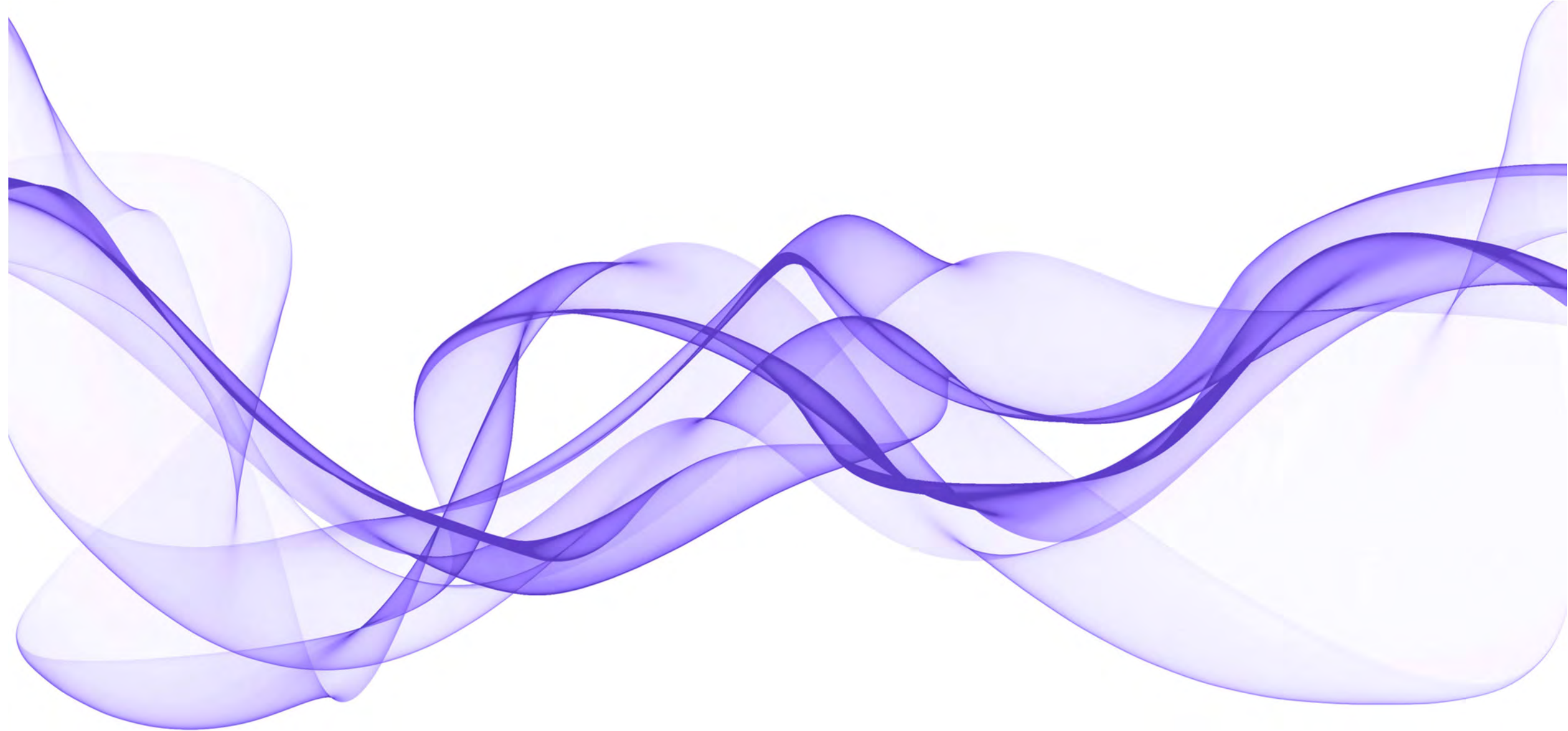




Communities in Transition

Communities in Transition Showcase: Insights and Innovation in Community Practice



The
Executive Office





Communities in Transition

The Communities in Transition project, managed by The Executive Office, is working to build capacity, confidence and resilience in eight areas significantly impacted by 'paramilitarism' and associated criminality. Part of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime, the project is working towards creation of safer communities, more resilient to paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime.

Co-operation Ireland, alongside our academic partners, have been supporting delivery of the Communities in Transition programme throughout its lifetime, including undertaking community engagement, project design, developing research to assist understanding of 'paramilitarism' both at a societal level and in specific local contexts and evaluating the project and facilitating sharing of learning across the project.

Communities in Transition supports a range of projects designed to reduce vulnerabilities and narrow the ground which is exploited by paramilitaries and criminal elements. These projects are designed to support and empower local people to build on community strengths and change their areas for the better.

Since 2019 The Executive Office has supported a range of projects across the eight Communities in Transition target areas around themes of Health and Wellbeing, Community Safety and policing, Restorative Practice, Personal Transition, Young People, Environment and Culture and Community Development. Flexibility of approach was designed into the projects, enabling Communities in Transition delivery partners to work with participants to design and deliver initiatives tailored to local needs within the parameters set by The Executive Office. This has resulted in a wide variety of activities and approaches being delivered across the target areas.

This publication has been produced as an accompanying resource to the Communities in Transition Showcase: Insights and Innovation In Community Practice conference taking place on 20th March 2024.

Each currently active CIT project was invited to submit content for this report. We have curated this content in the pages that follow where you will find descriptions of the organisations involved, activities delivered, impacts, testimonials, and links to other media. We hope this will prove to be a useful resource that will inspire others and enable us all to learn from the Communities in Transition project.



Communities in Transition

Regional Partners

Carrickfergus and Larne

Derry/Londonderry

Drumgask/N Lurgan

East Belfast

North Belfast

North Down

Shankill

West Belfast



The
Executive Office





Communities in Transition

Regional Partners

The Communities in Transition project is supporting four projects delivered on a multi area basis. The STARS project (Striving Towards a Restorative Society) is delivered by Community Restorative Justice Ireland and Northern Ireland Alternatives across all eight CIT areas. The Act Initiative is delivering an ex prisoner support project in Carrickfergus and Larne, North Down, Shankill and East Belfast. Tar Anall is delivering an ex prisoner support project in West Belfast, Lurgan, North Belfast and Derry/Londonderry whilst Tar Isteach is providing employability support to ex prisoners and their families in these same four areas.

STARS

The Striving Towards a Restorative Society (STARS) project is delivered by Community Restorative Justice Ireland in partnership with Northern Ireland Alternatives. Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) is a grassroots community organisation which was founded in 1998 to address issues around informal policing in what would be generally viewed as Catholic Republican Nationalist (CRN) communities using accessible, non-violent, and peaceful means. Since then, CRJI's work has expanded to meet the evolving needs of the areas served and to support and advocate on behalf of residents and vulnerable or at-risk individuals. CRJI has several offices in Belfast in addition to ones in Newry and South Armagh, Derry and Lurgan.'

Description of project

The STARS Project seeks to embed restorative justice practices in non-justice settings. Across the Communities in Transition areas, STARS engages a range of stakeholders in training and mentoring, equipping residents, community workers, statutory organisations, teachers, and more, to contribute towards creating a more restorative society. Training and learning experiences include accredited training (Ulster University, OCN, and Restorative Justice Council approved), bespoke training that covers restorative justice and practices, conflict transformation, mediation and restorative intervention skills, and more. Alongside training, STARS staff mentor participants to help them conceptualise learning, and turn theory into practice to build relationships, maintain community, and repair harm in their context.



STARS



STARS



CRJI Central @CRJicent... · 30/08/2022
 STARS mentor & Mentee completed Skills for Justice Level 4 Diploma In Restorative Practices. Stars supporting restorative skills development, this improves the service we provide @michaeloh67 @endingtheharm
 For further information on our services contact 028 71229845



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CRJI Central @CRJicentral · 17/08/2022
 Derry STARS mentor and mentees completed Skills for Justice level 3 & 4 training. Skilled Restorative practitioners developing their professionalism. @ExecOfficeNI @Legend_dray @cooperationirl @michaeloh67 #starsproject



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CRJI Central @CRJicentr... · 04/07/2022
 STARS Derry mentor recently completed Restorative Practice Facilitator Training Course. Building personal development. @endingtheharm @Legend_dray @michaeloh67



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STARS

Impact

In Phase Two of STARS, over 500 people have been trained in restorative practices. This has involved restorative justice theory and practice, conflict transformation, mediation theory and practice, and more. Alongside these trainings, participants are mentored to consider how the ideas and theories can be actualised in their context to create a more peaceful and just society. Through STARS, tangible impacts include:

Improved community relationships and networks between stakeholders, including PSNI, residents, community organisations, and statutory bodies. Through dialogue circles, training together, and collaborative working, infrastructure allowing constructive conversation has developed, contributing to community cohesion and problem-solving. This has also involved dialogue circles, forums, stakeholder meetings and restorative street work.

Housing organisations such as Connswater Homes and Radius have been equipped to deal with tenant disputes in peaceful ways. Teams have been enabled to de-escalate conflict and find positive solutions to allow residents to maintain their tenancy via providing mediation and implementing restorative practices. Additionally, housing organisations continue to assess their policies and procedures to reflect restorative practices, fostering inclusive, non-punitive, and thriving communities for their residents.



STARS

Impact continued

Schools such as Ashfield Boys, Elmgrove P.S, Kilcooley P.S, Breda Academy, Carrick Academy, Lagan College, Boys & Girls Model, and more have engaged in STARS. Staff have been equipped with restorative practice tools to build relationships, communicate restoratively, and deal with conflict in the classroom environment. Even more impactfully, schools are beginning the journey to creating restorative systems and policies within the school. This encompasses a review of how discipline is administered, including detentions and suspensions, and prioritises a high level of support for young people alongside a high level of accountability and challenge for behaviour without a focus on punishment. So far, schools have found the implementation of restorative practices transformational in relationships with young people, and they assert there is a long way to go.

Through STARS, a range of training is available to participants. This includes an accredited Ulster University certificate in restorative practice, OCN levels one to three in restorative practice, and non-accredited bespoke training. Additional training has included mediation theory and practice, restorative street work training, conflict transformation and restorative justice training, and more.

A key success of the STARS Project has been the collaborative working alongside other CIT initiatives. Working alongside SAFE, DARE, Extern, ACT and others, STARS has been able to complement the positive work accomplished by these projects.



STARS

Testimonials

"As I said we are at the beginning of the journey, but we are already seeing the benefits of this practice."

Vice Principal Boys High School

"Through STARS, our whole staff team has been trained in restorative practice. This allows us to be on the same page and have a shared ethos and language when interacting with tenants and dealing with disputes. Several staff have completed their level three in Mediation Theory and Practice, allowing us to professionally and effectively handle disagreements with tenants and find constructive solutions."

Housing Manager

"For me, STARS and restorative practices not only helps me with my role in supporting women in the community, but it has changed how my family interact and deal with issues. It has allowed us to have challenging conversations in a helpful way and not let it escalate. It's been great with working in the community, too."

ACT Women s Worker

"After this training I feel more comfortable dealing with community issues. As a volunteer for Greenisland Community Council, I often get called to support in difficult situations. I feel like I have the confidence to handle these situations when they come up now."

Greenisland Community Council Volunteer

"STARS in Larne and Carrick has been a fantastic resource for me and my team. The restorative street work teams at the weekends help us address low-level ASB and community issues. They are always available to help with issues as they arise. Moreover, the neighbourhood teams now have great working relationships with residents and community groups in areas that have historically held some suspicion or hostility towards PSNI."

PSNI Inspector



STARS

Continuation of CIT

Residents engaged in each area are local advocates for restorative justice, continuing to shift people away from traditional means of community justice in NI. With large numbers of community stakeholders re-conceptualising what justice is and what shape justice takes in communities, restorative justice provides a framework and a mechanism to repair harm for communities traditionally impacted by paramilitarism. If STARS continues, the potential to continue creating networks of people who believe in repairing harm peacefully and restoring relationships has the scope to create a critical mass, and therefore redundancy, in the role of paramilitaries in dealing with justice in the CIT areas.

Embedding restorative justice in communities, and therefore providing relevant stakeholders with the skills to practice RJ effectively, undoubtedly yields economic benefits for societies. The cost of each crime, police response, arrest, paramilitary exclusion or attack is exponentially more than the cost of developing a skilled network of restorative practitioners within communities. The financial case is indisputable.

As STARS approaches its fourth year, there is still appetite and scope in communities for stakeholders to continue their restorative journey, and for those not yet engaged to begin their learning experience.

Restorative practice demonstrably transforms organisational culture. As schools, housing, policing, churches, and more consider how to create a more respectful, peaceful, accessible, and person-centred structure, society as a whole benefits. As organisations and institutions commit to developing cultures of collaboration, inclusivity, and respect, as well as honesty, constructive challenge, and accountability, individuals thrive



Tar Anall

Tar Anall seeks to offer support and services to empower and provide pre-employment opportunities, education qualification and personal development opportunities for republican ex-prisoners and their families.

We advocate on behalf of the republican ex-prisoner community who continue to face discrimination and legal barriers to full and equal citizenship.

Description of Project

Tar Anall as party of the Coiste consortium are directly responsible for supporting political ex-prisoners across the four CIT areas, (Derry,Lurgan,West and North Belfast), we have an already detailed understanding of the needs and aspirations of the political ex-prisoner community. This knowledge was reinforced through the findings of a recent 'Needs Analysis' study of the republican political ex-prisoners needs and requirements carried out by the consortium and partner organisation. We understand the issues which confront former political prisoners and their families in their everyday lives. And due to our ongoing engagement and interaction with area based republican political ex-prisoner organizations we connect directly to individual political ex-prisoners and their families on a host of issues. In doing so, offering practical support, advice and advocacy on matters which negatively affect their everyday lives. We aim to intensify this engagement through our already established support services and partnership networks, and outreach to those who are socially and politically isolated.

In the process we will raise awareness of relevant opportunities available through CIT to the Political Ex-Prisoner community and their families, providing them with the opportunity to design a bespoke action plan with mentoring support suited to their needs, connecting them to Education and Training opportunities with practical and life changing outcomes. The practical steps to achieve this will be localised information sessions, direct one to one engagement, use of our existing support and advocacy services under Phase 1 of CIT and through existing partnerships with other established community organisation in all four CIT areas, encouraging them to signposting political ex-prisoners and to the Coiste consortium.



Tar Anall



Tar Anall

Testimonials

“I had given up hope of ever finding a job as I didn’t have any qualifications or training. I am now in full time employment in a job that I love and have hope for the future.”

PXP CIT Participant West Belfast

“I was never confident enough in finding employment to really try. But with the training I got and with the support of my mentor I am now working full time.”

PXP CIT Participant Derry

“I have been in and out of employment my whole life, but with the training and support I have received I have found a job that I love in a sector that I have always enjoyed and I’m confident that I will be here for the foreseeable future.”

PXP CIT Participant Lurgan

“I had no hope of ever finding work, I was stuck in a rut. But after enrolling in my course and all the additional help I received from my mentor I am actively looking for a job and I’m confident I will find something in the near future.”

PXP CIT Participant North Belfast

“I am the son of a Political Ex-Prisoner. Before I enrolled in Tar Anall’s CIT programme I had no desire to pursue a job in my desired field as I didn’t possess the training needed. Thanks to Tar Anall’s CIT programme and the support I received from my mentor I have been able to gain the relevant training needed and also further my job search skills, that has helped me gain employment in micro tik cable installation.”

PXP CIT Participant West Belfast



Tar Anall

Impact

The impact of the CIT programme can be clearly seen through the employment gained by participants and the barriers they have overcome to achieve their goals. There have been 170 people involved in the Project over 2 years, before the commencement of the CIT project all participants were unemployed or in employment with zero hours contracts. Following the CIT programme 98% of participants have gained full time employment and the remaining participants are actively seeking employment.

