



**co-operationireland**

*working for a future together*

**2020 - 2021** ANNUAL REPORT

# OUR IMPACT



## WHAT WE DO

Co-operation Ireland is an all-island peace-building organisation. We work to build a shared and cohesive society by addressing legacy issues of the conflict and facilitating contact and collaboration between people from different backgrounds across these islands.

Under our current strategic plan, our programmes are primarily targeted at young people and marginalised communities which have experienced the worse impacts of the conflict.

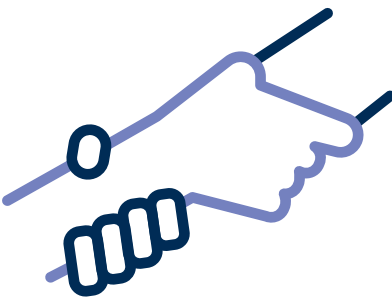


## YOUTH PROGRAMMES

Co-operation Ireland delivers a range of youth programmes which facilitate young people from different community backgrounds in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to meet, work together and build positive relationships.

Our programmes aim to prepare young people for living in a shared society by widening social networks, challenging negative attitudes and behaviours, and developing skills for working with others from diverse backgrounds.

In 2020/21 Co-operation Ireland delivered 17 youth projects. Programme themes included positive youth development, youth leadership, shared history and preparation for further education and employment.



## ALL-ISLAND CO-OPERATION

Co-operation Ireland continues to support co-operation for mutual benefit between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and works to facilitate strategic leadership for the building of good relations and collaboration across these islands.

Our flagship Local Authority Programme supports exchange of learning and practical experience around shared objectives. In 2020/21, 11 cross border programmes were in operation.



## MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

We support marginalised communities to take the lead in their own development and to capitalise on the opportunities for social and economic renewal created by the peace process. Our programmes aim to build leadership capacity and to encourage greater openness to networking and collaboration, including on a cross-community basis.

In 2020/21 Co-operation Ireland delivered nine programmes involving people from marginalised communities, from ex-prisoners to ethnic minorities.

Involvement in our 2020/21 youth projects helped participants to build links with other communities, improve their understanding for other traditions, and develop the skills and attitudes necessary for living and working in a shared society.

**96.4%**

of participants reported new links/friendships with others from a different community background.

**72.2%**

of participants demonstrated improved understanding of other traditions.

**88.6%**

of participants indicated better ability to work with others from different backgrounds.

**72.4%**

of participants socialised more frequently with young people from a different community background.

**82.4%**

of participants were more confident about working with others in a team.

**68.7%**

of participants were more confident about being the leader of a team.

**75.5%**

of participants were more confident about speaking in front of a group.

Our community programmes helped to build the capacity of local leaders and facilitated networking and exchange of learning between communities emerging from conflict across Northern Ireland. Community capacity and networking programmes were delivered in 26 areas across during 2020/21.

**1175**

People from communities across Ireland and Northern Ireland took part in training and development initiatives 2020/21, gaining skills for local development and good relations.





**Dr. Christopher Moran**  
Chairman



**Peter Sheridan**  
Chief Executive

# JOINT CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

**Co-operation Ireland's long tradition of working to build relationships has continued throughout the 2020/21 period against a backdrop of uncertainty.**

The past 12 months has been challenging but across our almost 30 projects and in partnership with our funders, we have continued to make progress in bringing people together.

Our priority continues to be peace and stability on this island and between these islands, and as we focus on the future and the post Covid environment, we look forward to a renewed focus on strengthening and deepening relationships.

Covid was only one factor to consider in 2020/21. There was also the effect of the UK leaving the EU on January 1 and the establishment of The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. These events continue to impact relationships between the UK and EU, and relationships on the island.

Issues of sovereignty, identity and borders will continue to influence the political landscape in the medium to long term. We acknowledge these concerns are beyond Co-operation Ireland's control, but steps have already been taken to ensure the organisation is better placed to positively contribute to ongoing efforts at finding consensus.

Whatever shape the future takes, Co-operation Ireland will continue to use its best endeavours to build consensus around our shared future and work to create a shared space where the diversity of identities and traditions is respected.

As an organisation we have undergone a strategic review by EY, and a realignment of board committees is underway to better deliver on our strategic priorities. The trustees' contribution to our work throughout the last year has been significant, and their contribution has allowed the organisation to emerge from the Covid period in a strong position.

This strength allowed us to support the wider third sector through our partnership with the Department for Communities on the Covid Recovery Fund and the Small Capital Grants Programme.

Through the Small Capital Grants Programme, Co-operation Ireland was responsible for the distribution of €1.34 million to 415 community groups across Northern Ireland.

Looking to the future, finding the next generation of leaders has been a continuing priority for the organisation

and it was welcome to see 140 young people embark on the Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Programme.

The innovative development strategy designed by our staff seeks to offer practical training and support to young people across the island, so they are prepared to take on leadership roles in the future. Recruitment is now underway for the next intake.

