

OPEN DOORS

OPEN DOORS



EX - P R I S O N E R S
P R O J E C T



PEACE IV

Peace



Northern Ireland - Ireland

European Regional Development Fund

OPEN DOORS INTRO

OPEN
DOORS



EX-PRISONERS
PROJECT

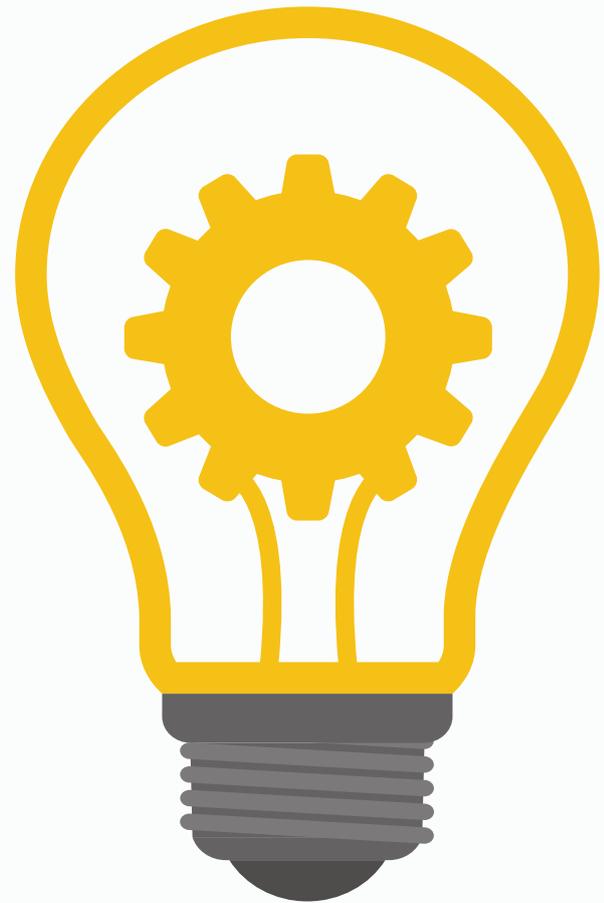


As we continue to find ourselves in the midst of the corona virus pandemic, the Open Doors project has worked tirelessly to ensure its partners and staff remain safe. Whilst staff have been restricted in their roles on the Open Doors programme because of the pandemic, it has not prevented the much needed work from being carried out in local communities.

Open Doors has played a strong effective role across the region which has very much supported the local community and government's policy of 'Stay at Home' and I have no doubt, has helped save lives by providing a relief from immediate poverty during this crisis.

Staff helped raise awareness of the dangers of Covid-19 and supported people around the possibilities of reducing the risk of catching the virus or from spreading the infection having staff and volunteers receiving professional training from International Committee of the Red Cross (those who trained on Ebola). They were able to access a wide range of Personal Protection Equipment when front-line workers found it impossible to access.

Staff engaged with and supported people who were vulnerable and in isolation, facilitating their access to essential needs such as foods and medicines. They provided much needed information and support to allow access to financial benefits from employers and to Social Security benefits.



OPEN DOORS ACHIEVEMENTS

279 Outreach clinics

9817 members of public engaged

8000+ soups for the North & West Belfast Soup Kitchen

800+ meals delivered to veteran Ex Prisoners / Former Combatants.

350 food parcels were delivered to families each week

670 prescriptions delivered to people who were vulnerable and shielding 250 front line workers were provided with face masks and face visors, e.g. local Dr surgery, nurses, and care home staff.

394 families were provided with support and advice on Government policies regarding furlough and welfare benefits.

Staff also assisted local pharmacies as volunteer delivery drivers to help ease the strain on their system.

ONLINE WORKSHOP OR WEBINAR LECTURE, DEBATE, DISCUSSION OR TALK 17 SEP 11:00 AM

OPEN DOORS

A feature Zoom talk by two people – one from the nationalist community and one from the unionist community – who will discuss the work they do as part of the Open Doors project to promote good relations and the lessons they have learnt along the way.