Participants have also actively been involved in barriers to employment training to overcome any misgivings they had in regards to employment. This training included:

Soft Skills Training CV

Skills and Support

Interview Techniques

Personal and Attitudinal

Life Skills Training

Labour Engagement

Social Enterprise

Promoting Lawfulness

Job Search Skills



Tar Anall

Continuation of CIT

It is our view, that the programmes and activities under CIT, if resourced adequately, can continue to go some way to assist in convincing political ex-prisoners and their family members that they too have an equal stake in society. The provision of a dedicated support services and the development of a bespoke training and action plans linked to individuals needs and requirements to include training and education, can help break the cycle of disillusionment, exclusion, inequality and disempowerment experienced by the political ex-prisoners and family members.

This outcome has undoubtedly begun a process of reconciliation and relationship building, by adopting an inclusive approach to contact and dialogue and encouraging the political ex-prisoner's constituency at present not engaged, to participate in peace building and peace maintenance initiatives.

We now witness those who were disengaged not only political but from their community, reengaging in a positive and constructive manner.

Tar Isteach

Description of Project

Tar Isteach is a community-based organisation that provides family support services and assistance in response to issues of poverty, disadvantage, ill health, exclusion, and isolation. This includes Welfare Rights/Benefits Advice, Counselling and Emotional Support, youth support, and support into training, education, and employment. The group is committed to community development, promoting peace and conflict transformation, improving cross community working relationships, equality, inclusion, and social justice for all. It advocates, lobbies and campaigns on issues of equality and inclusion for political ex-prisoners and their families, including legacy issues of intergenerational discriminations.



Tar Isteach



Tar Isteach

Testimonials

Welfare Rights Service Use Family Member

"We cannot express enough our gratitude for (my brother's) his advisor bringing all the services together to ensure the next chapter of his life can be as manageable as possible. We are less stressed, and our anxiety has been diminished. We also know we have somewhere to go when we need support, which is a further reassurance to our own emotional health and wellbeing. "

Participant

"Before I enrolled in the Tar Anall programme I thought my opportunities to reach my full potential were limited and the outlook for the future was bleak. Once I was enrolled in CIT, I became eager and motivated to learn and gain the qualification I needed. I got on well with the other learners and tutors and I took my lead and direction from my tutor. As a result of our weekly contacts my general attitude improved, and I felt more positive about the future."

Participant

"To sustain the progress and enable me to truly grasp the opportunity open to me, I was introduced to a number of potential employers from the transport industry. All were keen to provide me with employment opportunities on gaining the necessary qualification. My progress is continuing, and I am looking forward to the next stage in my career development."



Tar Isteach

Continuation of CIT

The continuation of the CIT (Political Ex-Prisoner Community Integration and Transformation) Programme is advocated based on several key reasons. Continuing the programme is an opportunity to expand on the positive outcomes achieved so far, ensuring that the gains made are not lost.

The geographical coverage of the programme should be extended into those areas not currently provided for through the CIT programme, areas where significant political ex-prisoner populations reside. Where we fail to address this need, we are in danger of perpetuating the feeling of abandonment and isolation in those areas not catered for under the present CIT structure.

A fully resourced and dedicated Family Outreach and Welfare Assistance would greatly benefit the Republican ex-prisoner community. This would recognize the importance of supporting not only the individuals directly affected but also their families.

There is also a need to investigate and address the issue of intergenerational trauma among the children and grandchildren of political ex-prisoners.

The continuation and expansion of the CIT Programme are essential for preventing feelings of abandonment and isolation within sections of the political ex-prisoner community. Failing to continue the programme or to address the needs of those not currently covered by the program is seen as a risk of perpetuating these negative feelings.

In summary, the argument for the continuation of the CIT Programme is grounded in building on success, expanding services, addressing broader community needs, and preventing the perpetuation of negative feelings within the political ex-prisoner.





Communities in Transition

Carrickfergus and Larne

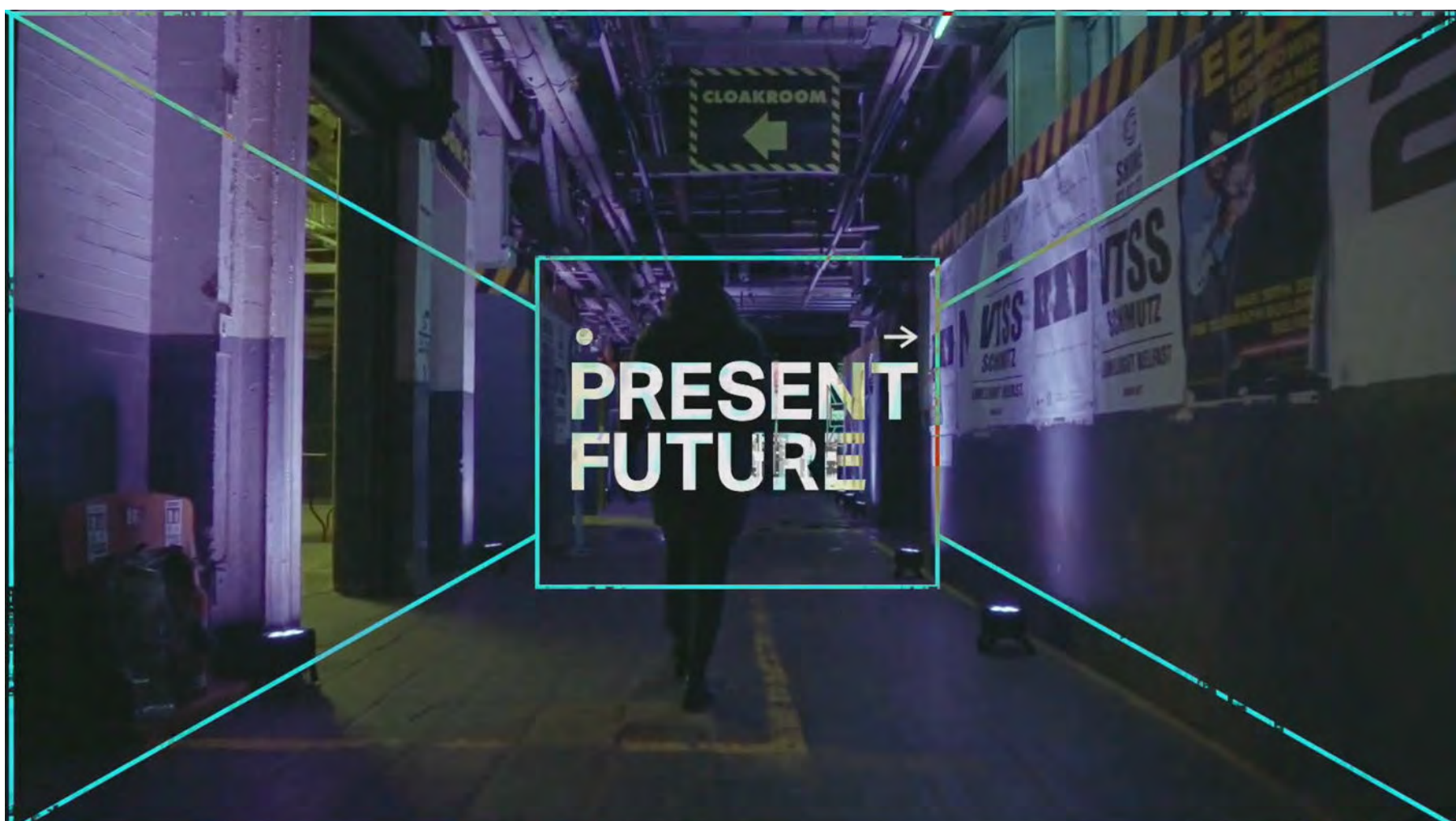
The Communities in Transition project is supporting six area specific projects in Carrickfergus and Larne. Wonder Arts are currently delivering projects relating to Employability, Capacity Building, Raising Aspirations, Community Safety and Culture and Identity. Extern are delivering a Health and Wellbeing project.

Carrickfergus and Larne Wonder Arts

Wonder Arts and Consultancy Ltd provides community development, cultural development and project management support to communities across Northern Ireland. The organisation currently delivers 5 of the Communities in Transition contracts in Carrickfergus and Larne.

Description of the Project

Wonder Arts currently delivers the Policing and Community Safety, Capacity Building, Culture and Identity, Employability and Raising Aspirations contracts in Carrickfergus and Larne. Together these projects have delivered a wide range of activities and interventions including re-imagining, youth outreach and development, education support, employability support, women's programmes, substance and alcohol misuse programmes and targeted interventions.



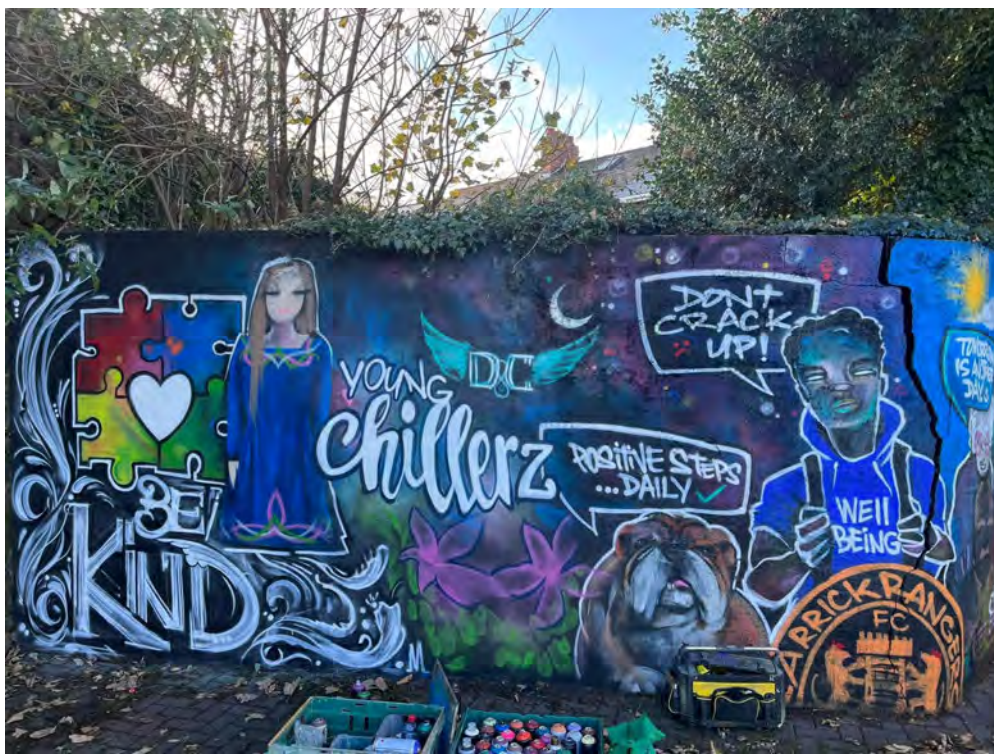
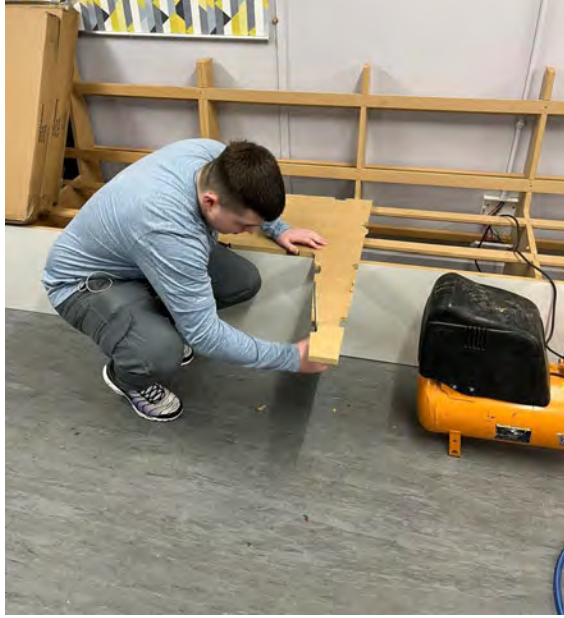
Carrickfergus and Larne Wonder Arts



Testimonials



Carrickfergus and Larne Wonder Arts



Carrickfergus and Larne Wonder Arts

Continuation of CIT

It is important that the programme continues because there remains scepticism in communities that funding and investment is not long term meaning that progress can be quickly lost. The programme has made a major impact in how it has built the capacity of local organisations and supported new networks, and without ongoing investment the partnership working and collaboration will lose momentum and the potential for change and transformation will not be realised. The programme has been successful in building the confidence of communities to engage with conflict transformation and addressing the legacy of the conflict and there remain long-term issues in both towns and for these to be fully addressed continued investment is essential. The flexibility and responsiveness of the programme to local needs and emerging issues has been critical to its success and it is important that this approach continues.



Communities in Transition

Derry/Londonderry

The Communities in Transition project is supporting two area specific projects in the Creggan and Brandywell areas of Derry/Londonderry. The Old Library Trust is delivering a Health and Wellbeing project, whilst the Gasyard Walled Feile are delivering a Culture and Identity

Old Library Trust

The Old Library Trust is a registered charity that has adopted a community development approach to engage people in health improvement initiatives, early year's development, and community healing through partnership with statutory and voluntary service providers. Our organisation is committed to improving community health, addressing local needs, building confidence, and developing knowledge and skills to support people to take greater responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

Description of Project

The Communities in Transition project delivered by the Old Library Trust, in partnership with the Bogside and Brandywell Health Forum, is a health and wellbeing project, which targets individuals from the Creggan and Brandywell area who experience a wide range of health and wellbeing issues as a result of living in a community with high levels of paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime. Our aim is to foster positive change in the form of increased community activity, overall community capacity, and improved individual health and wellbeing in the Creggan and Brandywell areas of the Derry/ Londonderry CIT Area.



Old Library Trust

Continuation of CIT

Our CIT project has become an essential fabric to our organisation and our local community. This project is vital for our local community, given its profound impact on addressing challenging topics like addiction and misuse. At the heart of the project's success lies the pivotal role of mentors, who serve as key supports for individuals engaging in the program. These mentors provide personalized guidance, encouragement, and a listening ear, helping participants navigate through obstacles and stay motivated on their journey towards improved health and wellbeing. Through the project, our community has experienced significant positive changes, (as reported in evaluations). Participants have benefitted from a sense of belonging and connection cultivated by the mentorship aspect of the program. Feeling supported and understood, individuals are more willing to engage in the project's activities, leading to increased participation and collaboration within the community. The project's holistic approach addresses not only physical health but also mental and emotional wellbeing. By tackling challenging topics head-on, such as addiction and misuse, the project provides comprehensive support and resources to participants. This proactive approach serves as a preventive measure against the negative consequences of such issues, empowering individuals to make informed choices and adopt healthier lifestyles. Moreover, the project plays a crucial role in reducing stigma and discrimination associated with addiction and misuse. Through education and awareness-raising efforts, the project promotes empathy, understanding, and acceptance within the community. By openly discussing these topics and providing a platform for dialogue, the project helps break down barriers and encourages individuals to seek support without fear of judgment.