The Future Leaders Programme has attracted support from over 50 private sector companies, and we are proud to be able to partner with them to deliver recognised qualifications in leadership skills.

As Chairman and CEO, we want to take this opportunity to thank the staff of Co-operation Ireland for their energy and enthusiasm over the last year. Given the unusual circumstances the contribution they have made has been outstanding.

We also want to thank the Northern Ireland Executive, Department for Foreign Affairs, Northern Ireland Office, and our partners in the private sector who have worked closely with Co-operation Ireland over the 2020/21 period and continue to support our vital work.

## CEO'S WORK

**Since the result of the Brexit referendum in 2016 Northern Ireland has experienced a level of political scrutiny and media interest not seen since the ceasefires of the 1990s.**

The decision of the UK to leave the EU was the most significant political development domestically since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement vote in 1998 and led to a resetting of relationships on the island of Ireland and between these islands.

There is little doubt that relationships are going through hard times and there is a danger they could be defined exclusively by Brexit, disrupting the delicate balance achieved through the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement.

This necessitated a re-examination of the future direction of Co-operation Ireland.

Throughout the year we were engaged by visiting politicians and journalists from across the globe to assist them in understanding the context as to why the Brexit decision was so consequential.

Using his vast experience from his role as former PSNI Assistant Chief Constable and more recent peacebuilding involvement, Co-operation Ireland CEO Peter Sheridan was invited by the Irish and British governments to conduct orientation visits to the border area for EU, UK and US politicians.

This work developed and led to regular and ongoing contact with the UK Cabinet Office, the EU Commission, the Department for Foreign Affairs and the Northern Ireland Executive, culminating with our CEO chairing a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and a number of invited guests on behalf of then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar in 2019.

He also accompanied Brexit Minister David Davis MP, Cabinet Office Minister Michael Gove MP, Cabinet Secretary Mark Sedwill and members of the UK Committee for Exiting the European Union on subsequent orientation visits.

This work has continued and recently, Peter Sheridan moderated a meeting with EU Chief Negotiator Maroš Šefčovič when he visited Northern Ireland to hold talks with UK Minister of State for EU Issues Lord David Frost.

That followed an appearance in front of the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and House of Lords Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland Sub-Committee.

In keeping with the organisation's ethos, Co-operation Ireland and the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool drafted an open letter in September – signed by over 50 civic and business leaders – calling for "balanced, bespoke and reasonable" solutions to issues raised by the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

Currently, engagement is ongoing with the Secretary of State Brandon Lewis, Lord Frost and in Dublin with the Department of the Taoiseach, and The Department of Foreign Affairs.

Through this work, Co-operation Ireland will continue to promote peace and stability as a priority and seek to build trust across our diversity of identities and traditions in certain knowledge that whatever way things change in the future it will always have to be shared.



## CO-OPERATION IRELAND BREXIT PRINCIPLES

**Co-operation Ireland was aware that the community was divided on the issue, and so our board agreed that the organisation would remain neutral but adhere to the following principles.**

1. The importance of strengthening and deepening British/Irish relationships
2. Protecting the Peace Process
3. Maintaining the common travel area
4. Minimising the impact on the border – keeping the border as invisible as possible
5. Avoiding economic isolation in the border region.





# NORTHERN IRELAND NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE

Despite the best efforts of Co-operation Ireland, delivery partners and funder (Department for Communities) to find a work-around, sadly the decision was made for NI NCS to take a break in 2020.

The intense nature of the programme with its emphasis on relationship building and teamwork meant that outcomes for participants couldn't properly be achieved using an online only model.

Conscious of the increased risks that young people were facing due to the restrictions that the pandemic brought, however, we were determined to benefit as many young people as we could with the funds available to us.

While the absence of a full programme was disappointing for the some 400 young people who would have benefitted, it did present an opportunity to develop our work with graduates, an area that we have been wanting to progress for some time.

Firstly, the Regional Youth Board, formed with 13 graduates from our 2019 programmes all signed up for a second year, despite the circumstances. As they had already completed a leadership course and worked together in early 2020, they were well placed to shift their activities online. Although it wasn't easy at times, they rallied and in amongst some quizzes, brain teasers and random chat, they completed a social action to raise funds for Aware NI, got involved with advocacy and training with NCS Trust, Future Leaders and government panel discussions; and devised curriculum and marketing activities for future NI NCS programmes. Secondly, with the support of the Honorable the Irish Society and St Columb's Park House, we piloted the idea of 'local youth boards' involving 60 young people in Derry/Londonderry and Coleraine. Starting in summer 2020 when small groups were able to meet outdoors, these groups initially met in person (under some big trees)

and were based around the principal developed during their time on NI NCS – 'that through being of service to others, I can learn and benefit myself'.

Although activities moved online for a time, they remained committed and delivered a number of social action projects, ranging from a penpal scheme connecting isolated members of the community to a campaign to provide binders to young transgender men.

Running alongside these campaigns were environmental projects including tree planting and litter picking. Finally they took part in a range of training including completion of the John Muir award.