The Open Doors project works with ex political prisoners and former combatants. The discussion will inform participants of the positive relations the project has built with ex prisoners/combatants across the political divide and share the lessons learnt throughout the journey in building positive relations.

To join this Zoom panel discussion click: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/63993973239>

GO TO EVENT →



BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

CO-OPERATION IRELAND

Organiser Bio: Co-operation Ireland is a non-political and non-denominational charity dedicated to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

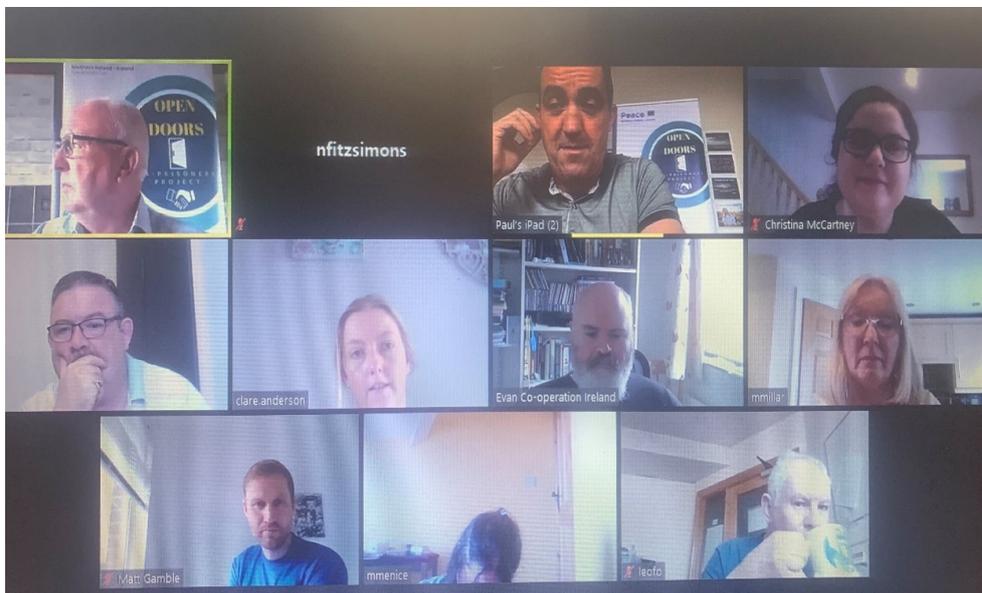
Contact Name: Michelle Millar

Contact Number: 028 9032 1462

Contact Email: mmillar@cooperationireland.org

Address: Unit 5N Weavers Court Business Park Linfield Road Belfast BT12 5QH

Website: [Visit Website](#)



OPEN DOORS held a Talk for Good Relation Week



OPEN DOORS

COVID 19

Teach na Failte

Teach na Failte continue to deliver services in Belfast, South Derry, Derry City, Strabane, Newry & Fermanagh. They collected toys that were distributed across these regions to families who were struggling to provide for their children at Christmas time.

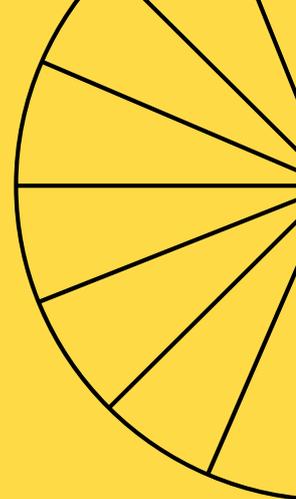
In addition to an array of toys for all age children, they also put together food parcels and food vouchers for families in need in these very challenging and difficult times.

Teach na Failte has worked with Yale University and has put together a programme of speakers focusing on NI during a time of great political and economic shifts (e.g. Brexit, and constitutional questions, demographic changes, NI's centenary and the economic fallout from the Covid 19 pandemic). The series presents various perspectives on how recent political and economic developments effect the lives of ordinary people on an "everyday" basis. Many of the voices come from border counties or towns. This series included partners of the Open Doors project.

