative restorative practitioners.

The beneficial impact of community-based restorative practices is widely recognised. Crucially, they can offer speedy and responsive community and statutory support to the victims of anti-social or criminal behaviours without the need for a lengthy criminal justice process. Secondly, they are underpinned by a wider understanding of justice which recognises that the best interests of those involved in anti-social or criminal behaviours do not or should not conflict with the needs and rights of victims and communities. In this respect, they can help to identify support and rehabilitation pathways for offenders whilst addressing the needs of victims. Finally, they have proven to be effective in helping to build relationships between the community and the police.

Accredited restorative justice schemes continue to play an important role in promoting community safety and wellbeing across a wide range of issues. However, there is also the sense that, in the context of low confidence in policing and their formal place within the criminal justice system, these schemes are limited in their capacity to engage certain constituencies. Consequently, it has fallen to alternative restorative practitioners to handle the majority of cases involving residents and constituencies that are harder to reach. These may necessarily form part of a multi-faceted community-based response in the short-to-medium term, particularly if they are shown to a) be reducing the number of attacks and threats; and b) helping to ensure that vulnerable children and young people access services and are provided with opportunities to chart a path away from anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and criminality.

Possible solutions

A need to support existing and developing community-based restorative practices to reach those sections of the community that do not access these services available in the area.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- Increased support for established and developing community-based restorative practices including professional development, to ensure better and consistent standards, full accreditation and integration with other services.
- Raising and maintaining standards in relation to community restorative justice should be tackled at a regional as well as local level, to ensure consistency and support in the most difficult areas.
- Promotion of restorative practices as a means of resolving youth, education and community issues, particularly amongst those sections of the community that do not access the services currently available in the area(s).

Personal Transition

Key findings

Ex-prisoners/ combatants continue to face various social, political and economic barriers preventing them to fully reintegrate into society.

Recent trends appear to support claims that republican socialist, dissenting and traditional republican constituencies have made considerable progress towards the endorsement of peaceful political strategies. However, there are a number of factors which are believed to be preventing larger sections of those constituencies moving in the same direction: the detention of senior republicans such as Tony Taylor; the repeated concerns around the separated regime at Maghaberry Prison; the highly publicised activities of the Paramilitary Crime Task Force, including the remit given to the NCA; and the use and alleged abuse of stop and search powers against individuals deemed to be associated with paramilitary groups, including those who may be working to persuade and build the capacity of members of their constituencies to take positive transitional steps. Without implying newfound support for political violence, these factors are giving confidence to those who remain committed to the use of violence in pursuit of political objectives.

It has been suggested by a range of stakeholders that successful transition will require people at all levels to take the risks and leaps of faith that have characterised past peace processes. The Good Friday Agreement has been cited as an example of relatively successful transition delivered through a carefully and sensitively managed process of community and political dialogue, policing and prison reform, and practical support for those transitioning out of conflict. This has been put forward as a model of good practice for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. There is a concern that 'grandstanding' or 'showcasing' may be counterproductive to the objective of transition.

Possible solutions

Providing support and legitimate alternatives to enable ex-prisoners/combatants to reintegrate into society and move away from any affiliation to a paramilitary group.

Moving forward the evidence suggests that a transition plan should include:

- (Ex-)prisoner engagement programme to include prison visits and work with community organisations and constituency representatives incorporating short-term education/training measures and advice clinics in the areas of: community development and mediation; leadership; welfare and employment; and communications and strategic planning.
- Dialogue with representatives from the dissenting, republican socialist and traditional republican constituencies, to include a number of roundtable forums at agreed neutral locations, along with a series of ongoing one-to-one discussions.
- Training and employment support services for those with a conviction for a scheduled offence should be reviewed, and if necessary enhanced, to ensure that they are fit for purpose and support transition to lawful employment.
- Ex-prisoner employability and skills programmes to include the full range of republican constituencies.



What next for the Project

Next Steps

The Executive's Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime sets out a range of actions which will work towards an end to all forms of paramilitary activity, the use of peaceful and democratic means and the rule of law in all communities.

This is a challenge for society as a whole and we all have a part to play. Delivery of the Executive Action Plan presents a unique opportunity for new partnerships to develop both across Government and with the community sector. Through the Communities in Transition project, we want to support areas that are significantly impacted by paramilitarism and criminal activity and build capacity amongst the people who live there and the community organisations that are working extremely hard to make a difference to their neighbourhoods.

The scope of the Communities in Transition Project is to build the capacity of these communities through specific, practical interventions to enable them to affect positive change for themselves, break the grip of coercive control and transition away from paramilitary activity.

Tackling Paramilitary Programme Outcomes:

- Paramilitarism has no place
- Citizens and communities feel safe and confident
- The public support and have increasing confidence in the justice system
- Support is available for those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures

The Project will work with those local communities to put in place interventions to develop capacity and confidence through:

- building capacity to address underlying social issues and achieve improved outcomes for all;
- building capacity to transition in neighbourhoods and places and for groups of people that make up local communities;
- building capacity to proactively move towards a culture of lawfulness; and
- building capacity to become open, accessible and lawful communities.

The area-based approach being taken forward in this project enables activities to be tailored to take consideration of local contexts and for them to be designed and delivered in a way which empowers and supports citizens to continue to deliver change in their communities beyond the lifetime of the project.

Underpinning Principles:

- **Empowerment:** Empower and support citizens and communities to address the problems they face.
- **Sustainability:** Embedding capacity within communities so that change can be continued beyond the lifetime of this programme.
- **Collaboration:** Working together within communities and between communities and statutory agencies.
- **Lawfulness:** Commitment to the use of peaceful and democratic means and upholding the rule of law across all communities.
- **Inclusivity, Fairness, transparency, impartiality and democratic accountability**

Next Steps- In Your Community

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

We would like to thank everyone who was involved during the first phase of this programme, and we look forward to continuing the collaborative work achieved up until now and extending the range of voices involved in the process.

Over the next few months we will bring together individuals from Brandywell and Creggan who want to see an end to paramilitarism and are willing to act to make change happen. We will work together to define priorities, activities and outcomes that will form the basis of commissioned activity in Brandywell and Creggan. The activities will add value to existing provision and develop the capacity and resilience of individuals and of the local community to address issues connected with paramilitarism and organised crime. This will mean both building capacity to proactively move towards a culture of lawfulness and to address the underlying systemic issues which are exploited by paramilitary and organised criminal gangs.

ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROCESS

As part of the participatory design process and to help inform design discussions in this phase, there will be a number of supporting activities happening within your area:

- **Community Learning and Safety Dialogue Activities**
Community led events to increase knowledge and understanding of the justice system and the responsibilities of the different agencies within the system.
- **Young People Activities**
Engage in personal development and debate around vulnerability to paramilitary influence.
- **Environment and Culture Activities**
A process of engagement around the community ownership of the expression of culture and identity in the public space.

This document is the result of a community engagement process commissioned by TEO from the Communities in Transition Consortium: Co-operation Ireland in partnership with the Mitchell Institute (QUB), INCORE (Ulster University) and the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR)