Gasyard Wall Féile

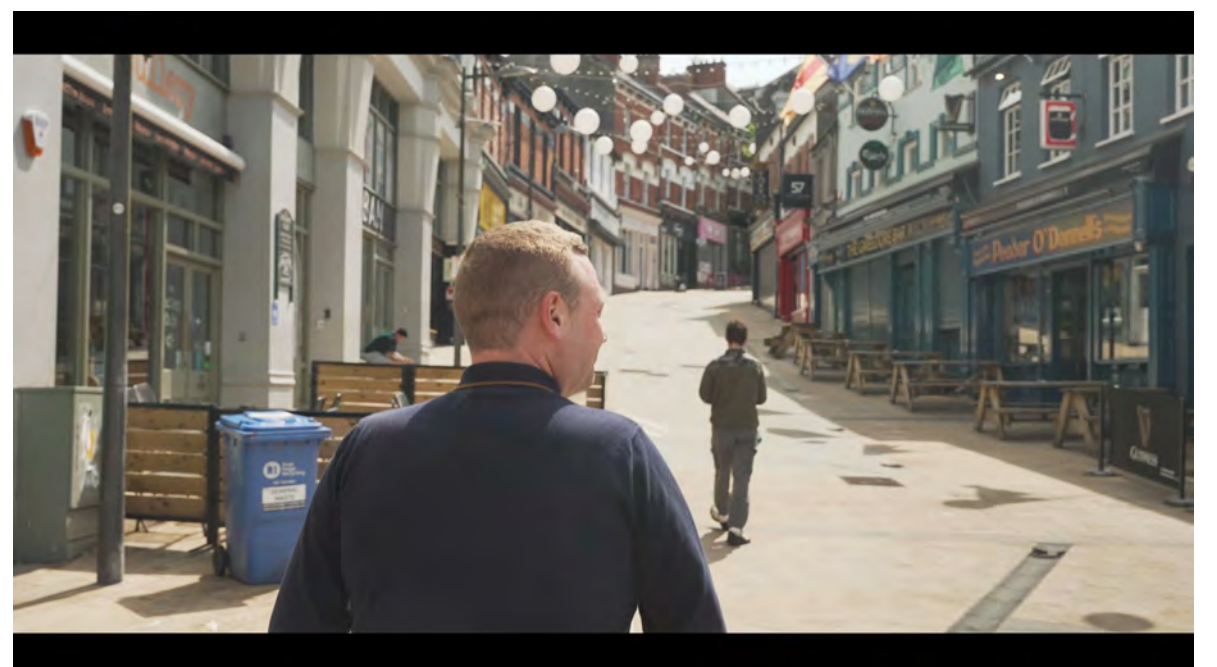
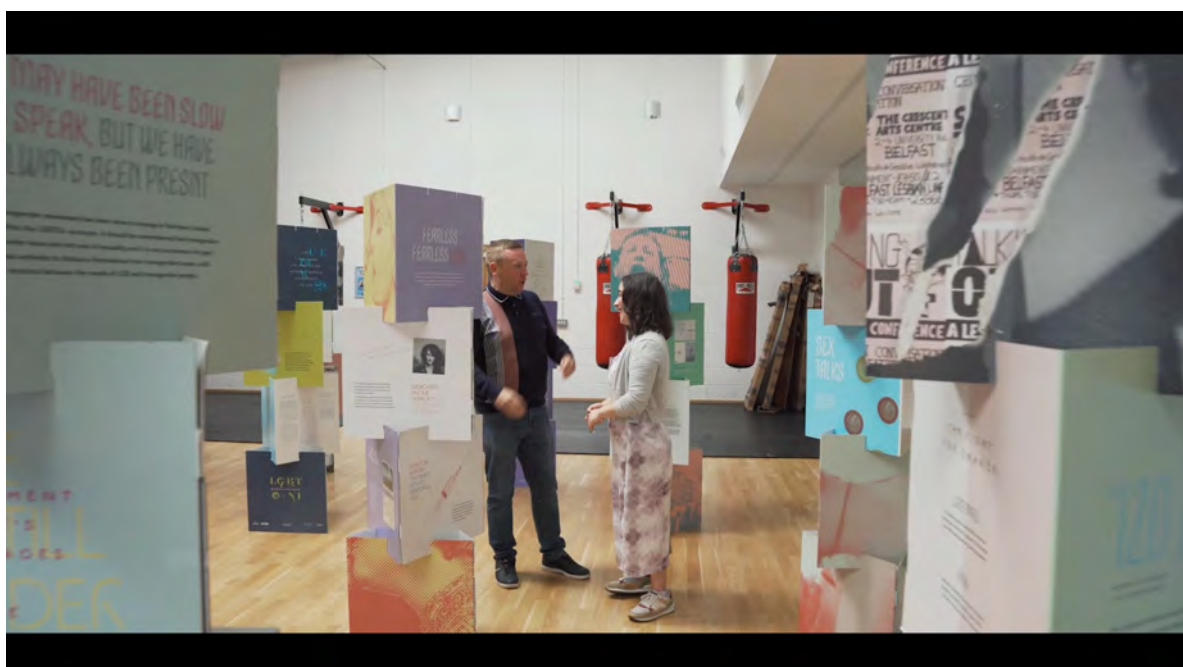
Gasyard Wall Féile is a community arts organisation based in the Creggan, Bogside and Brandywell neighbourhoods of Derry. The success of Féile over the last 32 years is due to the commitment of a multitude of groups, initiatives, residents and volunteers who come together to shape and manage the various programmes and events. As well as delivering the annual Féile, the biggest community arts festival in the North West, Féile delivers multiple year-round programmes including a Communities In Transition Culture & Identity programme in Creggan/Brandywell.

Description of Project

As part of the Communities In Transition initiative, Féile have been delivering a Culture & Identity project in the Creggan & Brandywell neighbourhoods of Derry, developing a number of new cultural events for the Creggan and Brandywell neighbourhoods that have been positive celebrations of the culture of and everything that is great about the Creggan neighbourhoods, sending out a positive image of the community and its strength and resilience to the wider region. Events and initiatives have included street art initiative 'Graffiti On The Walls', Bealtaine and Sanctuary which addressed the contentious bonfire issue in the area using fire and parading in a positive manner, film projects celebrating the area's sporting heritage, theatre productions celebrated 75 years of the Creggan estate and a new stage production celebrating the importance of Derry City FC to the area and the dangers associated with hooliganism



Gasyard Wall Féile



Gasyard Wall Féile

Videos

Bealtaine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYgbpR2blyk&t=519s>

Rath Mór Warriors – Release Your Inner Warrior

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTzcMk3Kags&t=881s>

Be Yourself? LGBTQIA+ Perspectives in Derry in 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oanj5UL8218&t=279s>

Trojans: Unus Sumus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgzgRP4JPp0&t=141s>

Street Art Festival

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPTLdn-lxSc>

Sanctuary

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_Gp9_7n4UU&t=661s

A Green Hill Far Away

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLm6HparRpw&t=916s>



Gasyard Wall Féile

Impact

Often the only stories that emerge in the press about the Creggan and Brandywell neighbourhoods are negative. The programme has enabled and empowered residents / communities / organisations to tell a positive story of Catholic Nationalist Republican (CNR) culture and tradition and explore positive ways of celebrating their culture. Events are diversionary in nature, build community capacity and be positive celebrations of culture and celebrate everything that is great about the Brandywell and Creggan neighbourhoods, sending out a positive image of the community and its strength and resilience to the wider region. Féile events shine a positive light on the people and groups that make these neighbourhoods such great places to live, work, play and visit. This project has attracted extensive positive media coverage of the area on TV, Radio, Print and web based media, highlighting the talent and skills of participants, showcasing the collaborative work of groups and individuals in the area, building a more resilient, confident community emerging from Creggan and the Brandywell, undermining the legitimacy and need for paramilitaries. The success of our Communities in Transition programme has seen Féile work closer than ever with groups and organisations across the Brandywell and Creggan neighbourhoods enabling Féile to increase the reach and success of our various programmes. Initiatives like the Creggan Forum have been really helpful in enabling Féile to highlight the work we do to others and also explore ways to work together with partner organisations and use arts & culture to address current and contentious issues in the area.



Gasyard Wall Féile

Testimonials

Bealtaine

"Well done fantastic work and great community spirit."

"Thank you for highlighting and promoting all that is good and positive about Creggan."

"Great for Creggan and all the young people, let's hope the press were all over this positive Creggan story."

Street Art Project

"It has been a privilege to be part of this project and a great opportunity to spread our school motto of 'Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day.' Thank you Féile Derry for brightening up our community with such positive messages and images."

"Absolutely amazing well done children about time our communities are shown in good news media instead of all the doom and gloom our City is an amazing place to live."

"Amazing stuff we all love Creggan."

"Brilliant it's great to see the kids the next generation take such pride in their area. Other areas should follow this example."

'Passed this past night. Just wow!'"

Sanctuary

"Amazing experience. To be able to come from Creggan and work on a project like this was unbelievable. I never would have thought I would work on something like this. I learned so much in just 5 days and I have been offered the chance of further training and work with one of the companies involved in the project. "

"Taking part in this project was my first time leaving Ireland, being on a plane, being away from home. I got the chance to learn new skills, meet new people. It was a great experience."



Gasyard Wall Féile

The CIT area of Creggan and Brandywell is one of the most deprived areas in the North of Ireland, falling within the Triax Neighbourhood Renewal area & is within the top 2% most deprived with regards multiple deprivation. While Féile's CIT project has been very successful, there continues to be paramilitary activity in the area. The Brandywell and Creggan neighbourhoods continue to be portrayed in the media as dissident republican strongholds. There has been punishment-style shootings, riots following police raids, dissident parades/shows of strength, graffiti etc. Worryingly, the age group of those rioting is getting younger, with children as young as eight involved. There is also increasing numbers of children and young people in the area that are refusing to attend school, disruptive at school and are often wandering the streets during school time and are at risk of exploitation, getting involved in criminality / paramilitary activity.

Among the other issues that the area continues to face are:

- 1) The legacy of the conflict continues to have negative consequences
- 2) Perceived lack of acceptance for the police
- 3) Perceived community profiling by police
- 4) Neighbourhoods portrayed as 'no-go' areas for police.
- 5) Paramilitary graffiti, threats & emblems
- 6) Anti-social behaviour / destruction to property
- 7) Stereotyping and misrepresentation of young people
- 8) High levels of youth unemployment with those affected often vulnerable to control by paramilitaries
- 9) Rising concerns about polysubstance use. The restricted movement of people due to the Covid 19 pandemic has heightened sedentary lifestyles, increased the misuse of drugs and alcohol and increased incidents of domestic violence across the area.

Féile's Communities in Transition project will not be the magic wand to solve all the issues that neighbourhoods like Creggan and Brandywell face. However, we are sure that our Culture & Identity programme provides the opportunity for our community to celebrate our culture in a positive way, strengthens local networks, increases local skills and expertise, increases community voice, and helps build a more resilient, confident community undermining the legitimacy and need for paramilitaries in the future. Before the CIT programme in the area, there was minimal funding





Communities in Transition

Drumgask/North Lurgan

The Communities in Transition project is supporting two area specific projects in Drumgask and North Lurgan, a Community Safety and Policing Project delivered by Community Restorative Justice Ireland and a Health and Wellbeing Project delivered by Copius Consulting.

CRJI Lurgan

Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) is a grassroots community organisation which was founded in 1998 to address issues around informal policing in what would be generally viewed as Catholic Republican Nationalist (CRN) communities using accessible, non-violent, and peaceful means. Since then, CRJI's work has expanded to meet the evolving needs of the areas served and to support and advocate on behalf of residents and vulnerable or at-risk individuals. CRJI has several offices in Belfast in addition to ones in Newry and South Armagh, Derry and Lurgan.

The Community safety project in North Lurgan and Drumgask is working to improve community safety through development of a community safety forum, capacity building of volunteers, relationship building between the local community and PSNI and community safety interventions.

There has been a strong focus on addressing issues of substance misuse in the Lurgan/Drumgask area, including distribution of Vape Testing kits and the development of the CLASS guide. This app is proving to be a great guide for parents and children around drugs, the dangers of them (for the children) what they look like and the nicknames of them (for the parents).





Communities in Transition

East Belfast

The Communities in Transition project is supporting four area specific projects in The Mount and Ballymacarrett areas of East Belfast. A Health and Wellbeing project delivered by East Belfast Community Development Agency, a Community Safety and Policing project and Raising Aspirations project delivered by Northern Ireland Alternatives and a Culture and Identity project delivered by Ballymac Friendship Trust.

East Belfast NI Alternatives SAFE

Northern Ireland Alternatives is a government-accredited community based restorative justice organisation that aims to promote and develop non-violent community responses to issues of crime and anti-social behaviour. Alternatives adopts a holistic approach to supporting victims, offenders and the community by providing a wide range of services & programmes designed to meet the needs of all parties.

Description of Project

SAFE is a community safety and policing project in East Belfast focusing on identifying community safety issues, working alongside residents, partners and others to generate and implement restorative initiatives. SAFE works with community advocates to build a safer and more hopeful communities.



East Belfast

NI Alternatives SAFE

Testimonials

"Court case coming up here in the next couple days for sentencing, pleading guilty to concern to supply class A and B drugs along with criminal property. Been looking at the badness that has been done. MOVE came at very helpful time, I wasn't sure what way I wanted to go. I wanted to give back to others who have similiar issues and make the same mistakes. To be honest with you mate, when MOVE happened, hearing Paul Reids story with the same background going through the same battles of race, hate and violence. If I'm not going to do anything about it now, there's no way I'll be able to do it."

Continuation of CIT

When reflecting on community restorative justice and transitioning members of the community away from criminality, relationships are critical. As we have established relationships of trust with those members of the community, we are in a position to apply a high level of challenge and a high level of support. This work alongside the punitive approach of the judicial system is the long way round of transitioning out of criminality but it takes time.



East Belfast

NI Alternatives - DARE

'Northern Ireland Alternatives is a government-accredited community based restorative justice organisation that aims to promote and develop non-violent community responses to issues of crime and anti-social behaviour. Alternatives adopts a holistic approach to supporting victims, offenders and the community by providing a wide range of services & programmes designed to meet the needs of all parties.'

Description of Project

DARE stands for Dream, Achieve, Respect, Engage and is focused on Raising Aspirations of young people in East Belfast aged between 4-16.

The project has included largely school-based work with a combination of whole class interventions as well as individual support. DARE has also supported young people in the community. Projects have included STEM based work, visits to Further Education colleges, small and large scale art projects, school reimaging (including art pieces, gardening and nature focused work), health and fitness programmes, mental health support, video and photography projects, careers days, OCN delivery, teambuilding sessions, summer schemes, podcast recording, animation project, life skills classes, ASB interventions, intergenerational projects, education and career support and more. Support has also been provided to parents through delivering needs based training, life skills classes such as cookery and ESOL, sensory box workshops and through our school coffee morning roadshows. Junior and senior youth steering groups have assisted staff in shaping DARE and providing the most appropriate support to participants.

We have also partnered with different youth organisations to deliver programmes which has allowed us to increase capacity of delivery to a wide range of young people



East Belfast NI Alternatives - DARE

Testimonials

"All of the children have thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and have greatly benefitted from the programme. Teachers have expressed how their children are now more likely to have a go at things and are equipped better to deal with small friendship disputes. DARE staff have built an excellent rapport with teachers and children alike and they are a huge asset to our school." **Senior Teacher, Elmgrove Primary**

"DARE has been brilliant for my child, she has got more confident in herself and she loves being part of the project. It's let her try new things she wouldn't have done before."

Parent

"DARE has allowed us to form strong links with children, families and a range of organisations in East Belfast. A continuation would allow us to continue this positive work, strengthening these relationships and also allowing more young people the chance to be involved with our programmes. Aspiration raising work takes time and a continuation of funding would help young people to build more confidence and realise their own strengths, skills and abilities. We have plans to continue to strengthen relationships between parents and education, recognising the connection between poor achievement in education and the value placed on this at home. We are aiming to empower not only young people but also their parents and families. The project has now been established and to be able to widen our reach and provide continuity in the lives of children in the area would be beneficial to the whole community."