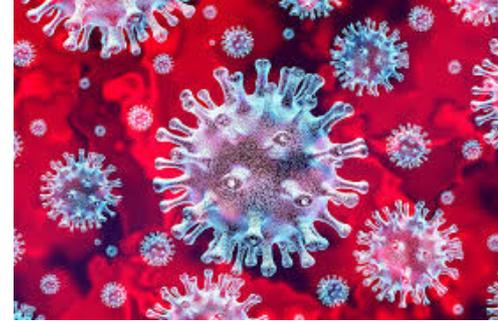
Some of the community leaders in the series of talks have included;

Frankie Quinn who is the founding member of the 1916 Societies and project coordinator for Éalú which is a mental health resource centre in County Tyrone; Julia Kee who is the former Sheriff of Londonderry/Derry and the current program leader for YMCA Ireland; Derek Moore who is the chairperson of Northwest Cultural Partnership and coordinator of the Londonderry Bands Forum; Paul Gallagher who is the Open Doors area coordinator for Teach Na Failte, Colin Halliday who is also the Open Doors area coordinator for Charter NI and chairperson of the Ulster Political Research Group (UPRG).

Teach na Failte recently opened an office in Newry and were very busy delivering a wide range of services to the EPFC's and their families within that region. At Christmas time they provided socially distanced events for children which included visits from Santa on his Sleigh.



OPEN DOORS COVID 19 CONT'



EPIC

After delivering over 8000 soups as part of the North and West Belfast Soup Kitchen and over 800 meals to EPFC veterans during the first lockdown, it was becoming more evident that mental health issues were becoming a major problem for ex prisoners in the local community. To address this issue EPIC Open Doors staff completed 'Safetalk' training to help them to support clients and signpost them to the appropriate agencies.

EPIC Open Doors staff set up a 'Walk and Talk' group, inviting anyone to join. Staff were joined each week by volunteers from the HOPE Zone and Extern who offered professional advice and counselling. The group has become very successful and have now moved on from the walking and talking (although still occasionally doing it) to a weekly self-help group. They have taken part in some art and crafts classes and completed training such as the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), Mental Health First Aid, First Aid and Paediatric First Aid courses. The group has also taken part in a tour of Crumlin Road Gaol, conducted by a Loyalist ex-prisoner who engages with the Open Doors programme.

In December, EPIC Open Doors staff coordinated and helped deliver 1117 Christmas Dinners to people in the Greater Shankill area. This was a huge task which included the help and assistance from 17 community groups, 10 cafes, 2 shops and over 50 volunteer delivery drivers. During this period, 115 EPFC veterans received the meals also and staff checked in with them, making sure they were coping and receiving any help they required whilst ensuring they wouldn't be alone over Christmas

Christmas meals for local ex prisoners



EPIC Open Doors project is a member of the Greater Shankill Covid response group consisting of over 50 organisations, all sharing information and resources. As part of this, EPIC Open Doors staff completed a discreet and confidential referral system for many EPFC families in need of gas, electric, food and essential clothing.

EPIC Open Doors staff have also been at the forefront of a drugs awareness campaign after being made aware of a new drug being consumed via vaping. Staff immediately made the Public Health Authority (PHA) and PSNI aware and a sub group was established to raise awareness of the dangers of the drug throughout the local community. The sub group consists of local secondary schools, community groups, drug awareness groups, mental health groups and the PHA.