These pilots were so successful that we will seek to develop local youth boards across all NI NCS in order to provide a bigger and more localised range of opportunities to continue with social action, volunteering and developing connections within one's community.

We're looking forward to the return of NI NCS, bigger and better, in the near future. Finally, a word from NI NCS graduates and local youth board participant, Hannah: "This programme is very special to me as I believe it gives so many young people the opportunity to develop skills and qualities that they will carry throughout their lives. As a 17 year old girl, I often found that trying to be confident and having the willingness to fight for my local community's issues was something that I was scared of.

"NCS gave me a safe place to explore and evolve as a human being.

"NCS also led to so many amazing projects which I am a part of today, such as Park Youth, Local Youth Board and so many different social action projects that have evidence of making a difference in our community."



## FUTURE LEADERS PROGRAMME

Since Co-operation Ireland was established as an all-island peace-building charity in 1979, our role has evolved in line with the changing priorities for peace on the island of Ireland.

Despite the changing political circumstances, at the core of our philosophy remains the belief that getting people to work together for mutual benefit, across religious, cultural, and political divisions, will promote greater understanding, respect and recognition of mutual interdependence.

Co-operation Ireland's work to promote and encourage interaction, dialogue, and practical collaboration between the peoples of Northern Ireland and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and Dublin and London has taken on an added level importance with the UK's decision to leave the European Union.

To respond to these coming challenges Co-operation Ireland devised a programme to give young people their voices in maintaining and strengthening these key relationships by providing a bespoke online all-island Future Leaders Programme.

In the past year we have partnered with Utopian Learning to offer three courses to our programme participants – Employability, Communications, and Lobbying and Leadership.

Guest speakers Emma Little Pengelly and Minister Gordon Lyons MLA added depth to our explorations and conversations.

We also heard from board members Ossie Kilkenny and Terence Brannigan on entrepreneurship. Programme delivery was impacted by Covid-19 but through online resources the young people were able to complete their tasks.

Recruitment is now underway for the next tranche of future leaders.

*"I participated in a recent session on leadership and, as with prior interactions with the Future Leaders Programme, I was very impressed with the participants candour, engagement and 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 programme will be life changing and renew 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



130  
PARTICIPANTS

22  
AMBASSADORS

CO-OPERATION IRELAND 7



# COMMUNITY CAPACITY IN ACTION

The PUL community has felt increasing alienisation exacerbated by the BREXIT Protocol which is perceived to put the Union under threat.

Community Capacity in Action has been designed to address this, and is being delivered in the PUL majority Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus, and Rathcoole areas, through a bottom-up approach. The programme will build personal and community capacity, produce alternative leadership, and allow positive community initiatives to develop based on what the communities themselves see as their needs and desires.

Co-operation Ireland partnered with Utopian Learning to deliver the programme and the work to

date has focused on governance, leadership, decision making and lobbying, with all candidates achieving an OCN Level 2 qualification in Lobbying and Governance.

This has been a very successful start to which should be a successful project which has an impact on the PUL community in the East Antrim Area of Northern Ireland. As the programme continues other guests will be invited to take part in such discussions.



## DISENGAGED COMMUNITIES

In 2020 Newry, Mourne and Down District Council secured EU funding for a PEACE IV Local Authority Action Plan titled Beyond Tolerance.

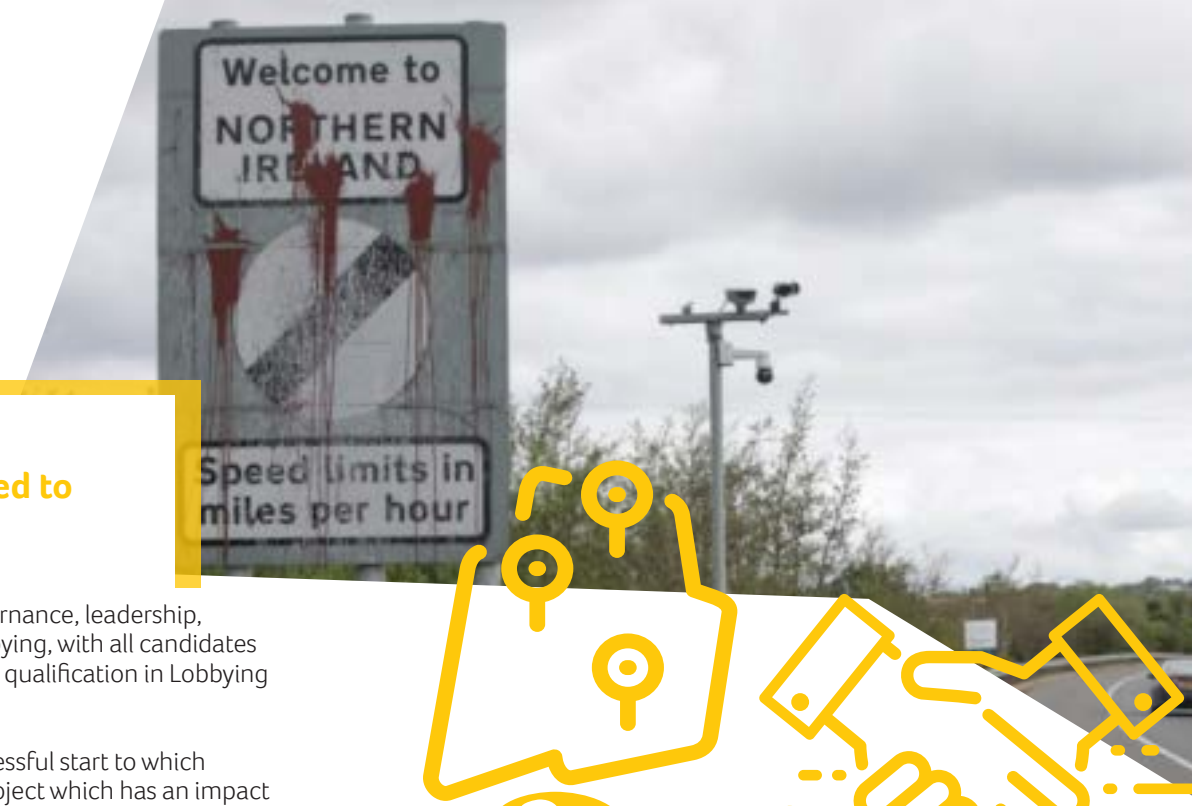
The main objective of the programme is the creation of a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared spaces and services and a reduction of Troubles related segregation, that continues to be an issue in the area.