East Belfast

NI Alternatives - DARE

Impact

Support for DARE has allowed us to have, both on individuals and the community, has been immense. DARE has given us the opportunities to form so many positive relationships with young people, parents, schools and community groups. Some of the DARE projects have had a more material impact on the community, such as the murals in Nettlefield multisport pitch, Breda Academy, Elmgrove Primary and Harding Memorial Integrated Primary, as well as gardening projects in Breda Academy and Elmgrove. DARE has given participants an opportunity to discover new skills as well as developing existing ones, such as working in a team, presenting to others, creating new products, and facing fears. Throughout DARE, we have tried to introduce new experiences to the participants, such as trips to tech workshops, using STEM equipment, trying new activities including bouldering and American football, DJ workshops, and trips to the Mourne. School based programmes have all been bespoke, designed alongside the staff who know their children and young people best, which has led to better engagement and impact on both the participants and the schools. DARE has enhanced existing work in the community, partnering with organisations such as Nettlefield Multisport Facility, Bloomfield Community Association and Willowfield Parish Community Association



East Belfast NI Alternatives - DARE

Continuation of CIT

DARE has allowed us to form strong links with children, families and a range of organisations in East Belfast. A continuation would allow us to continue this positive work, strengthening these relationships and also allowing more young people the chance to be involved with our programmes. Aspiration raising work takes time and a continuation of funding would help young people to build more confidence and realise their own strengths, skills and abilities. We have plans to continue to strengthen relationships between parents and education, recognising the connection between poor achievement in education and the value placed on this at home. We are aiming to empower not only young people but also their parents and families. The project has now been established and to be able to widen our reach and provide continuity in the lives of children in the area would be beneficial to the whole community.

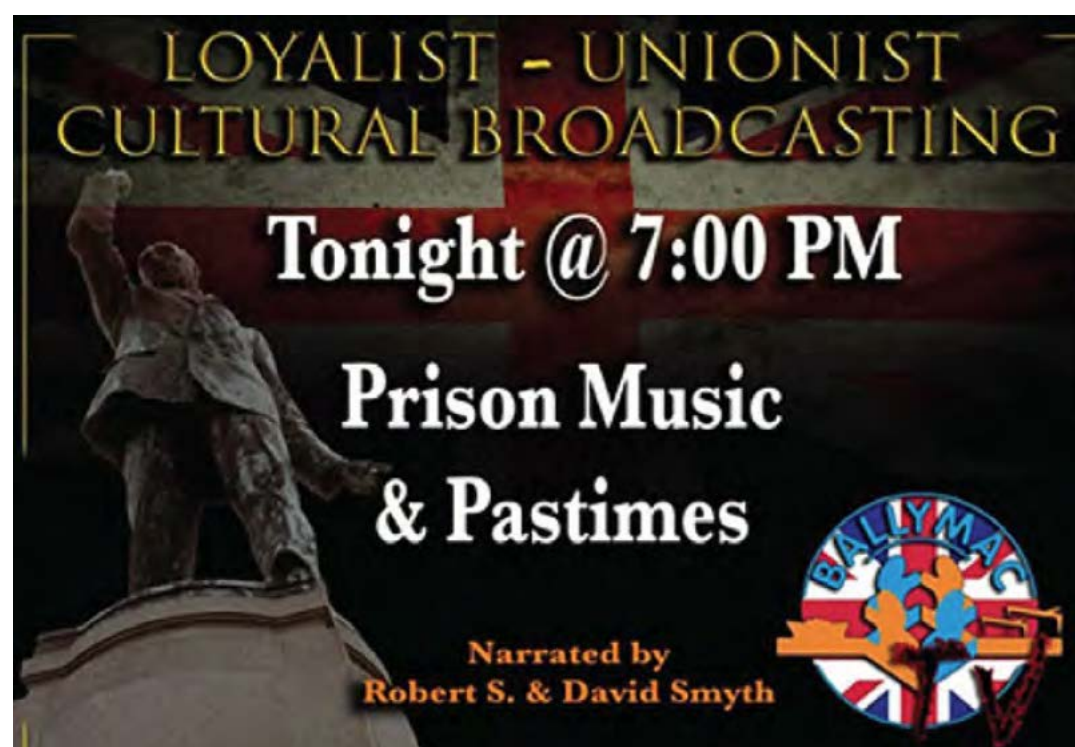


East Belfast Ballymac Friendship Trust

Ballymac Friendship Trust works throughout East Belfast with other agencies to enhance the lives of the local community. We do this by working with various statutory, quasi-statutory and community organisations to deliver numerous interventions working particularly with young people at risk of offending, women and ex-offenders.

Description of Project

The East Belfast Culture and Identity project aimed to use artistic and creative ways to explore the role of loyalism in the modern day. We delivered a number of different strands which included videos, plays, workshops, museum exhibits, ex-prisoner art as well as educational visits throughout the UK and Ireland.



East Belfast Ballymac Friendship Trust



Irish St. Community Centre
Waterside, Londonderry
in Association with
Ballymac Centre
Presents

LOYALISM IN DEVELOPMENT

HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS
FROM 50 YEARS OF CONFLICT
ONE OF THE LARGEST COLLECTIONS OF CONFLICT
MEMORABILIA EVER DISPLAYED TOGETHER

SATURDAY 26th JUNE
12pm - 4pm
IRISH STREET COMMUNITY CENTRE
Waterside, Londonderry

NO TICKETS REQUIRED
ALL WELCOME

Guest Flute Band will be in attendance & playing on the day



East Belfast Ballymac Friendship Trust

Testimonials

"This programme has reconnected me with my community in a positive way." – **Male prisoner.** –

"My physical and mental health have improved a lot since coming on board." **Female Resident** –

"Finally we are getting the voice we deserve' – Male Resident. 'I have met so many new friends – I love it!'"
Female Resident

"I have learnt so much, I have met so many people of all ages and visited other communities' **Female Resident**

"Since being released from prison I have become more and more isolated, feeling that the sacrifices my family and I made were being hijacked by the local hoods. I have loved meeting up with people that have gone through similar experiences and feel so much more connected with society generally."
Male prisoner.



East Belfast

Ballymac Friendship Trust

Impact

We had huge feedback from the videos and exhibitions that we produced with views in the multiple thousands. These interventions empowered the participants, becoming more confident in their standing in the community and the stories they were trying to tell. The loyalist voice has historically been much undervalued. This programme enabled a community to come together to tell the story of how their lives were impacted by the troubles and to show how they have emerged from these times. As a direct result of this programme the women involved have started up their own group that meet regularly and have recently been successful in securing significant funding through The Shared Ireland Fund, enabling them to work with similar groups from County Clare and Galway. The ex-prisoners too have started their own group offering support to other ex-prisoners as well as working with young people deemed at risk. The museum also is now examining options to create a permanent home for the exhibition. The programme can also lay claim to playing a significant part in the recent decision by the UVF to stand down the East Belfast leadership who had been involved in money laundering, drug dealing, loan sharking and general intimidation of the local population.



East Belfast Ballymac Friendship Trust

Continuation of CIT

Throughout history we have seen that if there is a vacuum in an area in terms of support and positive role models then the malevolent influences flourish. There is no doubt that this was a large reason why East Belfast became a hotspot for intra community violence and criminality. With the recent changes that have happened within the criminal grouping working under the banner of the UVF we now have a once in a generation opportunity to affect positive change within the area. In order to make sure that change happens with the approval of the community then the community must play a major part in the decision making and the delivery of targeted interventions when required. It would be tragic if we do not continue and develop this programme in order to bring meaningful change to the area.



East Belfast Community Development Agency

East Belfast Community Development Agency is the 'umbrella organisation' supporting community development in East Belfast. Our membership is made up of community groups drawn from the local area. It is representative of a broad range of interests and needs within communities and encompasses a variety of groups, including local residents' associations, faith-based organisations, sports clubs, older people's projects and men's and women's groups. EBCDA's mission is to provide resources, support and capacity building programmes for community groups that are based on partnership, equal opportunities and sustainable outcomes.

Description of Project

EBCDA designed and delivered a Health & Wellbeing project that addressed the needs and issues facing the community in the East Belfast CiT area. This included:

- raising awareness of existing relevant health and wellbeing support services available
- Improve the health and wellbeing of the local community
- Increase individual and community resilience and wellbeing

The work included training, bespoke wellbeing workshops, programme to reach men and women, develop a Chatty bench 3 year programme with community organisations.



East Belfast Community Development Agency



East Belfast Community Development Agency



Impact

We believe the project has had a huge impact on the participants, from community workers improving their wellbeing via Chatty Bench work to men discovering a purpose to keep living and believing in themselves again.

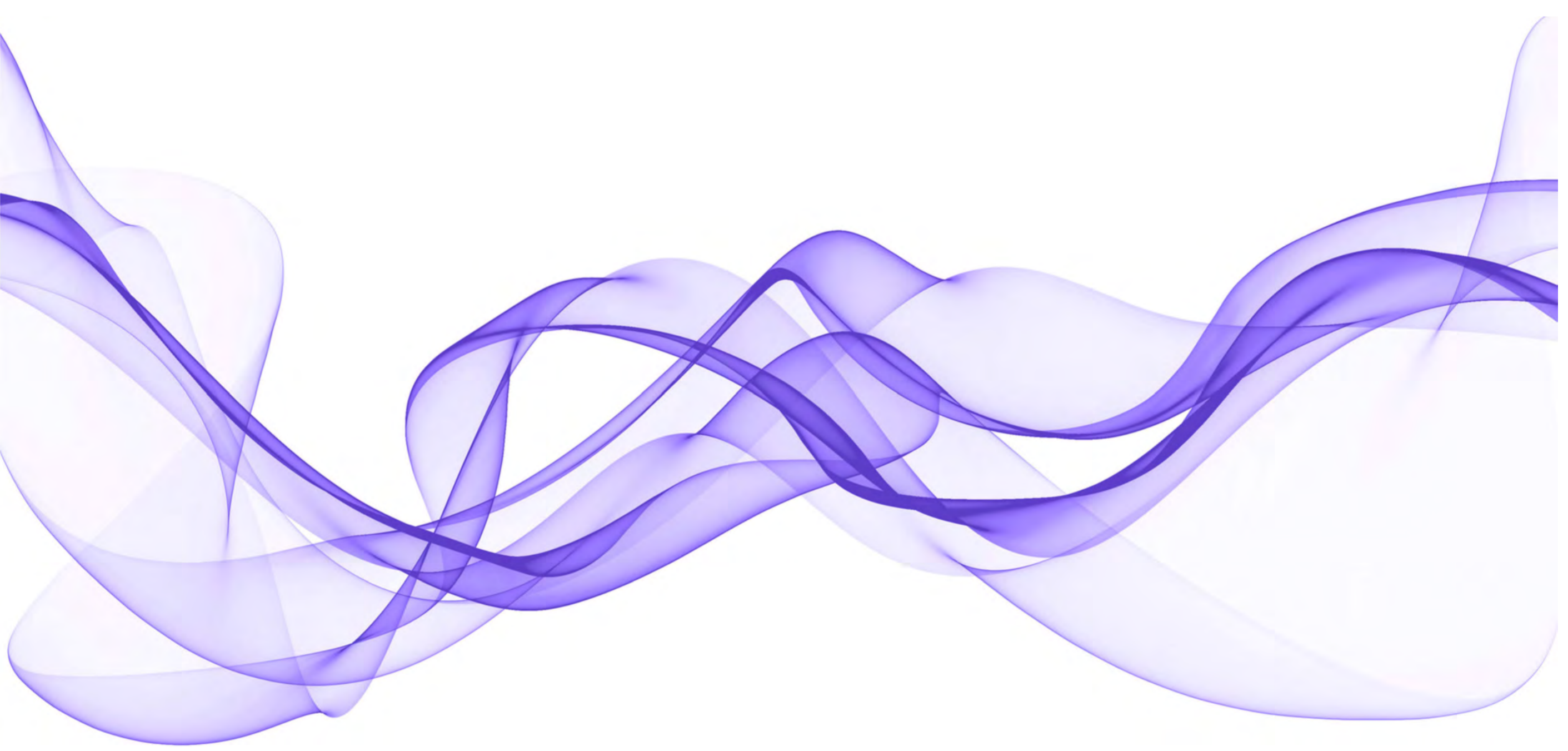




Communities in Transition

North Belfast

The Communities in Transition project is supporting three area specific projects in New Lodge and Ardoyne areas of North Belfast. A Health and Wellbeing project delivered by Ashton Community Trust, a Community Safety and Policing project delivered by Community Restorative Justice Ireland and an Employability project delivered by BCT NI.



The
Executive Office



Ashton Community Trust

Ashton Community Trust is a community-based charity established in 1992 by local people to deliver employment and services to the North Belfast communities. Through-out the last 20 plus years the organisation has grown in size, impact and geographical reach. Our mission is to provide “A safe, prosperous and caring community where residents have a strong sense of pride, ownership and belonging”. We take pride in delivering wrap around anti-poverty services where positive sustainable change can only happen when the layered challenges faced by people experiencing multiple deprivation are recognised as being equal parts of a very complex jigsaw.

Description of Project

CIT Health & Wellbeing programme is for two areas of North Belfast, New Lodge and Ardoyne. The aim of the programme is to design and deliver a health and wellbeing programme that addresses the needs and issues facing residents living across the North Belfast CIT area. The expected outcomes from the delivery were to:

- "Raise awareness of existing relevant health and wellbeing support services that are already available;
- Improve the health and wellbeing of the local community; Increase community capacity and encourage sustainable wider community participation for the betterment of the community; Develop more coherent relationships between the community and
- local service providers;
- Stimulate interest in community-based action to reduce vulnerability to underlying issues such as drug dealing, extortion and illegal money lending;
- Increase individual and community resilience against paramilitary control;
- Reduce the number of people vulnerable to paramilitary influence and control."



Ashton Community Trust

Description of Project

16 community-based CIT health and wellbeing proposals were designed, approved and delivered in this reporting period.

975 individuals attended or participated in community health and wellbeing activities

256 training sessions, workshops or events were delivered to advance community health and wellbeing outcomes

14 local partners or projects were engaged with to support the delivery of the programme."

Testimonials

"The training was interesting, easy to follow and enjoyable, and I would now be more confident giving first aid to someone in need". "It can be challenging to attract people into community development work, but flexible funding pots can help co-design innovative ways to engage more effectively, especially with newcomer populations."

"The money management classes were really helpful and I will use these new skills to help me manage my money better. I really appreciated the Christmas food hamper because I have been struggling to make ends meet and feel that I let my family down because I cannot always provide for them."

"The uniform shop has been a life saver for me, I was embarrassed at the start but the girls made us feel so welcome and I am really grateful for the help."



Ashton Community Trust

Impact

Our project has:

Strengthened local networks,

- Helped to disrupt area-based silos,
- Supported alternative ways of working, co-design structures, Increased provision of activities for young people,
- Expanded holistic approach,
- Supported residents,
- Increased financial literacy,
- Incorporated anti-poverty focus,
- Supported participants to develop new skills and practical tools for learning,
- Increased mental health awareness, physical health and positive self-esteem.
- Demonstrated the importance of cross area working, signposting and connecting with relevant services.
- Helped to identify further gaps in the existing community infrastructure,
- Encouraged professional development and helped removed barriers to access.



Ashton Community Trust

Continuation of CIT

There is nothing worse than delivering a successful programme that demonstrates a high return in investment and then it ends because of no funding. In partnership with our community providers we have delivered a programme that has increased connectivity with local services, built stronger community networks, enhanced community infrastructure and gave people opportunities to engage with their local community providing a safe place where hard conversations can take place. CIT has been a lifeline for some of our clients, the events, training, workshops etc has been an opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people, make positive changes to their lives, get involved activities they would never have tried before and raised awareness of health and wellbeing."