OPEN DOORS COVID 19 CONT'

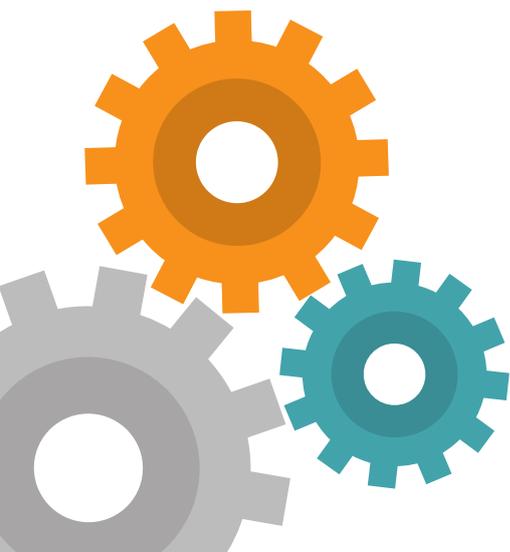


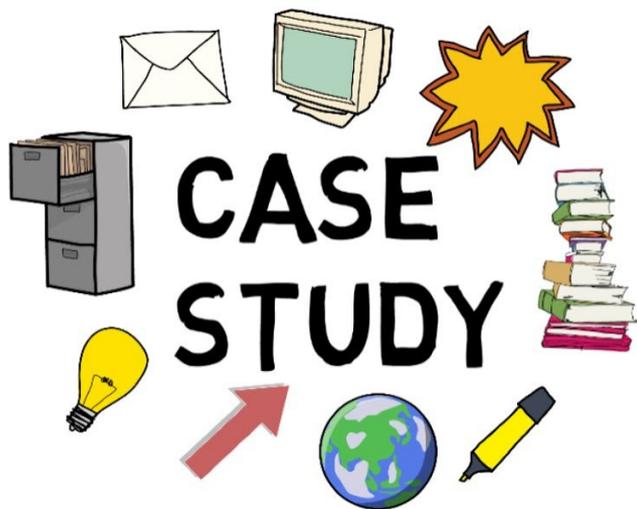
CHARTER NI

Charter Open Doors group has been assisting the Ballybeen veteran's group (formerly known as Ballybeen Men's Shed). The group has moved into new and much larger premises and they have a new and ambitious committee in place. Charter NI look forward to working with the group to benefit the ex prisoner and ex combatant community to learn new skills enabling their members to move on with their lives.

Members of Charter NI Open Doors project have taken part in Bryson's 'Building the Best Futures' pilot programme which is a sports led personal development programme. On the first day, they had a walk around Helen's Bay on a fresh Monday morning looking at the sights and wildlife around the coast. After an hour and a half it was back to the cars for the drive to their venue in Bangor for a refreshing cup of coffee and some well earned nourishment. The afternoon was spent talking about their personal well-being and how they as project workers look after themselves which was very valuable. It has got everyone engaging about the health risks that they may probably ignore but which are incredibly important.

The following weeks saw them make their way on foot from the Bryson building to the nearby Ormeau park, after splitting into pairs and heading off for a stint of orienteering. Afterwards, they all took part in an archery course under instructions from trained practitioners which again was well received by the Open Doors staff. Then back the short distance to the DARE project building and after some very well received soup and sandwiches they finished off the day doing team building activities. The programme has helped the participants to reflect on their well-being and resilience and to understand the effects of stress better. Sessions also reflected on finding focus and understanding how to envisage participants legacy and leadership style. We wish to express our thanks to Lorraine Boyd from the DARE (Dialogues About Race and Ethnicity) Intercultural programme, Joanne Morrow from Bryson Lagan Sports, Liza Wilkinson and Ulia Picu-Iwaisi from Tides training and consultancy for all their help and input.





A Loyalist ex-prisoner had returned home from living abroad to discover that he had cancer. This necessitated two operations to remove a tumour and lymph nodes. He had a very limited social network on his return to his home town and very few family members. Through the Open Doors project, staff were able to notify other ex-prisoners who had served time with him.

The EPIC Open Doors Outreach Officer, along with another ex-prisoner, visited the man regularly, taking him to hospital appointments and visiting him during his two stays in hospital. Afterwards, staff were able to support him in the community and he availed of the EPIC Welfare Advice.

He has expressed his appreciation of all the support he received and has said that he would have given up on his cancer battle long ago, if it was not for the Open Doors staff.



SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Significant time and resources were invested in designing and delivering the second Sustainable Leadership programme.

