



co-operationireland future leaders



Welcome to the Future Leaders Spring Report 2022

We have had a busy 3 months since the start of 2022; our East/West partnership building was formally launched in February with a delegation visit by 3 young people and their leaders from the Luton Irish Forum to our Belfast Connect Day.

Some of our young leaders travelled to the US as part of a comparative study of young people's view and attitudes to peacebuilding and community engagement. With ongoing restrictions in January, we continued our programme delivery with a blended approach, and restructured our planned All Island youth conference, running a number of "Connect Days" instead.

We were delighted that these were able to be delivered in person, and it was wonderful to see the buzz and energy when our young leaders finally got the opportunity to come together, on a cross community and cross border basis for the first

time; they had the opportunity to gain extra training and participate in a range of engaging workshops, but most importantly they got to interact with each other, and a range of our ambassador organisations.

Margaret Lucey
Programme Manager





Programme Delivery Routes

1. Our Self-Starters (Independent Learners)

Our young leaders completed their OCN training courses in Leadership and Communication & Lobbying in January, with several of the learners deciding to make a presentation as part of their final assessment to a panel of programme representatives and ambassadors. These presentations took place via Zoom on Thursday 27th January and Monday 31st January, and the issues presented ranged from adoption rights, domestic abuse, local library services to a plan for activities to initiate friendships/interaction between primary and secondary school students.

Congratulations to all who participated in the training - in total, 21 of our 30 participants achieved their OCN qualification.

Feedback from Participants on Communications Course



- “ I think this has taught me to be strong and decisive and how important it is to have a voice. ”
- “ I now know that if you put your mind to it and never stop working that anything is possible, it only becomes impossible when you stop trying. ”



Feedback from Participants on Leadership Course

- “ The course has improved my confidence in my leadership skills and I feel I would be more likely to put myself forward for a leadership position. ”
- “ I really enjoyed this course and found it useful/practical for the topics it covered. It was a ray of positive energy which everyone needs on Monday evenings and I learnt so much . ”

Social Action

With their training complete the young leaders were given the opportunity to engage in a social action module, with the initial sessions focusing on exploring what social action means and examples within the community.

As inspiration to the group on the potential issues they may wish to address, on the 21st February they were joined by Michaela Rafferty.

Michaela is an activist and youth worker from Belfast. Michaela has a lifelong passion for youth work, social justice and equality, working not only in her hometown of Belfast but overseas on women's empowerment projects in Tajikistan, youth rights projects in Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank of Palestine and in refugee camps across Greece.

Michaela spoke to the Future Leaders about following their passion, trust in their own voice and committing to learning and working with others.



A number of the young leaders decided as their social action project to produce an awareness video highlighting the victims of domestic violence in the home. They plan to film the video on Saturday 30th of April and have the film edited just in time for the showcase in May. They have been working hard to put ideas together and are looking forward to producing an informative and helpful video for anyone who needs advice on where to go to find support.



Programme Delivery Routes (Continued)

2 .Our targeted groups (Cross-border youth and schools groups.)

Those targeted groups working at a community level completed their sports leadership training and as part of the assessment the young people ran a series of sporting events for younger children in their communities.

They are now embarking on a range of social action projects where they can put these leadership skills into practice. The issues addressed by the young people include promoting health and wellbeing among their peers, promoting women's rights to tackle toxic masculinity, creating safe spaces for young people in schools and clubs to promote their mental health and fundraising for local charities tackling homelessness and suicide.





As part of the cross border residentials the young people will have the opportunity to share their plans for making change within their communities with their partner groups.

While the cross border communication and collaboration has been virtual to date, our first residential took place in Cork at the start of April when 23 young people from Belfast (Lagmore Youth club & South Belfast youth leaders) travelled to Cork to meet with 22 young people from Cork (Carrignafof Community College Cobh, Terence MacSwiney College Knocknaheenny and Bishopstown Foroige Group).