This is evidenced by residential segregation, peace walls, sectarian graffiti, public display of flags and emblems in a manner aimed to mark territory and intimidate. As well as increasing social division and tension, segregation also inhibits the potential for economic

development and the efficient delivery of public services.

In partnership with Utopian Learning, people from across these diverse communities in Newry have been brought together to develop relationships and learn more about the local history, cultures and where to seek help and support.

The next phase of the programme is due to begin in October 2021.



# ENTWINED HISTORIES

Entwined Histories 10 was heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic however this project, which helps to explore significant events in the history of Ireland that impact communities north and south with school children, was able to go ahead and continue its cross-border expansion.

Four participant schools recorded a short film on historic events of 100 years ago, and this was featured in our first ever digital showcase which streamed live in May 2021 and has been viewed over a thousand times.

Significant contributions from the students were accompanied by messages of support from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney TD, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis MP.

The Showcase also included a discussion with Dr Russell Rees on the legacy of the Irish War of Independence. We are extremely grateful to all eight Schools from Counties Down, Antrim, and Louth for their efforts in building important cross-border friendships together.

Looking ahead Entwined Histories 11 will explore the impact of partition in Ireland, including the creation of Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State, and address how the border continues to affect our lives in the present day.



## UNITING COMMUNITIES: YOUNG LEADERS AND AMBASSADORS TRAINING

Co-operation Ireland started the delivery of the Uniting Communities Training programme through Department for Communities in June 2020.

Co-operation Ireland worked alongside seven different partners to deliver a programme aimed at developing young people from Castlederg, County Tyrone (DERG DEA) and North Belfast as they took part in intense leadership training and programme delivery for their wider peer groups.

Although impacted by the lockdown, after restrictions were eased the programme delivered online good relations training up to four nights a week. The programme has a good track record in helping to shape government policy by bringing together participants with Stormont ministers and senior civil servants. This has lead to the establishment of a joint working group in partnership with the Education Authority, The Executive Office and Department for Communities that will work to ensure ambassadors from across TBUC programmes are having their voices heard.







# AMAZING THE SPACE

Amazing the Space faced many challenges as the continuing impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic was felt across all our regional programmes but despite this disruption, schools involved in this cross-community project pulled together to make it a success.

Students from Schools in Ballycastle, Bangor, Newry, and South Armagh engaged with online workshops and resources to explore key themes of culture and traditions and the importance of sport in peacebuilding.

200 students from eight schools took part in the project which culminated in our first ever digital showcase event featuring contributions from a range of speakers promoting culture, sport, and good

mental health. An audience of 450 viewed the event live during its premiere broadcast and we have experienced an increased interest in the programme as a result of the showcase.

Looking ahead Amazing the Space will continue to find ways of giving young people a voice as they work together on peacebuilding projects which promote good relations and nurture respect between schools across Northern Ireland and the border counties.



# YOUTHPACT

YouthPact is a cross-border partnership that provides bespoke training to youth workers delivering Peace programmes with young people across the six counties of Northern Ireland and six border counties in the Republic of Ireland.

Made up of four regional organisations, Cooperation Ireland (Lead partner), National Youth Council of Ireland, POBAL and Ulster University, the YouthPact partnership was awarded an initial €1.16m in 2018; with an additional 0.24m granted (2018) to develop extra training for workers with little or no previous youth work training.