We are pleased to report the Sustainable Leadership programme has now been completed remotely with twenty up and coming leaders in their communities taking part. Feedback on the course has been excellent and we are looking at the possibility of delivering a further course if time allows. The Sustainable Leadership programme was designed and facilitated by Liverpool University and was delivered to participants from both Open Doors and Coisté na nIarchimi's "Building Good Relations" project.

Topics included in the training programme included;

- Developing leadership potential
- Leadership for group development
- Developing the concepts of social value
- Self-reflective analysis of leadership ability / improvement
- Leadership for group development
- Leadership for change and civic engagement
- Stimulating organisational change

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Peter Shirlow for all his support in making this course possible.



CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME



We are delighted that Open Doors partners are delivering the Conflict Transformation programme. The programme includes the following modules;

1. An individual development plan
2. Persuading, influencing & negotiating
3. Flags & Emblems
4. Anti Sectarianism
5. Site visits

If you would be interested in taking part in the Conflict Transformation Programme please contact your local Open Doors Area Coordinator (detail below)

- Charter NI Belfast & Lisburn
Colin Halliday - p2plisburn@yahoo.co.uk
- Teach na Failte Belfast, Strabane & Derry
Paul Gallagher - paulgallagher46@hotmail.co.uk
- The Plough Historical and Cultural Group Newry
Leo Foy - theploughgroup@gmail.com
- EPIC Belfast
Steven Pollock - stevenpollock@btconnect.com



SEMINARS

In December 2020 the Plough and Charter NI held a joint seminar (remotely) on the theme of Anti- Sectarianism.

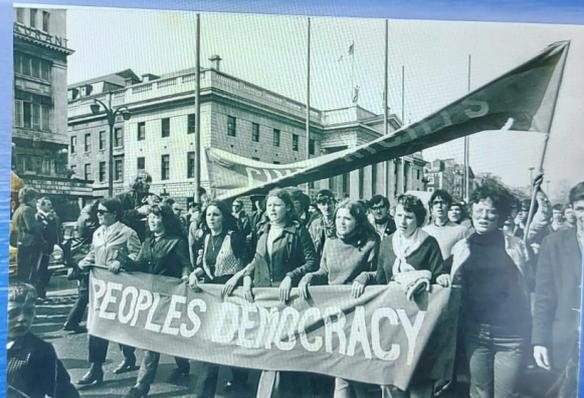
Speakers at the seminar included Peter Bunting who is the Assistant General Secretary for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, with responsibility for co-ordinating and developing the Trade Union Movement in Northern Ireland. Pádraig Yeates who is a retired Community Affairs / Industry and Employment correspondent with the Irish Times and Albert Hewitt who is the Community Coordinator for union Unite.

The seminar was the third one in a series of six and we are currently organising the next seminar which will look at Racism. It was well attended from various stakeholders and partners.

“The Troubles & Sectarianisms in Northern Ireland”



Civil Rights was conflated with other agendas



GOOD RELATIONS WEEK 2020 CELEBRATING OUR JOURNEY, EMBRACING OUR FUTURE.



Good Relations

September 2020 saw Teach na Failte and Charter NI host an online discussion as part of Good Relations week.

The discussion informed participants of the good relations work being carried out by the Open Doors project. They provided an insight into the work they do as part of the Open Doors project to promote good relations and spoke about the lessons learnt along the way. They also highlighted the many barriers and prejudices ex-prisoners face on a daily basis.

The discussion was followed by a Q & A session.

Evaluation

We commissioned an independent external evaluation of the Open Doors project. The interim report was completed in October 2020. It focused on qualitative information and findings as a means of assessing the impact of the project. It also presented quantitative performance or findings in line with the agreed programme objectives.

Whilst Covid 19 may have many negative impacts on the ex-prisoner/former combatant community, there are issues associated with it, (e.g. poor physical and mental health, disengagement from community life and isolation). The evaluation showed clear evidence of the effort undertaken by programme partners in reaching out to those in need of support during lockdown.

The interim evaluation report is very positive and highlights the Open Doors project is making steady progression in meeting its set targets.

