

Approaches to Community Relations Work

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Foreword

This typology of community relations work is an attempt to classify the different kinds of work which might validly be called community relations work i.e. work designed specifically to assist the development of understanding, respect and communication between our communities.

The typology offers a brief analysis of the rationale underlying the different kinds of work that are happening, gives examples of programmes and practices pertinent to the particular work, as well as some thoughts about its possible further development.

It is hoped that such a classification can help groups to recognise that there are a variety of approaches to community relations work, all of them useful to the overall objectives of the work, but differing in their focus. It is also hoped that clarifying such a spectrum of approaches can enable groups and organisations to involve themselves in the work at the level required by their own particular concerns and ethos, using the skills available to them, and perhaps moving from one kind of focus to another as their concerns, skills and capacity develop.

The classifications are not intended to be definitive, or limited, but only suggestive, in recognition that we are all of us still defining the boundaries of the work, and continuing to work at new possibilities for its effectiveness, and better methods to evaluate it. Nor does the typology presume to prioritise the differing kinds of work i.e. indicate that one kind will be more effective than another in achieving the desired goals of community relations work, as our knowledge about the validity of such prioritising is as yet too limited to make such a prioritisation with any certainty.

The typology also includes a brief assessment of the kind of work that needs to happen in parallel to focused community relations work, in order to make it successful. This work is called Contextual Work, and it was included in recognition that, by itself, and without progress in these parallel areas, the effect of community relations work will be severely limited. It is believed that the endorsement of such work by agencies involved in community relations can also be useful for the overall progress of such work.

The typology was first outlined in 1989. In this, the third edition, the typology has been amended to take account of some of the new approaches and organisations which have sprung up to develop the work over the past few years. The Community Relations Council, set up with the assistance of the Government in 1990, is one such organisation. Its task is to assist in the development of community relations work at whatever level is possible throughout Northern Ireland. The Council have reprinted this typology in the hope that it may assist such development, and be of use to the increasing number of groups who are seeking to involve themselves in community relations work in the belief that, without such work, solutions to our many differences will be much longer in the coming, and much less sustainable.

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Summary

Abbreviations used

1. Focused Community Relations Work

Mutual understanding work

Objectives: Work designed to decrease ignorance, suspicion prejudice and stereotyping within and between communities.

Rationale and development

The assumption behind 'Mutual Understanding' work is that it is the lack of sufficient information and understanding about each other's humanity, objectives, hopes and fears that limits political co-operation between communities. The work therefore concentrates on decreasing ignorance between communities and encouraging the development of empathy between conflicting individuals and groups.

Contact work

Mutual understanding work often has to begin with initial contact work i.e. bringing people together to meet with others from a different community. Such work is often necessary in a community where most education is divided, and where the majority of us live in areas that are segregated. It can often be most usefully done through existing organisations who are willing to involve themselves in it, and it is within the capacity of most groups to develop it.

To be effective, such contact should be as qualitative as possible e.g. work which involves relatively long-term contact, and involving co-operation on tasks and issues of collective enjoyment or concern. Such sustained work is more likely to facilitate the development of more informed and more trusting relationships than work involving only short-term contact.

Collective issues work

When groups e.g. of women, trade unions members, church congregations, environmentalists, sporting participants, economic developers, etc. come together to use their collective strength to develop strategies on issues of concern in order to bring about social change such groups can be an important vehicle for sustained contact.

Through such work, common concerns can be articulated, and common values about social change and development can be facilitated. While discussions on issues of political and cultural difference are often avoided within such groups, with careful facilitation such groups can, where relevant, eventually extend their briefs to include work which focuses on the differences between their varied communities, sharing information about such differences and the problems arising from them.

Focused group work is probably best done where some initial contact work has led to an increased willingness to tackle consciously, in a structured way, areas of differences and collective concern. Such work can often be added as a useful additional area for consideration by many community groups, and within many ongoing training courses e.g. social work, law, youth and community work training, probation, all A.C.E. and Y.T.P. training and staff development courses for community and voluntary agencies active in the community.

Single identity work

However it is now increasingly recognised that such work focusing on differences e.g. of a political or theological nature in some instances is likely to be limited unless work designed to facilitate free discussion within communities is carried out productively. If such intra-community work is not done - which is often the case because of fear and intimidation and lack of available structures through which to do the work - mutual understanding work is more likely to produce defensiveness and be therefore less effective.

Neutral Venues work

Because of the segregated nature of much of our social, cultural and working lives, it is often difficult to find venues which can be comfortably used by differing communities. While sometimes building new premises is the only option available to facilitate contact work, it is often possible, over a period of time to increase the collective usability of existing venues, despite their historical connotations. Many church halls, and some orange order halls, are now being used for mixed groups. Such usage has been possible through inclusive discussions with differing groups, taking into account their historical and existing fears about differing venues, and putting in place mixed management committees.

Examples:

E.M.U./C.R.I.S.

Focus Group.