CRJI

Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) is a grassroots community organisation which was founded in 1998 to address issues around informal policing in what would be generally viewed as Catholic Republican Nationalist (CRN) communities using accessible, non-violent, and peaceful means. Since then, CRJI's work has expanded to meet the evolving needs of the areas served and to support and advocate on behalf of residents and vulnerable or at-risk individuals. CRJI has several offices in Belfast in addition to ones in Newry and South Armagh, Derry and Lurgan.

Description of project

This project works to address community safety issues in New Lodge and Ardoyne areas, including building relationships with the PSNI. Activity includes a Community safety Forum, training of volunteers such as Community Safety OCN's and Naloxone Training by peer led trainers, learning visits, self defense classes and community safety outreach work. There have been some very notable highlights including a project to roll out Vape testing kits that will detect illegal drugs within vapes and reimagining of walls that had paramilitary writing/slogans on them. The walls were re-imaged and designed by an artist with input from the community.



CRJI



Before and after images of the walls that have been reimaged.



BCT NI

BCT is a long established accredited training organisation, based in the heart of Ardoyne in Belfast.

Our young people not in education, training or employment (NEET) and those at risk of becoming NEET to:

- Recognise their skills and abilities.
- support their qualifications attainment.
- Enhance their personal development.
- Increase their employability skills.
- Raise their aspirations and support them onto a career pathway / progress in education, training or employment.
- Enhance their self-confidence, self-belief and self-worth.

As a result of our work, we aim to break the cycle of intergenerational unemployment in our community and revert the sustained deprivation in respect to education and skills, employment and income.



BCT NI

Description of the Project

Youth Employability Programme for North Belfast

Engaging with young people who have been involved in or are at risk of becoming involved in paramilitary or coercive activity. Raising educational attainment, employment and life aspirations of young people from the CIT area. Improving learning outcomes for young people.

<u>Target Areas</u>	<u>16-24</u>	<u>Under 16</u>
New Lodge & Greater Ardoyne	40	17
Area of Influence – Tigers Bay	5	3

NB Following on from the success of last years pilot programme there was an increased demand from Tigers Bay participants, and we worked with 5 under 16 years.

Tigers Bay participants came to the centre for the group courses for the first time as last year these were facilitated in New Beginnings premises.



BCT NI

Impact

The BCT Employability programme targeted young people from a background of intergenerational unemployment who are at risk of and for many, engaged in criminal activity and / or the influence of paramilitarism. By supporting their skills development and providing work opportunities, in a supportive environment, young people have recognised their self worth and ability and recognise the potential for a career and the benefits that will bring in terms of enhancing their life experience and the opportunities available to them. Supporting young people onto a positive career path has positive benefits in terms of their mental health and wellbeing and facilitates the inclusion of young people as contributors to the local economy and their local community. This programme has had a massive impact on the young people who took part."



BCT NI

Testimonials

Participant

"With still needing to complete my education it caused barriers in being able to get a job. BCT and Jobstart have given me the opportunity to work in JMD Training where I'm gaining knowledge and qualifications that I originally thought I would never have. On my placement I'm gaining confidence and skills that will help me a lot in the future and none of my progress would have been possible without Jobstart."

Participant

"My time at Newlodge Youth Centre so far has been phenomenal experience especially being from a different community made me nervous a little however, Sean and the staff team welcomed me allowed me to be myself in the club. I couldn't recommend a better place to learn the ins and outs of youth work other than Newlodge Youth Centre."

Participant

"My Job Start experience has been nothing but amazing. To have the Opportunity to work 25hrs a week In the youth club I grew up With Is unreal. I am a facilitator on a group protect with young lads doing the Same Stuff I did when I was going up to be able to help them understand the consequences of their behaviour, When I got asked to be on the Job start I Didn't know rather to be on it or not. But being on Job start is the best Decision I have ever Made. The Stuff I have learned over the past 4 months is Just amazing. Ive learnt how Import youth work is in today's society and many other things. I would highly recommend the job start programme."

Participant

"My time on jobstart so far is one of the best experiences of my life. When i was asked to do it i didn't really have an understanding of what i would be doing and i also wasn't confident in my social skills but now 3 months in i talk to everyone in the youth centre and have realised that youth work isn't just supervising kids in a youth club its about building connections and creating memories young people will never forget."





Communities in Transition

North Down

The Communities in Transition project is supporting three area specific projects in Kilcooley and Rathgill areas of North Down. A Health and Wellbeing project delivered by Find Help NI, a Community Safety and Policing project and a Raising Aspirations project delivered by Northern Ireland Alternatives.

Find Help NI

Find Help NI is a not for profit organisation, which has been created by experienced counsellors, to help our community find the right help, at the right time. Through our years of front line experience working with people in crisis or despair, we recognised the need for a joined up approach to wellbeing that looks at the whole person, and everything in that person's life that contributes to their sense of wellbeing.

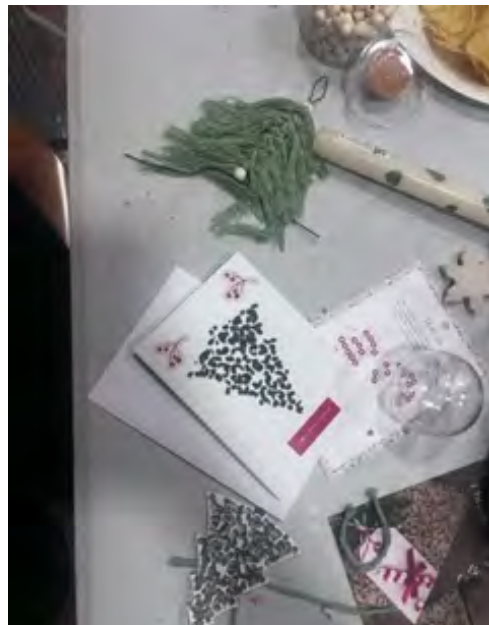
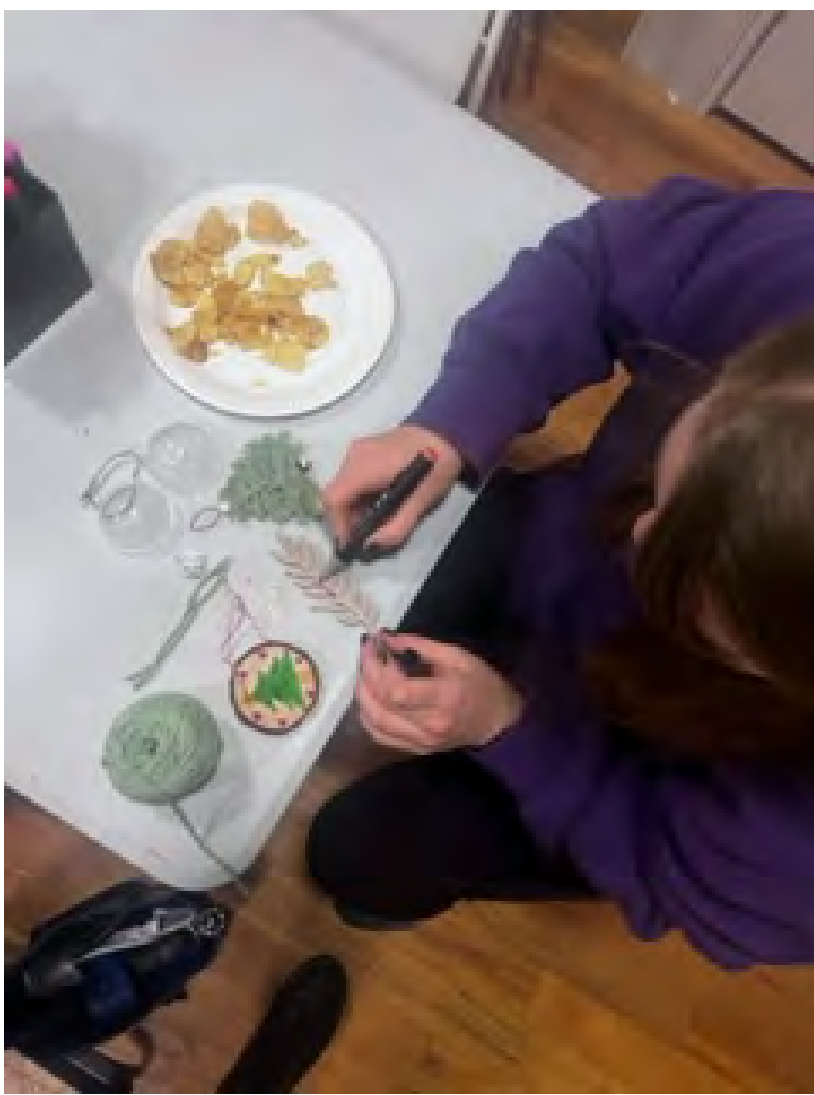
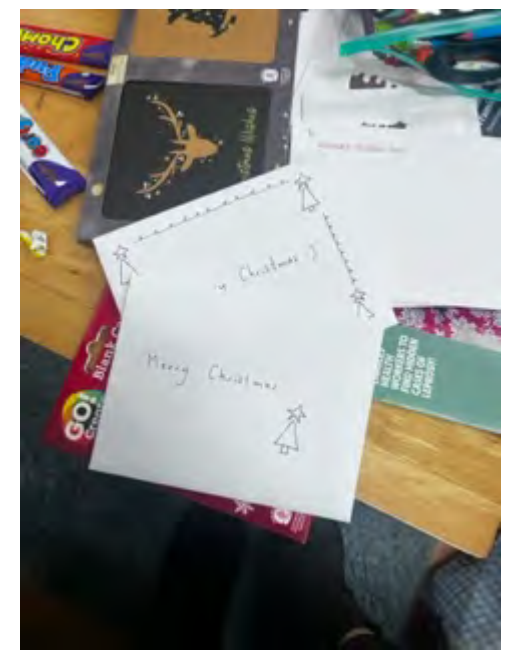
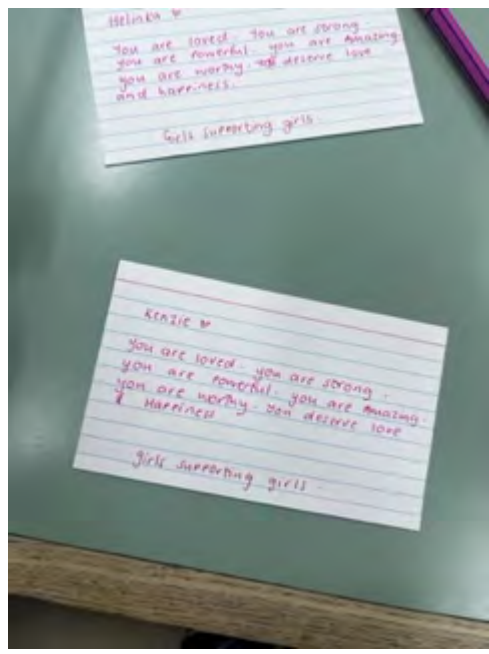
Description of Project

We've been working on the CIT Health and wellbeing project for the past 4 years offering funded counselling sessions and health and wellbeing support within Kilcooley and Rathgill areas of Bangor. Over this time we have a number of ongoing support programmes that run in the area such as girls supporting girls groups, women's support group, men's wellbeing gyms, Men's community football team and youth support services such as homework club.

As well as these ongoing support programmes we have run a number of short course programmes to meet the needs of the area such as, yoga and wellbeing, cost of living workshops etc.



Find Help NI



Find Help NI

Impact

Our funded counselling sessions have allowed those who need therapeutic interventions to receive the support they need with little or no waiting times. The programmes that we run allow people to feel a sense of community and involvement in their area with a focus on their mental health and wellbeing. On a recent feedback form when asked how the programme has benefited the individual it was stated " at times i have struggled to even leave the house. I have enjoyed the togetherness of the group and trying new things that i wouldn't of tried before" and " it has greatly helped with my mental health and challenging the way i think about myself. theres always an empahsis on support that is out there and events planned around wellbeing".



NI Alternatives - DARE

Northern Ireland Alternatives is a government-accredited community based restorative justice organisation that aims to promote and develop non-violent community responses to issues of crime and anti-social behaviour. Alternatives adopts a holistic approach to supporting victims, offenders and the community by providing a wide range of services & programmes designed to meet the needs of all parties.'

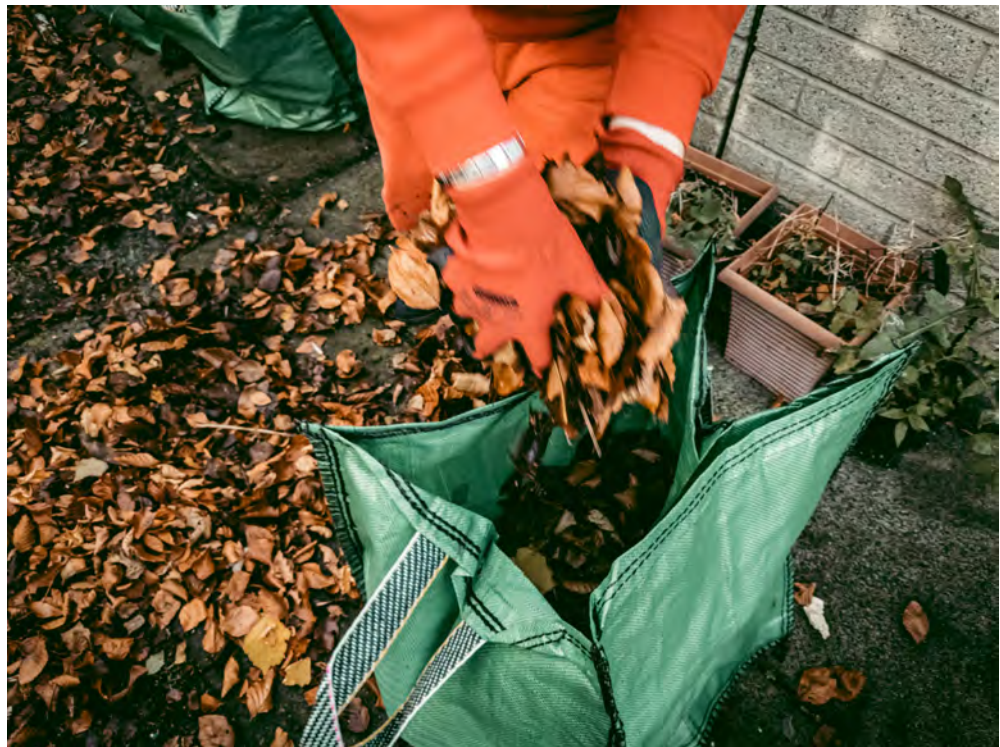
Description of Project

The DARE Project is funded through the raising aspirations of Communities in Transition monies, The Project is now at the of it's forth year (Including Pilot) and seeks to improve confidence, resilience and raise the aspirations of young people living CIT identified areas in North Down and Ards.

The Project currently has 3 Post Primary groups that meet and 3 in school, primary level sessions delivered weekly addition of homework support for the P7 pupils of Kilcooley weekly with community volunteers from West Church supporting operation. The Post Primary groups explore a range of youth led topics issues throughout the year while also having some fun activities and trips thrown in as well to boost their confidence, self and resilience, with many of the young people engaging coming up through from P7 to now being in 4th / 5th year and GCSE exams, they have found a level of support unheard most at some point throughout the lifespan of the project availing additional support through one to ones or signposting into service



NI Alternatives - DARE



NI Alternatives - DARE

Impact

The impact of the project has been the continued delivery of not to blow my own or my teams trumpet, extraordinary youth led bespoke programming allowing the young people to learn from one another and with staff intervention in a safe environment where they can be openly challenged by the team and their peers on any number of viewpoints. Leading to more socially dexterous and resilient young people growing up in the estates of North Down and Ards identified during the initial selection of CIT areas throughout Northern Ireland. The programme has demonstrably linked the future outcomes of children and young people in education and employment to the Communities in Transition priorities.

