

PROGRESS REPORT - SPRING 2021

I hope you all have had a lovely Easter break and come back to your desk (or screen) refreshed and ready to push on to the summer months with renewed hopes of some kind of vacation planning, albeit not too far from your home base this year anyway. The staged withdrawal of restrictions over the months of April and May will be hugely important in Great Britain and Ireland and also across the pond in the USA as we all aspire to the reopening of life as we once knew it some 13 months ago. No doubt that there will be bumps along the road to recovery, but we remain optimistic that later in the year we will see the return of some face-to-face meetings, events, and social gatherings. All of this will greatly enhance the type of experience we deliver at programme level with young people right across this island.

Unfortunately, you will have shared my huge disappointment as you witnessed on international news channels, recent violent scenes of predominantly young people rioting in a number of towns and cities across Northern Ireland as a direct consequence of the way the rushed through Brexit Agreement created serious nuances for Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland protocol, which treats Northern Ireland differently than the rest of Britain and the assumption of a border down the Irish Sea has put serious pressure on community relationships as people strive to understand and deal with perceived changes to their national identities. The stranglehold of paramilitaries, posing as identity protectors, has come to the fore once more in many towns and cities.

It is therefore imperative that we once again rise to the challenges, redouble our efforts, and enhance our promotion of a far better way, strengthening relationships and understanding by creating Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders. They will be empowered to lead and build peace across the island, by equipping them with the skills, confidence and networks to make a positive contribution to the future development of their own communities and relationships on and between Ireland and the United Kingdom.

With your help as Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Ambassadors, we have been able to commence the delivery of the programme training virtually across all the important issues raised by the young people in the programme design group. Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Programme Manager Margaret Lucey and her team have had to learn so quickly how to adapt to creating interesting training workshops delivered totally online via a mixture of Teams meetings, webinars and zoom calls. Not all a negative experience, as we will never go back to doing things exactly as we did over a year ago.

Our ambition for year two of the Programme would be to provide a blended approach of face-to-face meetings which can be so important in relationship building, with the advantageous elements of virtual learning such as less time spent in travel and participation added to the immediate interaction between young people and their trainers from all corners of the country.

Following a national recruitment drive there has been a marked flurry of activity lately with registrations far exceeding our first phase target of 60 young people. We are now in the middle of the most intense delivery phase of the Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders programme to date, with accredited training modules being delivered in three groups over an eight-week period, across a number of themes including Leadership and Resilience, Communication and Lobbying, Employability and Mental Health First Aid.



It is great to have had a number of Ambassadors, and a number of notable voices of authority involved in the delivery aspects of the programme. This has been well received by the young Future Leaders as they have much to learn from the wide range of experiences provided by our Ambassador's group and those in positions of authority within the respective communities.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the Spring Report for the Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Programme putting some more flesh on the bones of what is an extremely busy and exciting start to the programme delivery phase of this unique all-island youth initiative.

Thanks again and should you wish to discuss any element of the programme or want to help us reach out to others, please contact me directly on futureleaders@cooperationireland.org.

Best Wishes

Peter Sheridan
Chief Executive
Co-operation Ireland

Update from the Design Team

Recently 3 members of the Design Team, took a leadership role in a new Active Citizens: Social Action for Climate Change training programme that Co-operation Ireland is delivering in partnership with the British Council. The young leaders participated in the Active Citizen Youth Leadership International Facilitators' training and are now supporting the delivery of the programme here. They are working with a group of 19 young participants recruited from across the island of Ireland on an innovative and creative programme of activity and engagement, supporting environmental and climate change social action projects. These projects will be shared on a global basis through the Active Citizen Network which is running in 22 countries including Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Members of the design group, as well as other graduates of our programmes also have the opportunity to participate in a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training programme delivered by members of the Public Health Authority. The aim of the training is to improve the mental health literacy of the participants. Although it will not train people to be mental health workers it will provide guidance and general information about mental health problems to remove the stigma and fear related to the issue, and to give participants confidence in approaching a person in distress.

Recruitment & Training

Recruitment for the programme continued, with an open approach to registration available through our website as well as a targeted approach through several youth organisations and delivery partners.

The CIFL training delivery started in earnest on 15 March, with 60 young people being involved directly in an intense 8-week period of accredited bespoke virtual training on Developing Employability Skills, Communication and Lobbying Skills as well as, Leadership Skills and Resilience Training. The training approach is interactive, with a mix of content delivery and group discussions with several specialist guest speakers joining the sessions to share their experiences and advice with the learners.

"The employability training has really helped me to understand the recruitment process and the minds of the recruiter which is invaluable especially since I'm just beginning to enter into the job market. The highlight for me was learning about STAR as it is very helpful in order to answer the recruiter's questions effectively".