YouthPact's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing public health

restrictions saw the project pivot almost overnight and transition to online operation.

In that time YouthPact was able to host a large scale online interactive sharing and learning event for youth work managers across the island entitled, 'Where are we now? Reflecting on the contribution of the youth work sector in supporting young people to live, work and play - in a pandemic'. Three academic papers were also published.



# LOCAL AUTHORITY PROGRAMME

The All-Island Local Authority Forum is a strategic cross-border partnership comprising ten Council Chief Executives and is facilitated by Co-operation Ireland.

2020 was an action-packed year for the forum, which held monthly meetings at the height of the Covid-19 crisis to provide a platform for Chief Executives to share information on COVID-19, the emergency responses of their councils in both jurisdictions and to share ideas. Other key highlights from 2020 include:

- Publication of *A Scoping Study of Emerging Needs and Opportunities in relation to Cross-Border and All-Island Co-operation*
- A Strategic Review of the All-Island Local Authority Forum took place in September 2020, which resulted in the following priority areas of focus being agreed for the coming years:
  - Climate Action & Mitigation
  - Town/Town Centre Regeneration
  - Leadership/Women's Leadership Programme
  - Tourism
  - Relationship Building
- A virtual series of three online events over a period of six weeks, entitled, *Public Sector Leadership in Climate Action: From Global to Local* took place in October & November to an audience of over 200 participants at each event.
- The delivery of the Cross Border Women's Leadership Programme – "*Building the Resilience Backpack*" took place throughout 2020.
- The Annual Joint SOLACE NI/CCMA webinar took place in December 2020 with the theme '*Building Back Better, Re-imagining the future of our communities*'. The keynote speakers for the event were Professor John Barry of Queen's University Belfast and Professor Neil Gibson, Chief Economist with EY Ireland. A key focus from both speakers are the challenges we face in the 21st century in meeting economic needs within the means of the planet. A lively debate between Professor John Barry and Professor Neil Gibson was facilitated by author and broadcaster Dearbhail McDonald.





# COMMUNITIES IN TRANSITION

Co-operation Ireland continues to support The Executive Office to deliver the Communities In Transition project. In 2020 34 contracts were awarded across seven themes and eight areas of focus commenced delivery.

The Communities in Transition project has provided opportunity for those in our eight areas of focus to build their capacity through a mix of training and practical actions which will make a positive difference in their community. Over one thousand participants have been involved across the projects in activity including training, community engagement forums, community led initiatives to address issues of concern such as mental health and drug addiction and over 60 different social action projects which have enabled participants to enhance their capacity through practical experience.

Training provided included community development and leadership, coaching and

mentoring, community safety, mental health, drug awareness and first aid and child protection. Accreditations have ranged from introductory level to degree equivalent. A number of projects, including the Derry employability project, North Down, Derry and West Belfast Health and Wellbeing projects, Shankill, East Belfast and Carrickfergus and Larne Capacity Building projects included element of vocational training for at risk community members.

Social action projects included awareness raising campaigns, projects to reimagine murals, employability support, projects to address isolation, build community cohesion and tackle poverty.



  
**34**  
CONTRACTS AWARDED

  
**60**  
SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS



  
**8800**  
LOCKDOWN MEALS DELIVERED

## OPEN DOORS

The Open Doors project has been designed to support the integration of ex-prisoners and their families into wider society, enabling them to work with a broader range of service providers.

Open Doors is a joint partnership project between Co-operation Ireland, Charter NI, Teach Na Failte, Ex-Prisoners Interpretive Centre and The Plough Historical and Cultural Group.

The programme participants continue to work with the Commission for Victims and Survivors regarding legacy issues. The ex-prisoner/former combatant community (EPFC) represents a significant group within our society, with the number of politically motivated prisoners alone being estimated as 40,000 people

During lockdown, all the partner groups engaged in community support work, including virtual welfare support clinics and the delivery of food to vulnerable members of the community.

Open Doors was due to run until September 2021 but has been granted an extension to January 2022.

  
**208**  
OUTREACH CLINICS

# SMALL CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

The Small Capital Grants Programme, funded by the Department for Communities, was established in 2018 with the aim of assisting voluntary and community organisations purchase items of equipment to enhance and sustain the activities and services they provide to the local community.

In the 2020/21 scheme £1,349,182 was awarded to 415 projects.

The promotion of co-operation and partnership between local groups is central to the programme design, with applicants required to form consortia to be eligible for funding.