Through workshops, group work and direct interventions, children and young people are now better placed to negotiate the challenges of living in communities that are impacted on by para-militarism and coercive control and to make the most of the opportunities that are available to them in education and in other settings. We have had a number of participants age out of the target demographic over the past couple of years and yet remain on in other capacities like joining the SAFE youth forums, becoming junior leaders and quite a few of these older young people have recently expressed interest in becoming youth workers themselves, so I would think it fair to say that their experiences on engaging in this project have been positive and will hopefully set them and their communities up for the next generation coming up through.



NI Alternatives - DARE

Testimonials

"As a young person in Northern Ireland policing used to be something I didn't really think or care about and would actively avoid engagement with police officers, but when I got the chance to meet the neighbourhood police while participating in the DARE programme. I realised how hard of a job it can be and that they are putting their lives on a line to protect us and the community. A neighbourhood police officer named Billy helped me and my friends to realise that they are on our side. Taking the time to engage and get to know us, and explaining the processes that he and the other officers must adhere to whilst doing their job. Like I said it is a very risky job, and the officers down where I live have been taking a hammering because of the ongoing drug feud in the north down area. Everyone hates the police because they think they're not doing their jobs properly or fast enough, but they are stretched and not always working in ideal conditions."

"I have experienced loads of stories from Billy where he has done his job, and they shouldn't be hated because most of them are doing risky things to help or protect us. The police officers I have engaged with through DARE understand why young people might not like them from past first-hand experiences, family history or unrealistic viewpoints based on fictional portrayals in movies and TV. Like in any job there are those that shouldn't be in that profession, not all teachers can teach, some nurses don't have a good bedside manner and some police officers aren't great at engaging with young people and don't really know how to but the ones that do their jobs and care about us and the communities we live in help us understand what police officers should be like. And with this strategy being rolled out, there is an opportunity for greater connections to be made between the police and young people across Northern Ireland."



NI Alternatives - DARE

The D.A.R.E. Staff have a real rapport with the children and it's amazing how they are able to keep them engaged week after week. Their approach is perfect, and the children learn in a way that benefits them in school and other aspects of their lives. We don't have the time or remit to cover this work in the curriculum and it will stand them in good stead as the environment is becoming increasingly difficult for children, especially when they become teenagers and all that brings."

Teacher

"Some of the things children are aware of at their age would maybe surprise you, so it's important that we are able to engage with them around complex issues in a way that is appropriate and sensitive. The programme definitely provides children was a way to understand the world around them and to prepare them for the future."

DARE Ffacilitator

"It was a good experience to turn the tables and deliver content to D.A.R.E. staff, it opened my eyes to the work that goes into preparing sessions that they deliver to us regularly. It was a good laugh seeing the staff act like what we normally get on like, and I feel it was a great way to boost our confidence even more."

Young Person

"It's easy to make bad choices in our community and sometimes it feels like they are all we have. Drugs, paramilitaries, people putting pressure on you, boredom, no money. I love being part of this group and it has made me realise there are other choices and that I can make them. I feel like I know what I am going to do now in the future and how I can get there. I'm going to get there."





Communities in Transition

Shankill

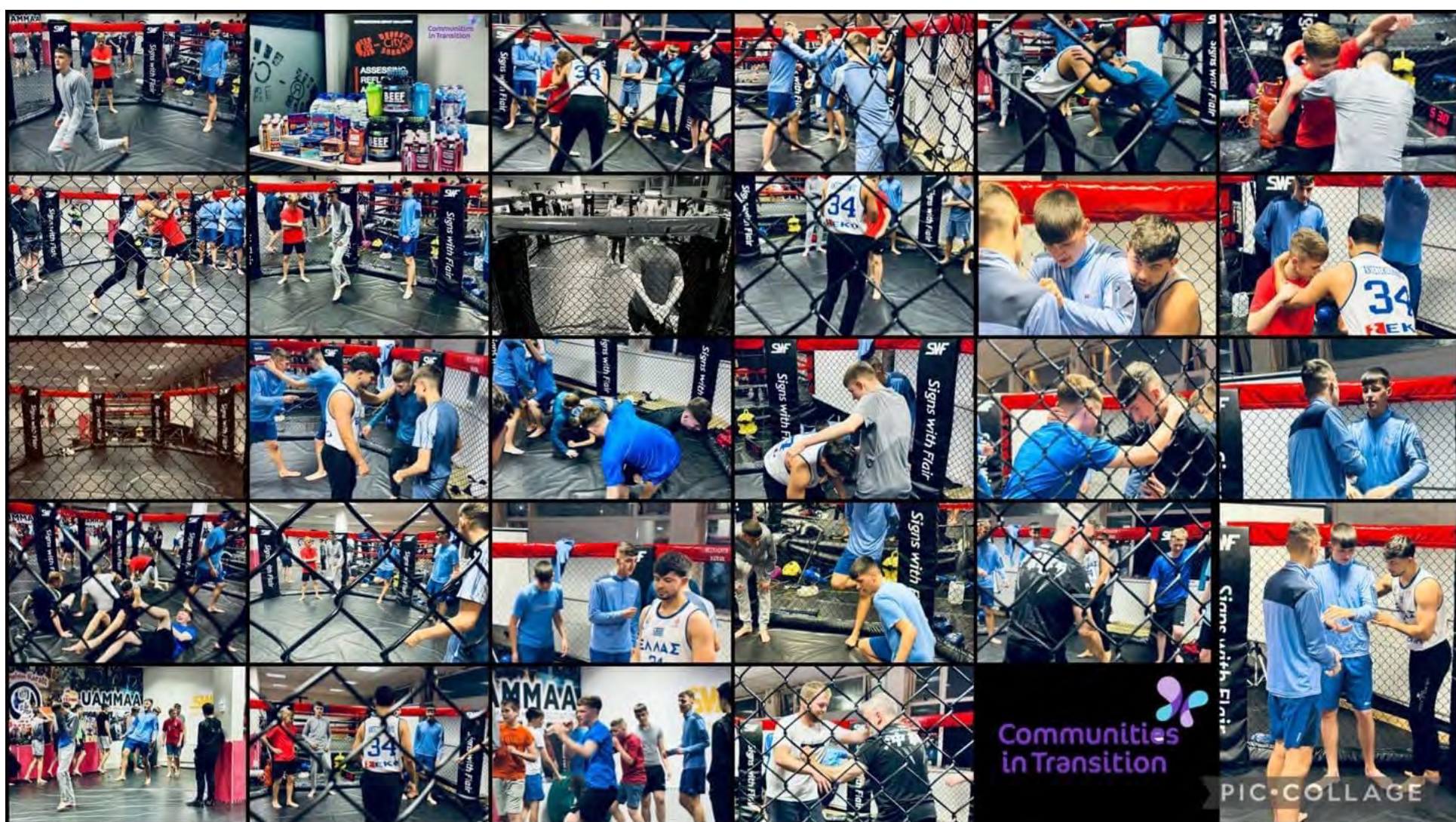
The Communities in Transition project is supporting four area specific projects in the Shankill area of Belfast. A Health and Wellbeing project delivered by Extern, a Community Safety and Policing project delivered by Northern Ireland Alternatives, a Youth project delivered by Greater Shankill Partnership and an Employability project delivered by Impact Training.

Greater Shankill Partnership (GSP)

Established in 1996, the Greater Shankill Partnership (GSP) is a community led regeneration agency in the Greater Shankill area of Belfast. GSP's operations and signature projects seek to drive forward a regeneration agenda for the area, ranging from Early Years / Surestart; Family Support Hub; Integrated Services for Children and Young People; Health and Wellbeing development; Community Education and of course Neighbourhood Renewal itself

Description of Project

Greater Shankill Youth Connects is a collective of youth and community organisations each working in partnership to support and better the lives of young people, living within and around the Greater Shankill community. Our partnership is designed to promote collaborative working in delivering joint projects, area-based initiatives and relevant campaigns. All of our work is based on the gathered voice of young people, Social Action Projects and a series of Area Based Interventions



Greater Shankill Partnership (GSP)



Greater Shankill Partnership (GSP)

Impact

Our project has enhanced the opportunities across the community for young people, youth workers and their organisations. It has developed relationships between different organisations and community supports to enhance the youth supports and provision within the area. It has also reduced the stigma associated with youth mental health & isolation and enhanced community cohesion between youth and the elderly generation within the Greater Shankill area.

Testimonials

"I feel more connected to services within my area and aware of other youth supports for those I work with ."

"I have widened my knowledge of the teenage brain and its development through this workshop."

"Our young people have had the opportunity to develop a social action project and give back to those isolated within their community."

Continuation of CIT

Longevity of any intervention is key to ensure lasting impact on its beneficiaries and to really generate change within a community.



Extern

Extern is a leading local charity operating across the island of Ireland, supporting around 25,000 people each year to change their lives. Operating for over 45 years, we believe another chance can change a life. Every day Extern works alongside children, young people, and families facing challenges to empower positive change and support family unity. We support people who are homeless or facing homelessness, those dealing with mental health issues and the impact of suicide, people experiencing problem drug and alcohol use and people living with problem gambling. We also support refugees, the Traveller community, and people who have been through the criminal justice system, to change their lives. As a charity, Extern strives for an inclusive and fair society; keeping children and their families together where possible; reducing offending and the impact of offending on victims and the community; that people have somewhere to live and that the people we work with are better equipped to live and make a contribution to their community. We are also the leading provider of placements for social work students in the voluntary sector in Northern Ireland.

Description of your project

We work collaboratively with existing community based projects to deliver a Health & Well-Being project. We:

Recruit and train Community Health Champions and develop targeted health and wellbeing groups within the community

Offer one-to-one intervention and therapeutic to those impacted by drugs, alcohol and mental health.

Engage with and raise awareness of available services in the local area

Offer free training/wellbeing sessions for the local community based on identified needs.

Hold awareness raising and engagement events in the local area.

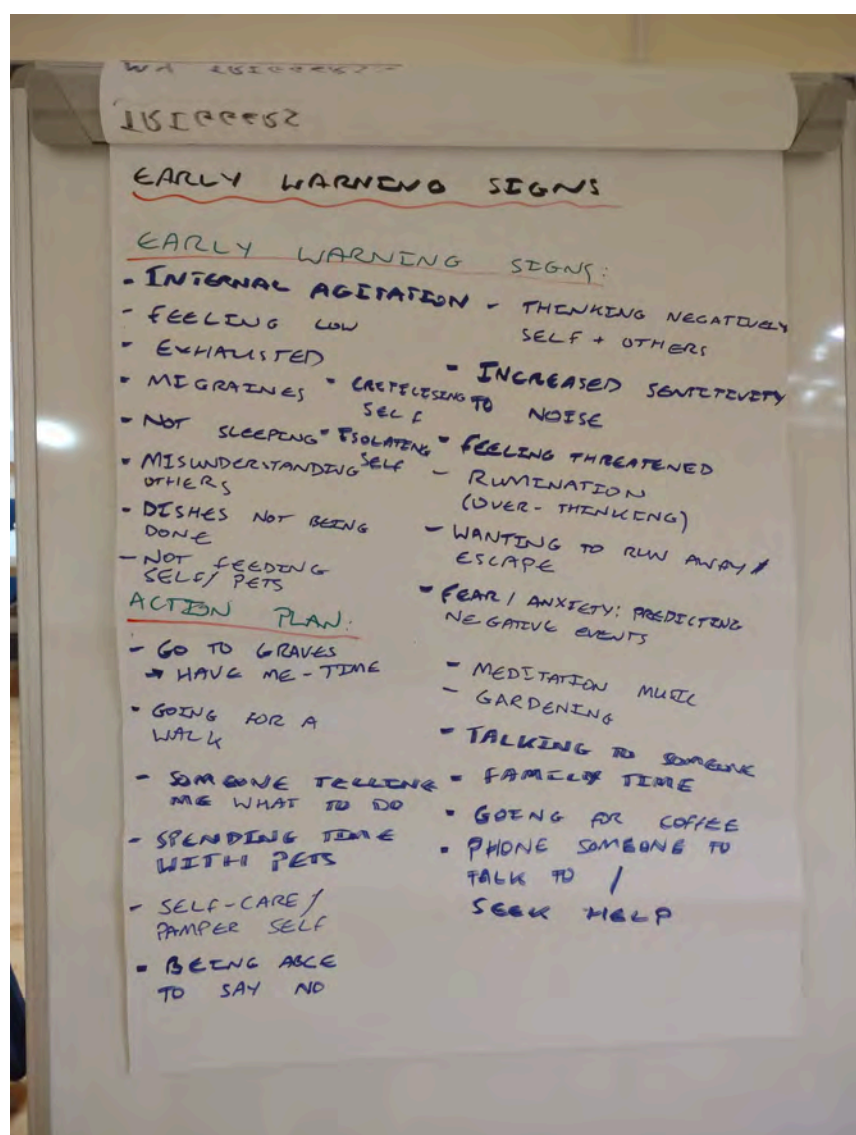
In consultation with the local community develop informative and interactive fact sheets in relation to key issues and distribute these effectively.



Extern



Extern



Extern

Impact

We have had a significant impact through training, 1-1 intervention and groups. Specifically, we have worked with individuals who have since left loyalist paramilitaries, supported individuals to discontinue substance use and provided aftercare to prevent and manage relapse, prevented suicide and improved overall well being .

Our most significant portion of work has been in 1-1 intervention where we have had both the biggest demand and most positive outcomes. We have heard countless people stating “there is no help available” or who have been referred to statutory services who then have a lengthy wait to access support.

In contrast our service has been accessible through either self-referral, referral through a friend or community champion in addition to more traditional routes such as through a GP or statutory service.

We have had reports from both service users and service user’s families reporting how meaningful support has been and how this has had a positive contribution to their lives. We have prevented suicide attempts and loss of life and supported individuals to become abstinent from substances who have had significant addictions. Additionally we have supported individuals, who would previously have had numerous contacts with the police due to violent offences ranging from assault to murder, to improve their emotional regulation skills. This has resulted in the individual able to respond to confrontations in non-violent, assertive ways, resulting in fewer callouts to PSNI and the person not receiving additional convictions and/or prison sentences.

Extern’s Community in Transition project has also enabled the community to implement peer support groups. These groups provide a platform for individuals to come together, to connect, upskill, support each other, and know that within each group there are champions who are trained to help individuals access therapeutic support if needed.



Extern

Continuation of CIT

Consistent support is important for service users. We have heard how when other projects have shut down suddenly/part-way through sessions service users are left to deal with things on their own, causing loss of trust and increased risk of self-harm, substance use, alcohol misuse and/or suicidal thoughts.

Service users we support express how valuable the support is and how this helps process traumas and move forward positively in their lives. We work with service users other projects or services deem “too complex”, “too angry/violent/dangerous” or “not wanting to engage”. We pride ourselves on providing a service that seeks to understand where a person currently is, to understand their goals and to build a positive working relationship them. In doing so we create a positive relationship with which we can provide a space for the person to reflect, consider their choices and what they want to have happen.

With funding continued we would seek to continue this project, both our 1-1 interventions and the groups as well as responding to community needs so that we continue making a positive contribution to the community.



Impact Training

Impact Training NI Ltd is a community based, not for profit training organisation. Delivering training for people of the Belfast area for over 35 years. Set up in 1978 in response to the unemployment problem in North & West Belfast, Impact's experience and expertise combined with its close relationship with the local community has contributed to its success and reputation as a quality training provider.

