

BUILDING CAPACITY TO SUPPORT TRANSITION IN THE NEW LODGE AND GREATER ARDOYNE

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

AUGUST 2018

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 New Lodge and Greater Ardoyne.

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 programme 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 and the relevant context for successful transition in the area. The second part provides a detailed thematic description of the findings and possible solutions as suggested by various participants. Although each area is unique, seven mutual 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 issues; Restorative justice and restorative practices and; Personal transition. The final section will presents the next steps in the project and the timeline for their implementation.



Area Profile and Headline Findings

Area Profile of the New Lodge and Greater Ardoyne

Politics

Both Ardoyne and New Lodge are within the Belfast North constituency area used for Parliamentary and Northern Ireland Assembly elections. The constituency is represented by Nigel Dodds MP (DUP) at Westminster, and elected two DUP, two Sinn Fein, and one SDLP MLAs at the last election. It is considered to be one of the most closely contested constituencies in Northern Ireland.

Both Ardoyne and New Lodge are within the Oldpark District Election Area (DEA) of Belfast City Council. The DEA elected three councillors from Sinn Fein, and one each from the SDLP, DUP and PUP in 2015.

"There is a danger in this scheme of promoting lawfulness without dealing with the problem."

"This will only work with a holistic approach. Money that is used is scattered. We need an integrated plan. A map for all of the initiatives which shows how each reinforces the other."

Social and Economic Issues



Ardoyne

For statistical purposes, Ardoyne is divided by NISRA into 3 Super-Output Areas (SOAs), with all 3 in Ardoyne among the most deprived 10% in Northern Ireland.

- Ardoyne 2 is the 8th most deprived SOA in Northern Ireland, with a very high proportion of the population living in households whose income is below 60% of the NI average (median).
- Ardoyne 3 is the 6th most deprived SOA in Northern Ireland in terms of the proportions of the population whose quality of life is impaired by poor health or disability.
- Ardoyne has the highest school-going population within the divisional area: According to the school census 2011/2012 1,190 young people in school of which 471 young people were statemented or had special educational needs.
- All 3 SOA's produce low educational achievement outcomes and has a consistent youth unemployment rate of 25-30%.



New Lodge

New Lodge is also divided into 3 SOAs with all 3 among the 10% most deprived 10% in Northern Ireland.

- New Lodge 3 SOA is the most deprived SOA in Northern Ireland in terms of Education, Skills and Training.
- New Lodge 2 is the most deprived SOA in Northern Ireland in relation to the proportion of people of the working age population not in work. New Lodge 1 is the 9th most deprived.
- New Lodge 2 is the 3rd most deprived SOA in Northern Ireland in terms of the proportion of the population whose quality of life is impaired by poor health or disability, whilst New Lodge 1 is the 10th most deprived.
- New Lodge has a total youth population of 1,903 with a school-going population of 835. SOA New Lodge 1 has the lowest levels of educational achievement in Northern Ireland.
- 25.8% with 2+ A levels (NI average: 53.0%).
- 40.9% with 5+ GCSE's (NI average: 71.9%)

Crime Statistics: REPORTED crime in September 2017



Ardoyne (with Crime Clusters)

Total	102
Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	37
Burglary	3
Criminal Damage & Arson	16
Drugs	3
Possession of Weapons	2
Robbery	1
Vehicle Crime	5
Violence & Sexual Offences	25
Other crime	1



New Lodge (with Crime Clusters)

Total	111
Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	27
Bicycle theft	3
Burglary	13
Criminal Damage & Arson	12
Drugs	3
Other Theft	11
Possession of Weapons	2
Robbery	2
Shoplifting	7
Vehicle Crime	2
Violence & Sexual Offences	23
Other crime	6

Context for transition:

Transition in Ardoyne and the New Lodge takes place in areas which continue to be shaped by:

- The legacy of conflict and sectarianism;
- Poverty and the challenges of deprivation;
- Low levels of educational attainment and aspiration;
- and Issues of reporting crime to the police.