As part of their residential, Deputy Lord Mayor Cllr John Sheehan hosted a welcome reception for the group in Council Chambers, City Hall, Cork. The young people also had the opportunity to visit different sites in the city as well as participate in a range of team building activities and themed workshops on communication and peace building. This is just the first in a number of cross border residentials planned for the next few months, in Limerick, Dublin, Belfast and Derry/L'Derry.

Case Study

One of our young leaders Billy, from our Youth Leadership group in Cork had the opportunity in January to participate in a work experience placement at one of Co-operation Ireland's Programme ambassadors, Deloitte.

Speaking about his time at Deloitte, Billy said,

"My work experience was pretty much perfect! I learned valuable skills such as CV writing and wellbeing. I discovered additional study and job avenues, both at home and abroad, I wasn't aware of before."

Billy became involved in Co-operation Ireland and the Future Leaders programme in November of 2021. The initial reasons Billy gave for wanting to get involved in the programme included wanting to meet new people, learning leadership skills as well as having an interest in Northern Ireland. The Future Leaders programme has, as Billy said, allowed him to meet new people and learning to work with these people as a team.

When asked about his involvement in the Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders programme, Billy said, "The leadership I learnt about was not about me being the boss – I am 'not on top' – but rather, I'm learning to work as a first among equals, taking charge and being decisive where I need to be."





Ambassador Programme Activities

Panel Pitches

Kicking off the year's ambassador activities was the final task for our online learners working towards their accredited qualifications in leadership and communication and lobbying. We had a great response from our ambassador volunteers who made for great panels containing a wealth of experience and backgrounds. The young leaders were tasked with creating and delivering a 5-minute presentation around a given scenario or a topic they are passionate about, and our panel responded with really positive and constructive feedback.

Connect Days, Belfast & Dublin

We were beyond excited to meet and work with some of our ambassador volunteers, in person, for the first time. Sadly, in early January we had to cancel our planned all-island conference due to Covid. Instead, we re-imagined it instead as 2 one day events, where we could work with smaller numbers on the overarching themes of connection and relationship building.

While Co-operation Ireland coordinated the event, the content and format was directed by our young leaders and the majority of activities were provided by our ambassadors, via an inspiring talk and really well delivered, interactive and fun workshops around the themes of leadership and communication. There was real buzz at both events and the feedback from the young people was a very positive. When asked about the content and flow of the day, one young person commented, 'Everything was genuinely so good, perfect balance of active and listening activities, I loved it!'



Thank you to all our volunteers during this quarter for your time, enthusiasm and genuine understanding of how to work with young people. Hopefully you've had a personal thank you via LinkedIn, and we'd like to make a special mention here to Henry Brothers, Deloitte, Ires Reit, EY, Net Eire at Morgan Stanley, McAvoy Group and Carson McDowell for coordinating your volunteers over the past quarter.

Welcome on board to Avvio, Gilbert Ash, Dublin Port, Reserve Bar, Stephen Colvin at Bloomberg Media and The Honourable The Irish Society. We look forward to working with you all.



East West Partnership Building

As part of developing our East West connections, Co-operation Ireland hosted a delegation visit by a number of young people and their leaders from the Luton Irish Forum. The group participated in the Future Leaders Belfast Connect Day as well as visiting a number of different youth groups in both Belfast and Derry/L'Derry. Feedback from the young people indicated that the outcomes gained far exceeded the anticipated outcomes of the visit in terms of the personal learning and understanding of the social action and good relations aims of the Future Leaders programme.

The next stage of the partnerships will see young people not only from Luton, but also Scotland Youth participate in on-line workshops facilitated by a number of the Future Leader mentor trainers as part of an international Comparative study of young people's views and understanding of community engagement and peace-building.





Going Global

As part of the ongoing development of the International dimension of the Future Leaders Programme, 3 of our young mentor trainers travelled to Boston Massachusetts, to work with young people and engage with education and youth organisations. During the visit they explored strategies on how young people can actively engage in building good relationships within their communities and across communities as active global citizens. The young leaders (Morgan, Arón and Leah) also met with some of our stateside ambassadors and members of the Co-operation Ireland US Board to talk about their experiences and work with Co-operation Ireland & Future Leaders. A really inspiring meeting for all concerned.