Describing the Project

The core purpose of this intervention is multi-fold:

- Raise educational attainment, employment and life aspirations
- Improve learning outcomes for young people

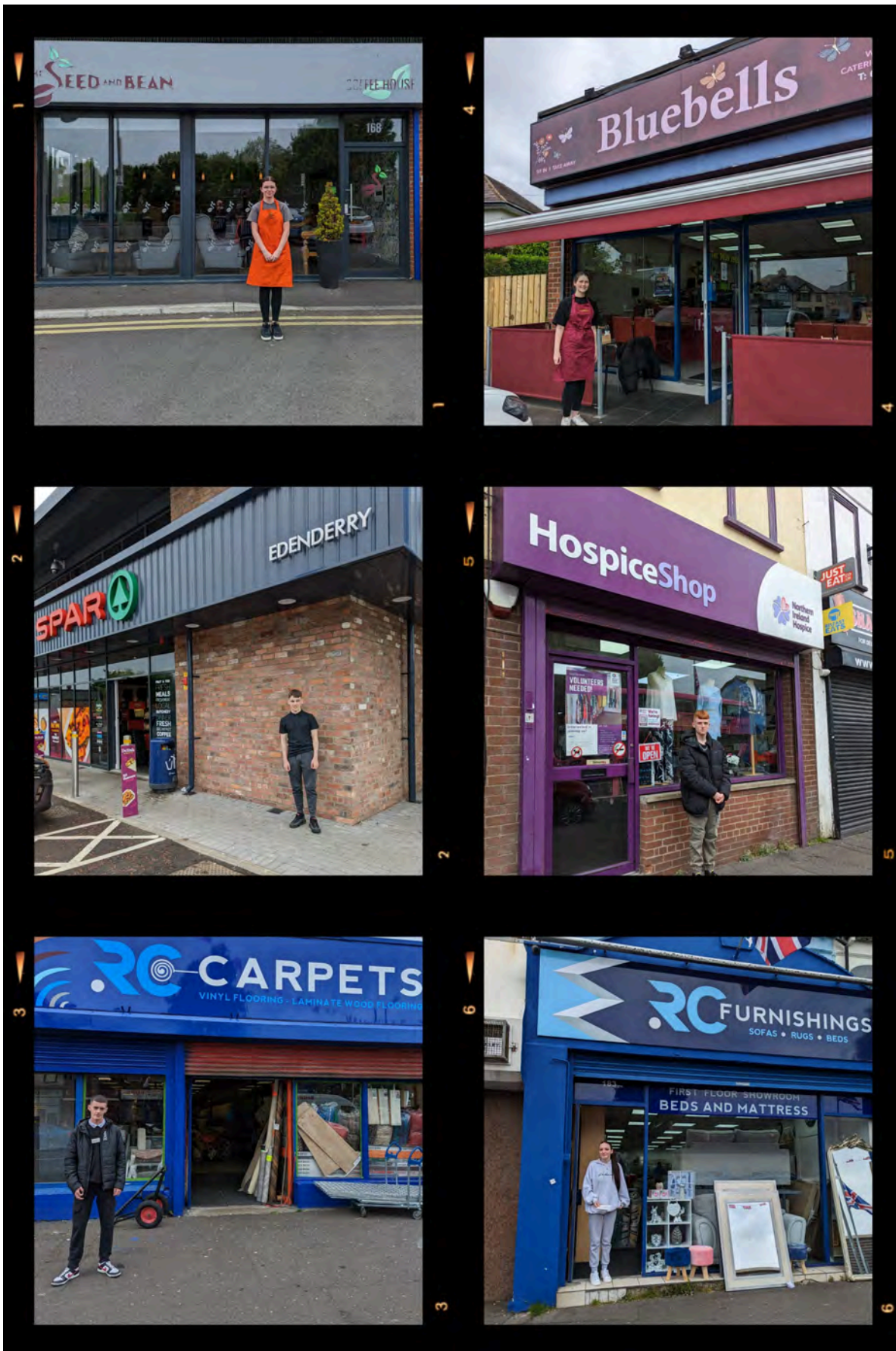
Build the capacity of the wider community to support the young people to achieve the necessary skills and qualifications to enable them to aspire to a better quality of life.

38 participants were identified for employability training and booked onto a variety of ranging from First Aid, Forklift, CSR and SIA training. From this 15 went directly into full time employment, 7 started journeys to self-employment, 1 went into higher education and 10 applied to go onto apprenticeship schemes. In addition 22 young people participated in a Saturday job scheme with the support of 18 local businesses.

The project included two main elements, a work ready element and a Saturday Job scheme. 22 young people took part in the Saturday job scheme.



Impact Training



Impact Training

Testimonials

We watched as the confidence and abilities of the young participants grew over the six months of the 'Saturday Job' programme. Direct involvement in the Back Two Front programme has increased their resilience towards paramilitary influence and involvement in paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime.

Below is a selection of participant feedback statements;

Gain Forth Gym

"Very friendly and helpful young individual who will do very well in their chosen career."

Be Beautiful U

"Casey did very well in her placement and is now fully trained in nails."

Made by Laney

"I found the placement to be very helpful and willing ."

Female age 15

"I would not have had the confidence or experience I got with this programme to be able to go and get a job in Boots. I am now earning £11 per hour and able to help my mum pay for some of my things."

Male age 16

"I was able to see what barbering was like as a job and Steven helped me get into Impact Training to learn to be a Barber."



Impact Training

Impact

To include the active participation of individuals within the Shankill CIT area. Identify and recruit 20 participants

116 young people registered interest in the programme with 22 beginning the 'Saturday Jobs'

Create and design 5 week personal development programme

Created and completed by participants going into Saturday Jobs learning things such as Life Skills and Money Management.

Secure placements in local businesses and shops for participants

18 local businesses secured with some of them able to take more than one participant. Some of the businesses involved in the programme were local shops and garages, a NI Hospice shop, a Gym, Barbers, coffee shops, bouncy castle hire and many more.

Mapping of success

This was outlined at monthly meetings with TEO

Collaborative working within the CIT Area

Many local stakeholders have been engaged with continued collaborative working throughout the project



NI Alternatives

Greater Shankill - SAFE

Alternatives is a community based Restorative Justice organisation that was formed over 25 years ago on the Greater Shankill. We now have sites in North, South, East and West Belfast, and in Bangor, Magherafelt and Portadown. Alternatives promote community safety, restorative training and work to support the community in terms mediation, preventive work, ASB awareness and social action.

Description of the Project

SAFE (Safer Areas For Everyone) Shankill is a community Safety & Policing project that aims to support the community in dealing with issues of community safety, crime and anti-social behaviour..

The Greater Shankill Community Safety Network provides impetus for the delivery of the overall programme. The Network brings together over 40 different groupings including local residents, community sector organisations, political representatives alongside representation from the PSNI, NIFRS, NIHE, BCC and DOJ. The S.A.F.E. programme has also included work to develop relationships with churches, address environmental and dereliction through B.U.I.L.D supported vulnerable young parents, and engaged with older people who experience isolation.

The Network has established a Church Restorative Forum which widened the capacity of S.A.F.E. to engage with residents in Greater Shankill and provide support to those who are most vulnerable within the community. Examples of this have included: Mental Health First Aid, Level 2 Restorative Practice, Sensitive Case Training, SAFE Talk Mental Health Training and Restorative Circles Training

Both initiatives provide early intervention support for young people, identifying those who are particularly at risk and delivering a wraparound service to reduce vulnerability



NI Alternatives Greater Shankill - SAFE



NI Alternatives Greater Shankill - SAFE

The Impact of 19 0s Redevelopment on the Shankill area of Belfast (youtube com)

We Are Here Mural Shankill Road-Celebrating Women (youtube com)

Alternatives -SAFE Shankill, Learning Visit to Netherlands (youtube com)

**SAFE Shankill - 5 STEPS to Wellbeing Murals Community
Clean up at Woodvale Steps (youtube com)**



NI Alternatives

Greater Shankill - SAFE

Testimonials

“We don’t see a lot of police in the area, so it was good to see them sitting down with us and taking an interest in our issues. The best thing was learning about the work of the police and all the different things they have to respond to. It helped me to understand the pressures they are under, and I think they got to understand our community a little better too.” - **Local Resident**

“Sometimes it feels like we are the only ones taking the issue of dereliction in Shankill seriously. The group has achieved so much with very limited resources and the partnership with Queen’s has major potential. The issue is definitely on the radar because of the work of B.U.I.L.D. and we are well placed to continue to campaign and demand change.” - **B U I L D Working Group Member**

“I’ve attended two of the workshops, the Mental Health First Aid and SAFE Talk ones. I volunteer with a local residents’ group, and we are getting more and more people coming for help, some who are very distressed. I definitely feel better prepared for helping people now and I would like to do more of this sort of training.” - **Workshop Participant**

“We could see the similar challenges they faced in Dublin, maybe greater in scale, but in terms of the violence and vulnerability caused by drugs and drug dealing, we could relate. It was interesting to see how the agencies and voluntary groups worked to support users and addicts, but what it made me realise is there is no golden bullet, despite all the suffering.” -
S A F E Volunteer

“It wasn’t what I expected, and I was interested to hear the different perspectives around drug legalisation. I also really enjoyed getting to know the two PSNI officers who were present better. This will help me in my own work with young people having these relationships. The project around extremism and radicalisation was also interesting, the way the police worked in communities to build relationships. It has given me something to reflect on more when I get some space.” -**S A F E Volunteer**



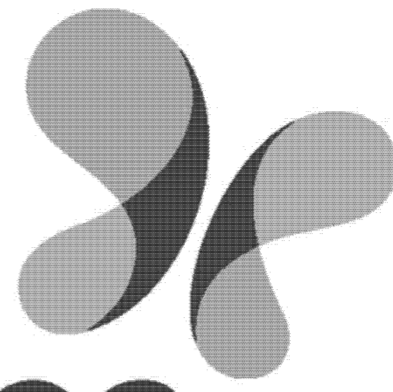
NI Alternatives

Greater Shankill - SAFE

Continuation of CIT

Continuation would enable us to enhance the Confidence in Policing Forum, including developing a clear action plan to ensure it doesn't lose focus or direction. The partnerships developed with organisations that support young people also have significant potential, and there are also opportunities to develop the youth groups and young parents' group, consolidating the programme. Finally, consideration should be given as to how to better resource the B.U.I.L.D. initiative, as its ongoing development and impact is likely to be curtailed without a longer-term income generation strategy.

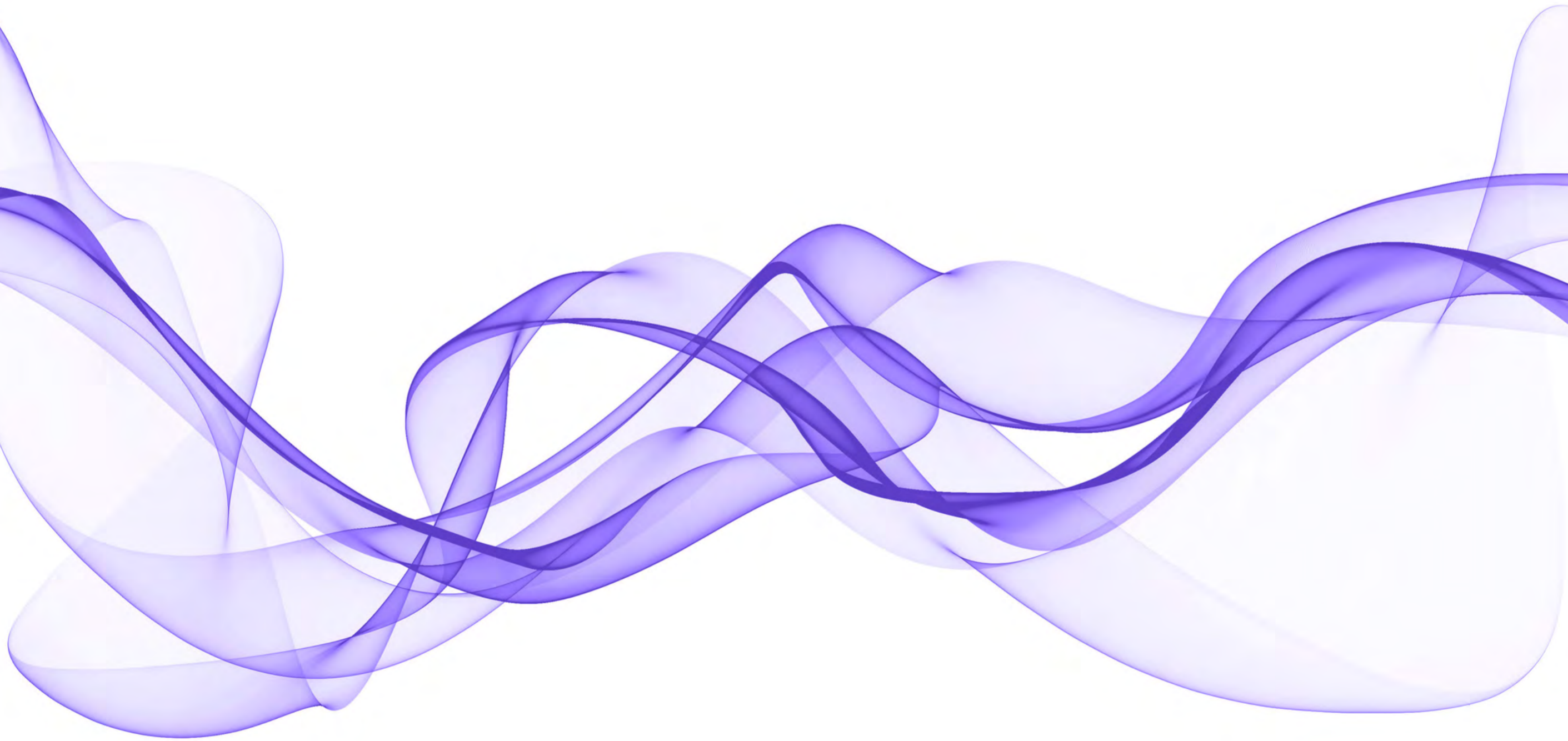




Communities in Transition

West Belfast

The Communities in Transition project is supporting three area specific projects in West Belfast. A Health and Wellbeing project delivered by a consortium led by Blackie River Community Group, a Community Safety and Policing project delivered by Upper Springfield Development Trust and an Employability project delivered by Springvale Learning.



Upper Springfield Development Trust

Upper Springfield Development Trust develops programmes that tackle crime, poor skills, economic poverty, poor social infrastructure, discrimination, and area disadvantage. We continually develop new ideas for action that supports good practice in key areas of social inclusion policy and practice. We always seek to engage, develop, improve, and transform people and our community.

Description of the Project

We coordinate and deliver the Policing and Community Safety Element of Communities in Transition Project. We work alongside the community to build resilience and protective factors to make our community safer for all. We tackle issues that the community have identified as being a barrier to working with PSNI e.g lack of confidence and legacy issues. We work with a range of partners including; PSNI, NIHE, YJA, PBNI, BHSCT, Housing Providers, Women's Centres, Emergency Services; NIAS & NIFRS, EA and Community / voluntary organisations.

We provide preventative, pro active and de escalation programmes catered to the community and give them an alternative to becoming involved in criminality. This has included:

- A Young Women's Programme
- A Young Men's Programme
- An Intergenerational Programme
- A Senior Safety
- A Diversionary Programmes
- A Relationship Building with relevant agencies
- A ReimagingFirst Aid, Defib and Drugs awareness training Information sessions on for Drug & Alcohol support



Upper Springfield Development Trust

Video of our work



Photographs of our work



Upper Springfield Development Trust

Impact

The Communities in Transition Project has given the community the opportunity to discuss how they want to shape their area. Feedback from residents has been vital in how we move forward as a community to address Policing & Community Safety issues. West Belfast is unique in that the biggest infrastructure and assets is the people themselves, who developed their own way supporting themselves during the conflict. This programme has given community and voluntary groups an opportunity to engage with some of the agencies listed above who would not have had a relationship before. CiT has opened doors to new ideas and ways of addressing Policing e.g Information Learning & Exchange visits. These visits have allowed us to look at other good models of practice in Ireland and UK, while bringing the community with us and seeing how this works. The opportunity to do this was never available before. If we want to build sustainable and safe communities we need to empower people to take on this challenge at the grassroots level. This project has allowed us the opportunity to showcase the strengths of our community and also challenges that lay ahead. Police have engaged in community / voluntary groups they had never before. New relationships have began between PSNI the GAA, Schools & Youth Groups which would not have happened previously. This is at the early stages, however this something that will hopefully have a lasting impact in the community. CiT has given us the opportunity to look at the relationships between the community and statutory agencies highlighting where we can work in partnership and identifying where there are the gaps. This project has allowed relationships to build organically over time which will have a major impact in the long term.