B4 cannot address all of these issues. Full transition from conflict will require sustained and linked attention to what was described to us as 'the culture of hopelessness and low aspiration'.

A 'culture of lawfulness' should make a direct contribution to the quality of life of the people living in Ardoyne and the New Lodge, as well as to wider society, and should also contribute to the attractiveness of the area for other social and economic changes. These should also be monitored within the B4 evaluation.

Headline findings arising from the Ardoyne and New Lodge

1. There is a strong community spirit in both Ardoyne and New Lodge. However, there is a greater sense of community fracture in Ardoyne, with more groups and individuals opposed to the peace and political process compared to the New Lodge.
2. In the New Lodge, the largest community organisations work through the Community Empowerment Partnership coordinated through the Ashton Community Trust. There are also a number of other organisations in the neighbourhood but on a smaller scale. In Ardoyne, the main network of engagement is through the multi-agency partnership.
3. The language of 'paramilitarism' was foreign to many in New Lodge and Ardoyne. Groups, which continue to promote violence and/or oppose all types of co-operation with the police, are generally referred to as 'dissident'. The boundary between dissident and criminal is widely treated as 'fluid' with many people suggesting that the numbers were reduced. However, it was acknowledged that the culture of rebellion and unlawfulness remained alive in youth culture, although not always associated with any strong ideological framework. There were repeated comments that those associated with armed violence were involved in drug dealing and criminality and were engaged in creating a niche for themselves through threats and intimidation.
4. Young people relate in a complex way to conflict and violence before the peace process. As one person said, "There's confusion over who's who and what the role is who is a genuine Republican or a hood seeking a criminal opportunity." Young people reported that dissidents continued to exist but that they were associated with drugs and crime. Youth workers reported that the majority of young people were disinterested in learning about historic events, less interested in interface issues and were more focused on current issues such as mental health and suicide.
5. At the same time, this could lead to un-reflected versions of history, especially on social media, and support for events such as anti-internment bonfires, Easter events and the anti-internment parade.
6. There was some degree of criticism of policing in both areas. Many people suggested that policing with the community had deteriorated in recent years as a result of changes to the policing budget.
7. There was a sense from the community that the threats from 'dissidents' impacted on how the PSNI responded to local community safety and policing issues i.e. visibility and response to calls.
8. Some contend that elements within the community want to create a 'formal policing vacuum', which would allow armed groups to fill and be seen to responding to residents needs by punishing individuals through shootings, beatings or exiling;
9. However, there was overwhelming support for policing and a keenness to build sustainable and collaborative relationships with local officers.
10. There was a consensus that B4 will only be successful if it is integrated into a wider plan. Many people said that B4 was the only element of the wider Tackling Paramilitarism project where there had been direct community engagement. In New Lodge there was a sense that socioeconomic change was disconnected from efforts to tackle paramilitarism.
11. There was a regular concern that statutory agencies were inconsistent in their approach to issues of lawfulness. This was particularly true in relation to youth services and specific instances such as the anti-internment bonfires, where statutory agencies were said to fail to support the wider community in eliminating unwanted demonstrations.

What does this mean for the Executive Action plan

SUCCESS IN NEW LODGE AND ARDOYNE WILL LARGELY DEPEND ON:

- Improved policing with the community
- Joining up B4 with other neighborhood initiatives
- Support for improved youth services
- Better inter-agency co-operation
- Reducing public tolerance for violence through working with the community



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 has 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.

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 were 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

A general sense of negativity and distrust in the PSNI has enabled paramilitaries to continue to exercise coercive control and influence.

There is a long history and attitude of resistance and alienation from policing in both Ardoyne and New Lodge. There was a sense from stakeholders that progression around police and community relationships had stalled and this was directly impacting on public confidence in the organisation. There are some that continue to follow that mantra and either tolerate or provide indirect support (by not providing information against them) for armed groups. There are others that are either intimidated or frightened by their perceived influence and/or control. In addition, there are occasions when the perception of police response or inaction or failings within the criminal justice system causes some within the community to lend their direct or indirect support to armed groups.