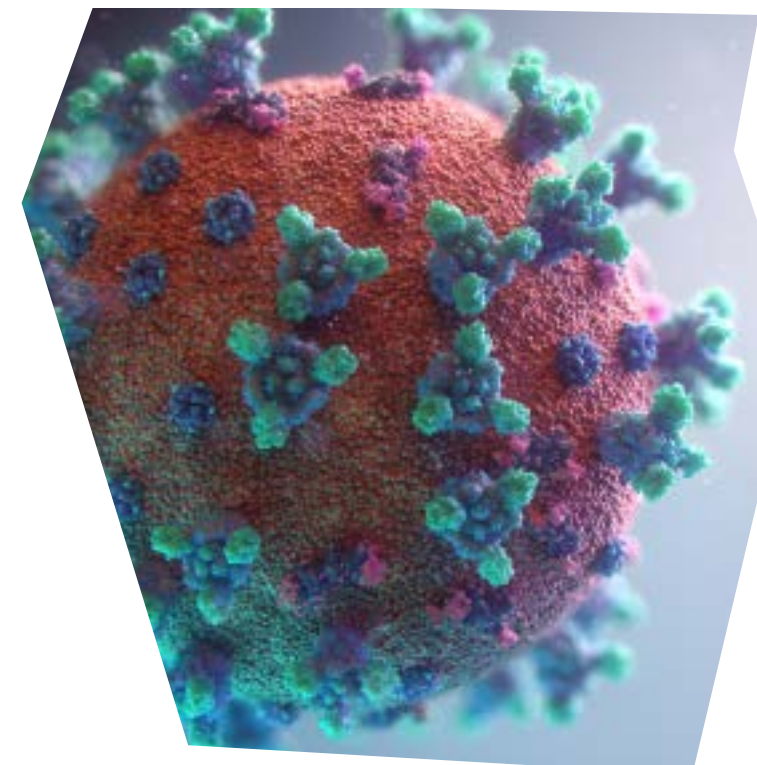
The programme is delivered by Co-operation Ireland, acting as an Intermediary Funding Body, and due to the impact of COVID 19 in 2020/21, the verification and vouching process was administered remotely using soft copy documents.



  
**415**  
PROJECTS FUNDED

  
**£1.34m**  
GRANTS DISTRIBUTED

## VCSE COVID RECOVERY FUND



On behalf of the Department for Communities (DFC), Co-operation Ireland in partnership with Rural Community Network were responsible for the distribution of the VCSE Covid Recovery Fund.

The fund was established to help organisations within the Voluntary Community Social Enterprise sector purchase of PPE and other sundry items to enable the re-opening and/ or continued delivery of vital community services.

Groups could apply for awards up to £5,000 for purchase of PPE.

  
**£3.3m**  
BUDGET

  
**3**  
PARTNERS





## CIRCLE OF LEARNING



Circle of Learning is an Executive Office funded programme working in three local authority areas – Mid Ulster, Antrim & Newtownabbey, and Lisburn & Castlereagh.

The programme engaged 12 small groups in four hubs with the aim of developing capacity, increasing skills, and building a network of contacts and relationships in cross community and geographically mixed regions.

The small groups undertook a skills audit and identified a social action project where they were responsible for the design, delivery and monitoring of a locally based initiative. With the help of a mentor a range of projects on topics such as cultural diversity, health, tackling anti-social behaviour and educational needs were successfully delivered.

The restrictions of the Covid 19 pandemic had a massive impact on the groups' opportunities to meet face to face and build relationships outside their immediate area, however, the purchase of technology such as iPads, projectors and screens meant that groups were able to meet online to discuss issues and implement solutions to mitigate the impact of Covid on their community development.

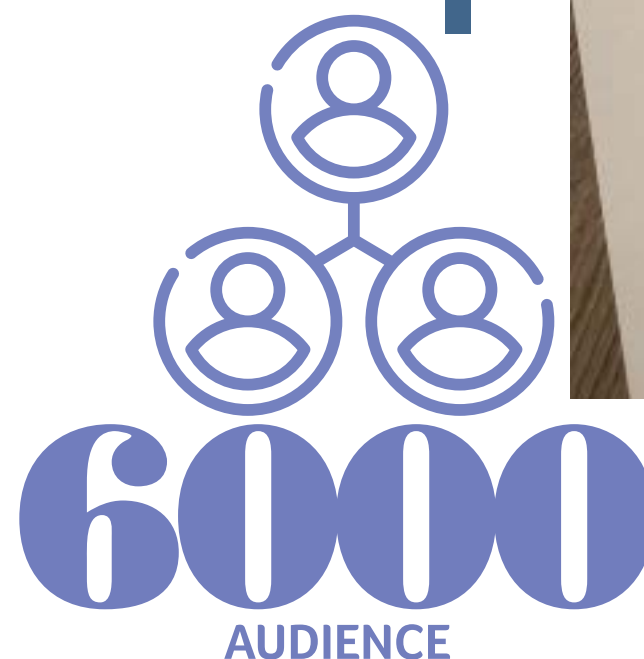
## PRIDE OF PLACE

Dubbed the 'Oscars of the Community Sector', the Pride of Place awards is an annual competition organised by Co-operation Ireland and sponsored by IPB Insurance.

The 2020 IPB Pride of Place Awards were delivered online due to COVID-19 restrictions with community groups actively participating throughout the year.

Virtual judging took place through zoom, where we heard stories of unsung heroes delivering on the ground to support their local community in the face of adversity and challenge during the COVID-19 crisis. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the 2020 IPB Pride of Place Awards took place online, hosted by RTE's Marty Morrissey to a viewing audience of 6,000.