Upper Springfield Development Trust

Testimonial

Chief Inspector PSNI

"It was amazing to see the positive comments and pick up on the feelings of the people surveyed in the community about the CIT programme.

The community policing and safety aspect of the programme was very important as the personal transition. Everybody is on a particular journey and everybody is gonna make it or take a different aspect and a different length of time to get there.

In terms of its focus on restorative practice, I think most of the people in the room that know me, and engaged in it."

Surestart Participant

"The approach really stood out for us, it was not drug focused, it's not about abstinence. It was focused on people needing or people needing counselling. They were actually bringing in them and they were doing things like cooking, singing playing music etc."

Surestart Participant

"What stood about this project was the multi-disciplinary alliances involved."

"I am delighted the CIT has been able to support Upper Springfield and the development of this program and to be here today to mark the success of their community safety and policing project for 2022 to 2023 and to celebrate all your hard work and programmes."



Upper Springfield Development Trust

Continuation of CiT

As stated in the impact of the project, we are still developing relationships and this programme is the catalyst for this. Over the last number of years we have been identifying issues and looking at how to work together to tackle these challenges. There is still a lot of work to be done to address Policing & Community Safety issues. During this time we have had political instability, Interface tensions and drug related killings within our area. In order to continue to carry out positive work we need to have the same level of buy in over the last few years which is in part credit to CiT. This community has bought into CiT and sees the benefit of what the programme and we hope to continue this.



Springvale

Springvale have over 30 years' experience of providing employability and training support across the wider Belfast area. At present, Springvale deliver both the Skills for Life & Work programme (SFLW) and AppNI programmes, providing vocational training to both young people and those in work. In addition to this, the Youth Employment team at Springvale currently deliver the YouthStart programme to economically inactive young people across Belfast through UKSPF funding and the CIT Employability programme, supporting young NEET people within the West Belfast area.

Description of Project

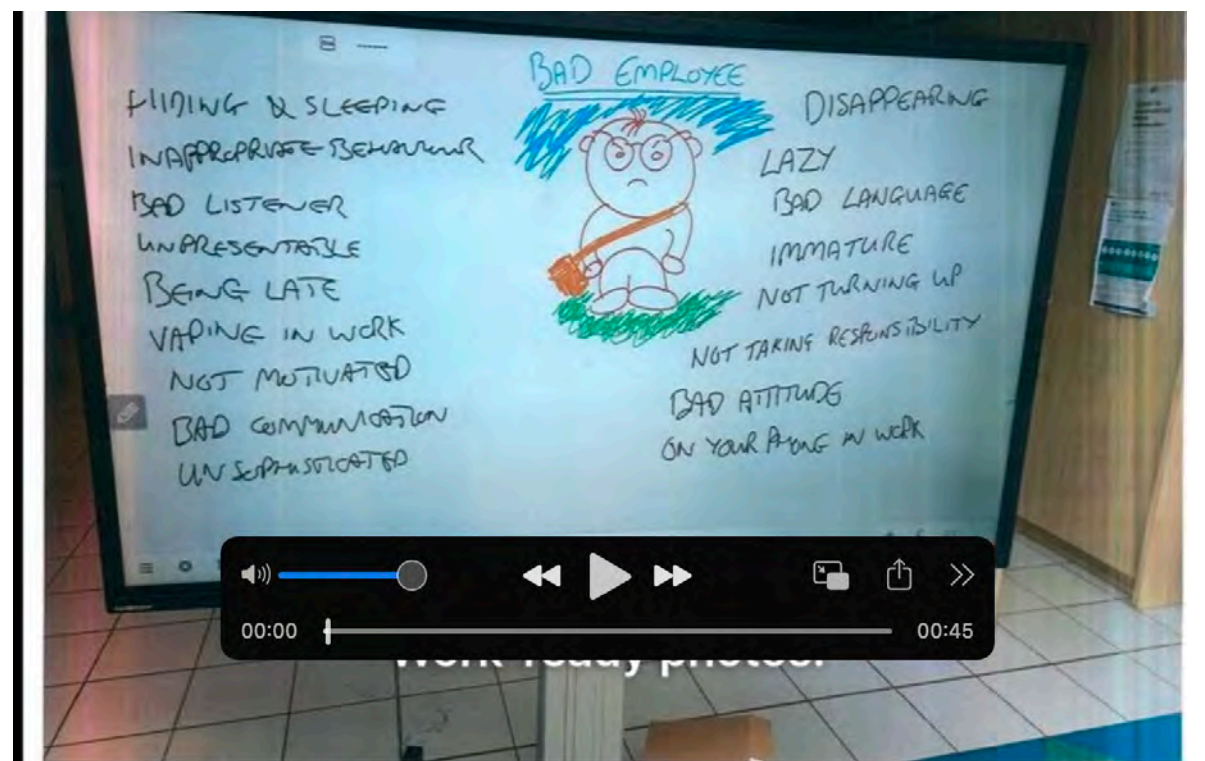
The CIT Employability programme has been delivered across West Belfast through Springvale in both 2022/23 and 2023/24. The programme has worked with 224 young people on both the CIT Employability Element (16-24 year olds) and Work Ready (16 and under). Springvale has taken a hybrid approach to delivery, offering training both in our centre and across the West Belfast area within the community.

Our Employability Element provides support through our dedicated team of Employability Work Coaches, Health & Wellbeing Officers and Employer Liaison Officers, to reduce the barriers to employment and progress young people. This is achieved through inhouse employability qualifications, industry training, mental health support, mentoring and youth work activities over a 12-week programme.

Our Work Ready element delivers employability training and skills development with young people aged 16 and under over a four-week period before progressing individuals into a 6-month paid work placement, during which time our mentors will work with both the participant and their employer to continue to develop and support the young person



Springvale



Springvale

Testimonials

Participant 1

I'm 24 and working as a classroom assistant through the JobStart scheme. I've been in this job from September and can honestly say it has completely changed me as a person, the personal growth I've made from starting this role was beyond anything I expected. The programme helped me develop my employability skills to secure the role and have been continuing to support me. I have learned several skills in doing this job which includes public speaking, problem solving communication and teamwork. I find myself more confident in every aspect of my life and base a big part of my confidence in my job. I'm so grateful to have been given this opportunity and hope to continue growing personally and professionally on every aspect of my life."

Participant 2

"I came through the CIT Employability programme. I am currently in the scheme. Through this opportunity, I have seen immense progress in my personal, social, and professional development. I have always been a creative person from a young age and have always progressed positively in these areas. Although, while I was growing up I found formal education extremely difficult and struggled throughout many of my subjects for the time I was there. I felt failed by the education system, but I stayed and continued into my A-level years to prolong my time in deciding what I wanted to do with my life. While I'm lucky I have many different areas of interests that all have the potential to lead me down a successful career, I needed extra support on my personal and social skills, as I enjoy meeting new people but struggle to make new connections. Through this opportunity, I have gained." new friendships I will take with me in my own personal journey



Springvale

Impact

The CIT Employability programme has been a vital service within the West Belfast area for NEET young people at threat of criminal or paramilitary activity. Over the past two years 224 young people have benefited from the support of the programme (140 Employability Element, 84 Work Ready).

Employability Element

For 2023/24 - 60% (32 of 53 completed participants) have now entered employment, 30% (16 of 53 completed participants) have now entered FE/training. Of the 17 participants still engaged on the programme, all 17 have industry training arranged in their chosen fields with interviews to secure employment within these areas which will hopefully increase the employment progression further.

For 2022/23 – 36% (25 of 70 participants) gained employment, whilst an additional 41% (29 of 70 participants) progressed to other positive destinations including FE/ Training, whilst 61% of participants also gained a qualification.

Work Ready

All 84 participants participating in both 2022/23 and 2023/24 have undertaken 6-month paid work placements and completed employability training, a large percentage of these participants at the end of their placement were kept on in a permanent capacity by their employer. The Work Ready element of the programme has proven to be a huge success, with our intake being heavily oversubscribed. Buy-in from the community and youth groups have been significant, and there is no other such programme across Northern Ireland. Securing employment experience with the opportunity to progress for young people under 16 is a major contributing factor in decreasing future unemployment and risk-taking behaviour.



Springvale

Continuation of CIT

The CIT Employability programme has provided significant support to a subset of young NEET people across the West Belfast area who otherwise would have no such support to distance themselves from risk-taking behaviours. We have developed exceptionally strong links with local youth groups who have helped to identify young people who are at threat of anti-social behaviour and at risk of progressing to more serious matters, taking a proactive approach to dealing with such young people, providing them with the support needed to secure fulfilling employment opportunities. Through the development of these links, the buy-in from the community and employers, and the experience gained within the youth team at Springvale, we have seen a significant increase year-on-year in the positive impact of the CIT Employability programme in relation to securing positive progression destinations for participants. Whilst all activities undertaken through CIT funding are clearly important in tackling criminal and paramilitary activity, we at Springvale feel the provisions provided through the CIT Employability programme offer the greatest opportunity to decrease this. Providing employment opportunities and developing the skills needed to develop in a career are a significant method to reducing the sense of hopelessness and boredom which lead to risk-taking behaviours of our young people. Ensuring that they have a steady source of income, responsibility and a positive outlook on their future opportunities allows us to take a proactive approach to anti-social behaviours, steering young people in the right direction before they are swept up in these activities which damage not just themselves, but their communities and wider society.



Blackie River Community Group

The Blackie River Community Group has been an established group for more than 15 years and has evolved over time. In the beginning, the purpose of the centre was to come together and look at housing needs in the Beechmount area, and from that point it has further developed to now meet the physical, social, economic and environmental needs of local residents.

BRCG co-ordinates delivery of the West Belfast CIT Health and Wellbeing programme through a range of community partners across West Belfast including Grosvenor Community Centre and HEART Project in Falls, Upper Springfield Development Trust, Poleglass Community Association and Community Restorative Justice Ireland in Colin area as well as Upper Andersonstown Community Forum and Copius Consulting.

Description of Project

The CIT Health and Wellbeing programme has been delivered in the west Belfast area since January 2020 (Phases 1, 2 and 3). Led by Blackie River Community Groups, its consortium of community partners has intense mentoring and personal support plans to 390 participants, volunteer training and capacity building and information and awareness raising activities.

Support provided included physical activity, driving licenses, Mental Health support and Industry specific employability training. Volunteer training included accredited and non-accredited courses in safeguarding, volunteering, Drugs Awareness, mentoring and Project Management amongst others.



Blackie River Community Group



Blackie River Community Group

Testimonials

“The activities have given us a chance to get involved in something that helps us address issues that have affected us for years but have never been able to get support for.”

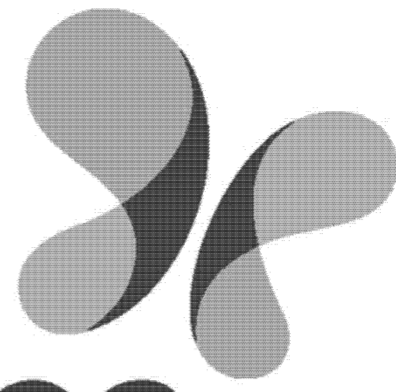
“Without the mentoring support I would be feeling vulnerable and isolated at home with no support network.”

“I’ve brought my family to sessions, and they have really enjoyed it also – it is a chance for us to talk to our neighbours and learn new things.”

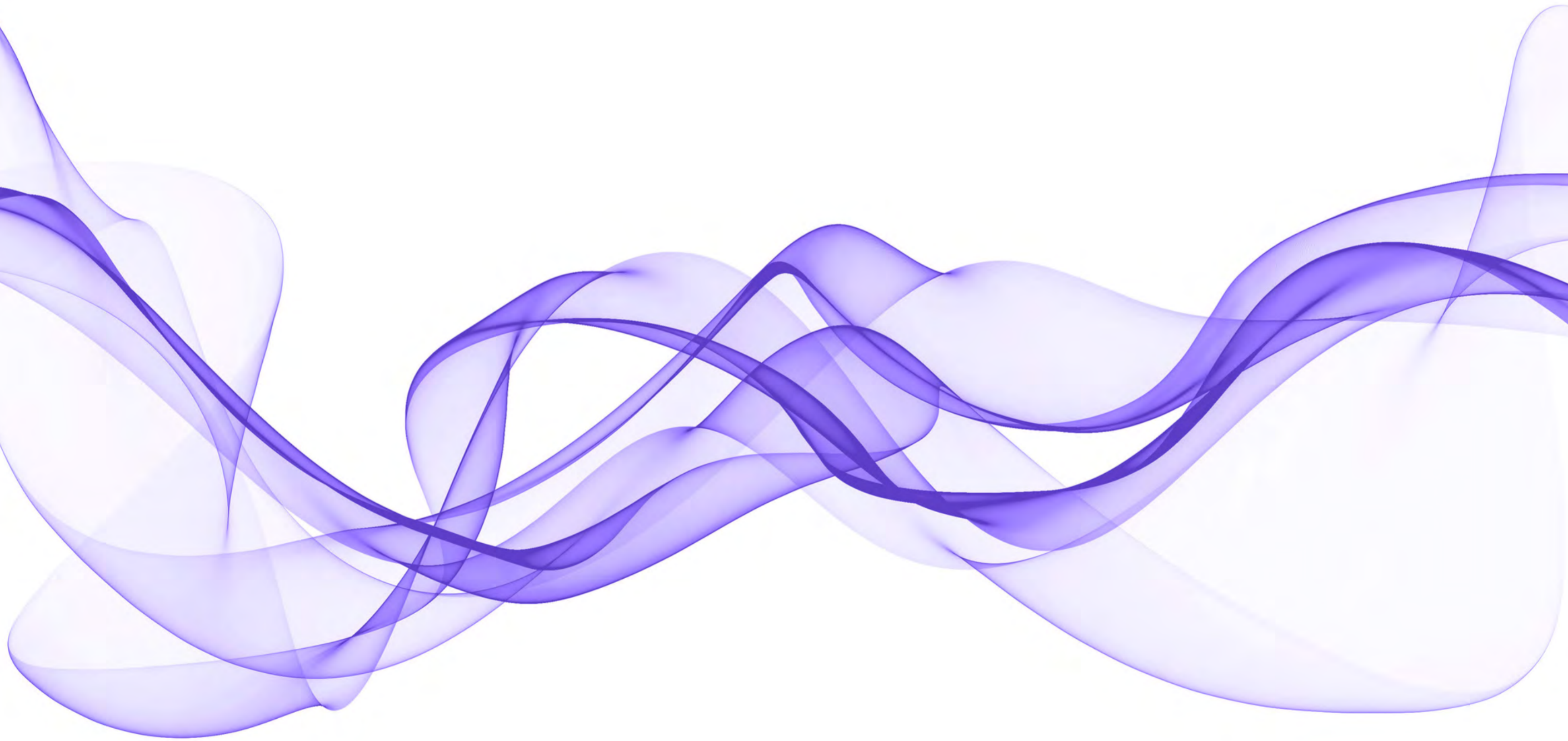
Impact

Outcomes for our participants include improved mental health and motivation, increased positivity and self-belief, increased employment and demonstrated improvements in life choices.





Communities in Transition



The
Executive Office