Several issues with policing in both the New Lodge and Ardoyne were identified including:

A view that PSNI are rolling back from engagement work;

A reduction in neighbourhood teams;

Less opportunities to meet and build partnerships with the police;

A perception that the PSNI do not act on the information about armed groups in the community;

A view that elements outside of the PSNI are keen to recruit low level criminals; Frustration with the PSNI in not responding to community concerns about the bonfire in New Lodge.

"The resulting confusion and inaction about who is in an armed group makes this the perfect hiding place for anti-social behavior, drug dealing and petty crime."

"We have basically lost our neighborhood team here – this is not just about arresting people, this is about building a sense of community confidence and the police have lost the ability to both understand and articulate the social context surrounding many of the issues that exist in the community."

"There has definitely been a change in local policing over the last few years... you don't see them about, they don't go to as many meetings, and very often they have to bring five land rovers in to police the area."

Possible solutions

Improving relations of trust, communication and collaboration between the PSNI and the local community will reduce levels of coercive control and influence.

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

- Support for the multi-agency partnership and Safer Streets Initiative aimed at building community capacity to work in close partnership with the PSNI and wider criminal justice system.
- A specific programme to engage the community and youth services with the police and PPS on alternatives to PSA.
- Invest in the capacity of locally based community organisations to act as a partner in local policing and community safety, alongside work undertaken through A5.
- Training and support programme for the community around issues pertaining to the principles of lawfulness and policing; the role of human rights and policing, and an understanding of the criminal justice system.
- A review of relationships between local PCSPs/Policing Committees and how they interact and engage with the community, to ensure they can undertake their problem solving and accountability roles. This must connect with A5 and A6.

Young People

"Any young person getting involved with them groups has historical family associations; but more than likely has a drug debt, cause it's mostly all about crime."

"one fella with a gun is an armed group – its all about power and the threat of power – can be both subtle and upfront."

"There are people that try and control the area by using threats and guns to try and scare us...but they are scum, they are just drug dealers, pretending that they care."

"The most debilitating factor for young people, and the community really, is that the glass ceiling is so low that there is barely room to breathe."

Key findings

Restricted opportunities coupled with an attitude of 'normalisation' around violence has allowed paramilitaries to exert coercive control and influence over young people.

Discussions with young people and youth workers in particular focused on issues relating to employment; life opportunities; peer-relationships; sense of identity and inclusion; policing and violence. There was a 'normalisation' and 'acceptance' around violence in the community, and a sense that in some cases the police were less significant than armed groups in terms of punishment and managing behaviours.

Feedback from focus groups suggested that young people have a poor understanding around the role and responsibilities of the PSNI. Vulnerable young men are at risk of being recruited by dissidents – either through family or peer influences; substance misuse and debt leading them to unwillingly join; adrenaline seeking, and those that are very easily influenced.

However, it is important to note that the evidence from the fieldwork suggested that very few young people were being exploited.

Possible solutions

Increase resilience of those vulnerable to paramilitaries will reduce levels of coercive control and influence.

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

- Youth programmes across multiple age groups designed to encourage an inter-generational culture of lawfulness.
- Targeted programmes for 'vulnerable' young people especially 8-16 years of age.
- Youth community leadership programmes including volunteering opportunities, employability and educational visits.
- Specific programmes focusing on police – youth relationships.
- Providing alternatives to unlawful celebration – namely the development of specific work targeting the August Bonfire in the New Lodge.

Health and Well-being

Key findings

Poor mental health capacity and high drug and substance abuse, and addictions rates allow paramilitaries to exploit these vulnerabilities to exert coercive control and influence.

The discussions focused on issues concerning drugs, substance abuse, addiction and mental health. There was an agreement that there was a direct relationship between these issues and victims or perpetrators of locally based armed violence. Furthermore, it was noted that the community are sceptical about new initiatives that suggest people's lives will be transformed.

"A lot of the young people involved in negative behaviours, have got mental health issues...they end up getting a beating, threatened or put out and their problems are never addressed."