The Pride of Place awards promotes and celebrates the best in community development and recognises the selfless efforts of people in making their local area a better place to live, work and socialise.



## YOUTH NETWORK FOR PEACE

Youth Network for Peace is a youth-led regional project, which involved 10,000 young people connecting in a range of participative social action projects, on a cross-community and cross-border basis

This PEACE IV project was delivered in partnership with the Northern Ireland Youth Forum, Youth Work Ireland Louth, Youth Work Ireland Monaghan, Donegal Youth Service and Fóram na nÓg.

The highlight of the programme this year was when the young people organised a Social Action Colour Run to mark PRIDE Month in the Lagmore area of Belfast.

The first event of its kind ever to be organised in the area highlighted issues faced by young people from the LGBTQ+ community including poor mental health, social isolation, and homophobia. Organiser Arón Hughes said: "This was the first

colour run ever held in the Colin Area and we are proud it was held to celebrate Pride Month to draw attention to the issues faced by young people who are members of the LGBTQ+ community."

Anne Anderson Porter from Co-operation Ireland said: "The incredible work the young people of Lagmore Youth Project put into this social action programme and the good relations work they carried out in the lead up to the Colour Run was an inspiration and we were proud to be able to support them.

"As an organisation we work to ensure diversity and inclusion in all its forms."



## OUR GENERATION

The OUR Generation project is a Peace IV funded project that provides a unique opportunity for communities, north and south of the Border, to work together to halt the intergenerational impact of trauma and to build emotional resilience and peace for generations to come..

This three-year project will run to December 2022 and engage with 36,000 children, young people and their key contacts. The project will be delivered in education, youth and community settings aimed at the five Urban Village Areas of Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Northern Ireland and Ireland.

The cross-border partnership of seven regional organisations will be led by Action Mental Health in partnership with Donegal Youth Service, Co-operation Ireland, Youth Action NI, Youth Work Ireland, PlayBoard NI and Ulster University. Funding for the OUR Generation project has been awarded through the European Union's PEACE IV

Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), match-funding for the project has been provided by The Executive Office in Northern Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development in Ireland.

Recently, Co-operation Ireland helped deliver a Circus Skills programme in Donegal with children newly arrived in Ireland and under international protection in the direct provision system.

A two-day residential for youth workers on the impact of mental health was also held in Derry/Londonderry.





# VOICE MATTERS

**This project developed following outreach and engagement work we undertook pre-pandemic with communities in the Creggan area of Derry/Londonderry around the issues of community input in local decision making.**

Through adapting to the challenges presented by Covid-19, we developed a two-stranded model involving an educational marketing campaign and TedTalk inspired events that would introduce ways for people and communities to get involved in local decision making and have their voices heard.

These events will introduce the concept of deliberative democracy and asset-based community development, which we believe are excellent tools to allow for collective, productive ways forward on difficult topics within communities.

The events will be hosted at St Columb's Hall Trust, our long-standing partners in this project.

Through relationships built on our North-West Ministry of Youth and Our Generation projects, Voice Matters also provides a pathway for younger voices to play an active role in shaping and delivering this project. Voice Matters will be launching online in Summer 2021 with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade.



SEPTEMBER  
**2021**  
LAUNCH

## MINI-PUBLICS

**Mini-Publics will be a flagship initiative for Co-operation Ireland and the communities we work with, offering a new and innovative pathway for people and communities to have a greater input on decision making in society.**

Mini-Publics will engage a random selection of residents in a facilitated process to develop democratic solutions to community issues that will be followed through on by decision makers.

The events will be conducted over three weekends and will be run in two separate areas (Creggan and Waterside in Derry/Londonderry).

Mini-Publics put people at the heart of decision-making and empower communities to enact social change and improve the quality of community life.

They provide a mechanism to make progress towards repairing entrenched divisions and deep-rooted issues in a society, and as a result, build trust and relationships in and between communities and statutory bodies, leading to a stronger civil society.

This Mini-Publics initiative is supported by the Northern Ireland Office and Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade.

# WOMEN INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION (WICT) PROGRAMME

**Co-operation Ireland delivers the WICT Programme in partnership with TWN, Intercomm and Foyle Women's Information Network with funding from Department for Communities NI.**

The programme's objective is to increase the participation and influence of women in their communities through the development of knowledge and skills, thereby building confidence.

Over the 2020/21 period WICT worked with 128 women in counties Fermanagh, Tyrone, Armagh and Down. Some of our groups adapted to the new way of delivering

workshops via Zoom, other groups paused their activities and restarted them once restrictions were eased and they could meet face to face again.

The project was due to end in March 2021, but an extension was granted to end of September 2021 to accommodate groups whose activities were delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions.