Nathalie Mills, Ballymena

"Co-operation Ireland's Future Leaders Employability Course has helped me to gain new skills that I can use in various aspects of my life. I now feel more prepared when continuing on my career path. I have improved my communication skills and listening skills throughout the course. The highlights have been meeting a range of new ambitious young people, gaining information from a range of guest speakers who I would not have met without the help of Co-operation Ireland".

Fay O'Donoghue, Kerry

Board Ambassadors, Ossie Kilkenny and Terence Brannigan joined the employability course on the theme of “Standing out from the Crowd” and shared their advice to the young leaders on pursuing their goals and not being held back by fear or lack of confidence.

We welcomed the input of Ambassadors, Julia McLernon and Liam McCarthy on the Leadership Course with the theme of 'Life as Global Leaders - Leadership Skills' who shared their experience of life as leaders, the different ways to lead and what it takes to be a great leader.

“I participated in a recent session on leadership and, as with prior interactions with the Future Leaders, I was very impressed with their candour, engagement and their obvious desire to get everything they can out of this amazing opportunity. With all the challenges we are currently seeing across the Island of Ireland, we need these inspirational young people as trailblazers now more than ever. Each time I interact with them I gain strengthened belief that this program will be life changing and renewed hope for a better future for the participants and their communities”.

Julia McLernon

**Executive Director, Global Technology, JP Morgan
Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Programme Ambassador**

“It was a privilege to be part of the recent Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Training on Leadership. A great credit to the young people who are giving of their time in the present difficult circumstances to help build a long-term mutual understanding between all people on our phenomenal Island”.

Liam McCarthy, ABP Food Group

Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Programme Ambassador

As part of the Communication & Lobbying course, where the participants explored how to get their voice heard and engage with authority, we were delighted that the charity's Chairman, Dr Christopher Moran, joined the training and introduced two of Northern Ireland's leading politicians, Gordon Lyons MLA and DUP MP Emma Pengelly who spoke about the need to be informed and prepared when engaging with decision makers. They both also spoke about the need to be passionate and informed about your issue but open to other opinions and viewpoints and highlighted that the most important part of making a persuasive argument is speaking from your own personal experience.



Gordon Lyons spoke at the Communication and Lobbying course, on the theme “Getting Your Voice Heard!” where he had to step in at the last minute for First Minister, Arlene Foster. He said “The First Minister was really keen to attend this training and is disappointed that she was unfortunately unable to attend, as she is passionate about engaging with young people, the next generation, to hear their views, and to hear about the issues that are important to them, and participation in events like this gives her the opportunity to meet with young people from across the Island”.

When Minister Lyons was advising the young people on getting their voices heard, he spoke about the different ways that young people can engage. He also complimented them on taking the first positive steps to getting involved in a training programme like this that equips them with the skills to get their voices heard.

All participants have access to a range of resources in the Future Leaders learning hub, where they can access extra material, pose questions, and record their own individual progress. They also have the opportunity to apply the skills gained through their participation in mock interviews, or making a communication/leadership pitch.

The interviews and pitches will take place virtually on the week from Tuesday 4 May, with panels consisting of 2/3 Ambassadors and a Programme Staff Member who will be assigned a number of young people to interview or to review their pitch. After the interview or pitch, the panel will complete a review sheet for each of the young people, providing feedback on their performance. There will be a briefing available for all panelists prior to the event.

Several CIFL Programme Ambassadors have already committed to being involved, and if you, or some of your staff would like to support this event, please email futureleaders@cooperationireland.org for full details.

We are asking for a minimum of a 2 hour time commitment on the designated dates, but if you would like to book in for more than 1 session, we would be delighted to hear from you.

The next training opportunity will be "Unlock your Skills" delivered in partnership with the Princes Trust NI and will be a series of online interactive workshops aimed to give young people access to the skills they need to get work ready within a secure online environment.

Request for Quotes

To capitalise and continue growing the success of the programme, we are putting together a series of posts on social media to spotlight our Ambassadors. We would like a short quote from you on why you believe the Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Programme is so valuable for young people and its importance in equipping young people to meet the challenges we face today on the island of Ireland.

Please click [here](#) to write your quote.

Website Update

A full list of current **Ambassadors** is on the Co-operation Ireland website.

Work to update the CIFL Ambassador's section of the website is still in progress. If your image, or your company's logo, with short bio is **not included here** and you would like it to be added, please email a high-resolution image/logo and bio to futureleaders@cooperationireland.org.

Click [here](#) for full details on the **Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Programme**.

JOINT PATRONS

Her Majesty The Queen
President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins

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