"Let's be honest the conflict really affected people in these communities and we are talking three generations. For the majority, none of those issues and problems has been addressed. Transitioning out of the status quo is difficult; people need sustainable support and not just quick fixes."

" These armed groups (really criminals) and their supporters are literally torturing people in the community with the rumours they start. So much of it is on social media and you can't stop it then."

Possible solutions

Improving the management of and support for those coping with mental health, drug and substance abuse, and addiction issues will reduce levels of coercive control and influence.

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

- Programmes to address issues, which contribute to recruitment and victimisation with a specific focus on drug misuse, addiction and substance abuse.
- Providing support for trauma and mental health interventions, including suicide prevention, self-harm and depression/anxiety.
- Programmes to address issues around personal debt and subsequent intimidation and threat by armed groups often leading to recruitment or self-harm.

Environment and culture

Key findings

The local environment is dominated by images, symbols and structures of the conflict. Coupled with a sense of lack of pride in one's identity this has allowed paramilitaries to exert coercive control and influence.

In terms of culture there was a sense from people that historical narratives of the conflict evidenced in murals, plaques and gardens went some way to defining the communities, especially from an outside perspective. There was also recognition from stakeholders that the community had failed to experience significant transformation during the peace and political processes.

There was a recognition that any physical transformations to the local environment would provide a renewed sense of optimism around government's commitment to the process. It was also suggested that the focus should be on instilling community pride and encouraging local leaders to actively counter negative narratives originating in the community. For instance, there is widespread support for cultural, celebratory and sporting murals as opposed to ones acknowledging dissident groups and a general consensus of the overwhelming majority to move away from divisive murals.

Possible solutions

Creating an environment prompting a positive sense of identity, regeneration and civic participation will reduce levels of coercive control and influence.

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

- Initiatives to ensure connectivity to the wider community; the improvement of the quality of the environment with a particular focus on flags and murals, and an increased sense of pride and identity in the local area.
- A programme aimed at reimagining the future, that focuses on how the community can contribute to the wider civic culture in Belfast.
- Providing opportunities for volunteering and community service.

"We want a connected community; we do not want to be isolated. We want to ensure our residents have the same opportunities as other people."

"This is a very settled population, there is a strong sense of community and local infrastructure, and people want to improve the environment."

"We need support to address the issue of the bonfire. It's not about culture, it is seen by some as a platform to criticise the community and encourages conflict between some young people and residents and the police."

"Systemic issues of educational underachievement, poverty, and unemployment have shaped our environment. We cannot hope to undertake a successful transition without addressing these."

Community Development Issues

Key finding

Both Ardoyne and New Lodge have well established and developed community development infrastructures, however in Ardoyne it is very fragmented and in both of them they are insufficiently comprehensive and lack transparency.

Because community development has been associated with political organisation in the past, it was expressed by many participants that it is important to ensure that community development in the future is democratic, transparent, includes both women and men and is open to a variety of viewpoints. In many ways, the community development in Ardoyne and New Lodge is more comprehensive and better organised than in other B4 areas.

Much of the communication between the community and statutory services including the police is through community development organisations and their staff. It is therefore important that this 'gatekeeping' function for both community and statutory services is well managed and transparent. The three areas raised for consideration were governance (including membership, performance and financial transparency), gender participation and relationships with the police and statutory agencies.

Community Development in Ardoyne and New Lodge is organised differently. Ardoyne has an established and well-developed but fragmented community development infrastructure. New Lodge on the other hand, has a very well-developed community infrastructure which is acknowledged as well managed and co-ordinated. In Ardoyne the multi-agency partnership plays a significant role, and in the New Lodge, the Community Empowerment Partnership (CEP) established in the early 2000s has continued and is now operated as a voluntary framework for the whole area co-ordinated through the Ashton Community Trust. This has the advantages of co-ordination and collaboration in many areas and a high professional standard of work. Critics of this model mostly focus on the challenges of operating independently alongside a large provider of many services, and there are some in the community who object to working with the PSNI.