**4**  
COUNTIES

**128**  
PARTICIPANTS

## NORTH WEST MINISTRY OF YOUTH, STRABANE, DERRY AND DONEGAL



**The North West Ministry of Youth Project was a youth citizenship programme enabling young people to be more actively involved in local decision making in Strabane, Derry/Londonderry and Donegal.**

The project included residential and activity-based work, study visits, local workshops, confidence building and skills development.

A pilot project between Co-operation Ireland, Derry City and Strabane District Council and the Education Authority, work finished in March of 2021. It is hoped this work will be built upon in future programmes.

**3**  
COUNTIES

**72**  
PARTICIPANTS





# YOUNG ADVOCATES

The Young Advocates Programme was created to make real attitudinal impacts for young people, through making them champions for peaceful social change, including:

- Developing the capacity of young people from targeted areas to become leaders in their community and advocates for peaceful change.
- Improving community relations between young people from interface areas, through the exploration of social issues experienced by all.

This project was delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council funded by PEACE IV. Young Advocates is a citizenship intervention project for young people aged 16-24 to equip them to be leaders of the future and advocates for peaceful change.

Participants have gained OCN Level 1s in: Good Relations and Diversity, Peer Mentoring, Child Protection, First Aid and Refugee Awareness.

More than 45 Young Advocates have so far completed the programme and have engaged their peers, delivering campaigns, workshops and sessions across the city. Campaigns to date focused on Crime and Mental Health.

 **6**  
PARTICIPANT GROUPS

  
**45**  
GRADUATES

## OUR TOWN BALLYMENA

Over the past 12 months Co-operation Ireland has been working alongside local delivery partner The Carson Project, The Colonel Saunderson Project and Dunclug Youth Forum in the delivery of 'Our Town'.

This good relations focused programme brought together 20 participants both young and old. This unique good relations programme funded under The Executive Office delivered a cross generational, cross community project aimed at helping members understand the unique history and diverse folklore in the heart of their townland.

Participants worked alongside local historians and made a series of informative historical information video pieces along with a website to highlight their achievements and showcase their work.

Participants on the programme engaged weekly online, taking the opportunity to research their own family history, hear about local shared history locations, and engaging with Co-operation Ireland's Uniting Communities ambassadors through a series of good relations and community leadership sessions.

  
**20**  
PARTICIPANTS

  
**3**  
PARTNER GROUPS





# CHALLENGING ATTITUDES, CHANGING HORIZONS PROJECT

**CATCH is a six-month programme that engages with a group of youths from the nationalist community in Ardoyne in association with Ardoyne Youth Club.**

A second strand is carried out on a cross community basis in Strabane.

Over the last five years, the emphasis in North Belfast has been to engage with at risk young people to provide meaningful opportunities through personal development while exploring the issues of choices and consequences.

To reinforce this learning in the 20/21 period a number of guest speakers were invited along to challenge the group and their thinking. A residential trip to Poland and a visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp took place.

In Strabane, the aim was to develop trust and relationships between the participants before encouraging them to explore and discuss the deeper issues which affect their lives and their communities.

Issues such as mental health, social media bullying, leadership, and sectarianism were raised.

CATCH in Strabane and Ardoyne was funded by the Northern Ireland Office, with a second strand, funded by The Executive Office, operating a good relations programme in schools across Northern Ireland.



## OUR KIDS, OUR VOICES



**Co-operation Ireland's Our Kids Our Voices programme was a good relations focused project working with 30 young people aged 14-17 from both PUL and CNR communities in East Belfast in partnership with Willowfield Parish, The Short Strand Community Forum and Youth Initiatives.**

The project, funded by The Executive Office, focused on breaking down the barriers that exist between CNR and PUL communities to help young people consolidate positive relationships with their peers from a different community. This was done through good relations focused workshops, a residential in Cork, and engagement with local community leaders and political representatives.

For Mental Health Awareness Week, the young people teamed up with peers from Cork who participated in the Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Programme for a physical challenge.

The young people took part in a walk of 300 miles - the distance between the two cities - which was carried out with the use of treadmills and group walks in their local areas due to Covid-19.

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# FINANCE

The following figures show the operating income and expenditure for the Dublin and Belfast companies, extracted from the annual accounts audited by KPMG.

Income and Expenditure Accounts for Year Ended 31 December 2020.

	Dublin	Belfast	Dublin	Belfast
	€K	€K	€K	€K
	2020	2020	2019	2019
INCOME				
Donations	498	1,499	709	1,747
Other Income	212	116	267	626
	710	1,615	976	2,373
EXPENDITURE				
	Dublin	Belfast	Dublin	Belfast
	€K	€K	€K	€K
	2020	2020	2019	2019
Programme Costs	631	1,591	924	2,353
Administration	74	21	50	18
	705	1,612	974	2,371
Surplus	5	3	2	2

Results are after transfers between companies and adjustments for deferred income.  
Income and expenditure excludes monies distributed on behalf of The Department for Communities NI to charities for its Small Capital Grants programme and Covid Safe Return Fund.  
These grants totalled €1.314m in 2020 and €1.141m in 2019.







**co-operationireland**

*working for a future together*

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