In Ardoyne, there is a well-developed community infrastructure but less partnership and a history of both collaboration and competition between individuals, organisations and groups. The groups have different profiles and different perceived political allegiance, including church, independent trusts, political party and smaller republican and dissident organisations. This has the advantage of a plural voice, but the disadvantage of duplication and rivalry over resources. There is on-going division in the community about working with the PSNI.

Possible solutions

Improved transparency, comprehensiveness and collaboration will improve the capacity and outcomes of community development initiatives.

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

- Opportunities for local boards to be diversified to ensure a minimum participation of men and women, minority groups, and independent members.
- Local participation in regional accredited programmes supporting issues such as open and transparent governance; integration of ex-prisoners; gender and other equality issues.
- A process that prevents the demonisation and ostracising of groups and/or individuals on the basis of unproven or unfounded allegations to create public assurance and credibility for those engaged in community development practice.

Restorative justice and restorative practices

Key findings

There was agreement that there were insufficient resources for restorative justice and practice initiatives. Existing initiatives are too narrowly associated with specific groups and often seen as competitors rather than a broad community-based service involving statutory partners. In some cases, restorative groups were seen as stealth vehicles to allow paramilitaries to exert coercive control and influence.

Stakeholders consistently expressed the view that restorative justice had created an important additional service at local level which could intervene practically in crisis situations and encouraged local discussion towards a culture where resolving problems through violence was seen as unacceptable.

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of a strong community base for restorative justice, but concerns were also expressed that it was still associated with specific groups.

The large majority of interviewees emphasised the importance of working with the PSNI as part of the contract of restorative justice and concerns that the system of accreditation should be strengthened. At the same time, it was recognised that the raising and maintaining of 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.

"Ardoyne has always experienced violence and used violence to resolve arguments."

"We need to tackle the low-level stuff – we don't just need to go after the Mr. Big – we need to stop the low, insignificant stuff because that is what creates the culture."

"This community wants policing; it needs restorative justice practices; we need to show people there is an alternative to violence; we need to show people that they have opportunities."

"We need restorative services at local level and we need to extend them...what we need to do is provide integrated services in communities, which can move money to whoever can do the job. The principal of the school says he can see the kids with problems in his Primary School. But we don't address it. Money is still going to PSNI and DoJ and not to the services that could do something."

Possible solutions

Further resourcing of restorative justice and practice initiatives, and improved standard and access to accreditation will reduce coercive control and influence.

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

- Establishing an 'Restorative Ardoyne and New Lodge' Project on an inter-agency basis, and with a youth and education focus and with community and statutory participation.
- The development of a 'Transitional Justice Grassroot Toolkit' to facilitate community dialogue on empowering people to make decisions around lawfulness.
- Support to existing and developing community based restorative justice programmes to ensure better and consistent outcomes by encouraging full accreditation and professional development and integration with other justice services.

Personal Transition

Key findings

Social and economic barriers are perceived as preventing ex-prisoners/ former combatants to reintegrate into society and as enabling paramilitaries to exert coercive control and influence.

Ex-prisoners/ former combatants continue face various social and economic barriers preventing them to fully reintegrate society with consistent high levels of long term unemployment; implicit or explicit discrimination; difficulties accessing finance for self-employment and insurance or mortgage facilities; inability to access compensation when they are victims of attacks on their person or their property; exclusions relating to international travel; exclusion from adopting children, etc.

Possible solutions

Providing support and legitimate alternatives to allow ex-prisoners/former combatants to reintegrate society reduces coercive control and influence by paramilitaries.

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

- Supporting local individuals and groups to avail of the interventions under actions such as B1, B2, B3.
- A programme of leadership training for community organisations and ex-prisoners around models of community development and leadership.



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 New Lodge and Ardoyne 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 New Lodge and Ardoyne. 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:

- **Health and Well-being activities**
Community led events to promote dialogue and increase awareness of available support and services around mental health, substance misuse and addiction.
- **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**
Enable positive and innovative local youth work activities by providing additional resources where current provision is insufficient to meet the needs identified by the community.

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)