Integrated Schools.

Co-operation North.

P.A.C.E.

Ulster People's College.

Youth Action.

North West Youth and Community Project.

Corrymeela Community.

Holiday projects.

Prisoners' Concern Groups.

Churches Central Committee for Community Work.

Women's Information Group.

Ainsworth Community Association.

Sports Council community relations programme.

Lurgan Friendship Group.

Rotary Mutual Understanding project.

Kilcooley Environmental project.

Methods:

- Contact work.
- Collective Issues work e.g. on economic development, the Environment, etc.
- Co-operation work e.g. between industries, sports groups, etc. village festivals, including all cultural groups.
- Group work, focusing on issues of difference and possible co-operation.

Anti-sectarian work

Objectives: Work designed to decrease sectarianism at individual, group and institutional level.

Rationale and development

While changing attitudes is often an important first step, changing behaviour and organisational practice is even more important in ensuring effective community relations work. Increased understanding and respect must alleviate exclusion i.e. structures which ignore the needs of one or another community.

Anti-sectarian work is designed to address the problem of the occurrence of such exclusion, discrimination and sectarianism at either an individual or structural level. It will usually concentrate in the first place on identifying and analysing the existence of such exclusion and discrimination, investigating the causes for its occurrence and taking steps to redress it insofar as it is possible and desirable.

It judges the success of its work not by changes in attitudes, though these will often be addressed as part of the process, but by tangible behavioural changes and measurable indices.

Addressing such issues will frequently lead to agencies analysing and addressing the spread of their customers, reshaping their management committees so as to ensure an adequate cross community composition, and ensuring that their premises are seen to be accessible to all communities. Ensuring such accessibility may mean reviewing patrons of an organisation, symbols used, public holiday allocation, etc.

In addition, it may mean addressing inequalities within an agency or institution, reassessing work practices which inhibit equal opportunities, and developing measures designed to redress sectarian imbalances. Where carrying out such work may raise tensions, suitable opportunities will need to be provided to deal with such concerns i.e. through the use of trained shop stewards, or other designated persons within an agency.

Examples:

Playboard Anti-Sectarian project.
 I.C.T.U. Peace, Work and Progress Campaign.
 N.I.C.V.A. Community Relations Training.
 I.C.T.U. Trade Union Youth Working Group.
 C.C.E.T.S.W. Training for Social Workers.
 N.U.S. Anti-sectarian programme.
 Derry Peace and Reconciliation Group.
 Counteract.
 Y.M.C.A. Anti-sectarian programmes.
 Interface: Anti-sectarian project of the W.E.A.

Methods:

- Analysis of existing composition of a work force and clientele.
- Discussion of the causes of any sectarian imbalances observed.
- Establishing an anti-sectarian policy within an organisation.
- Development of work with a focus on action to redress discrimination/sectarianism.

Anti-intimidation work

Objective: *Work which is designed to address intimidation occurring within or between groups or communities.*

Rationale and development

Intimidation occurs when people are influenced to take a certain course of action because of fear. It can occur at many levels throughout Northern Ireland, both within and between communities and can be enforced through subtle or explicit means.

Within-community intimidation

Such intimidation prevents people from e.g. being free to support or not support collections, buy publications, decide whether or not to fly flags or to paint their kerbs, or put up or take down arches, or to open or close their businesses on e.g. funeral or marching days. Such within community intimidation is particularly destructive in that it often inhibits community consideration and discussion about difficult issues, and about possibilities for political options.

At a more explicit level of intimidation is the pressure to pay 'protection' money or to surrender one's house or car for use by paramilitaries, and the increasing practice of punishment meted out by paramilitaries within both communities against young people, mostly males, accused of anti-social behaviour. The use of knee-capping, spine shooting, and murder are now used in an attempt to keep law and order, particularly in communities where the police are perceived as not acceptable as enforcers of such order.

Inter-community intimidation

Intimidation between communities continues to be a persistent problem, often preventing people from feeling free to choose where to walk, live or work. Mixed married couples, or people living as a minority in a community are particularly vulnerable to aggression, as are those living in interface areas.

Random sectarian attacks have also made many areas unsafe, and general threats by paramilitaries to almost every sector in both communities have increased feelings of vulnerability and fear. Apparently random bombing by paramilitaries of installations and whole towns has also contributed to a general feeling of helplessness against those who choose to use intimidation to secure a particular political option, or to enforce their power within a particular community, rather than rely on persuasion and democratic debate to secure their aims.

Security force harassment

The containment of paramilitarism has ensured a dramatically increased level of policing in Northern Ireland, as well as a large level of army personnel stationed in the region. Such containment has resulted in harassment in some areas - particularly nationalist areas. Such harassment includes repeatedly stopping individuals and family members suspected of being sympathetic to paramilitaries, individuals going to and from G.A.A. matches, and pressure on individuals (beyond the use of conscience or citizenship) to become informers.

Anti-intimidation work

Anti intimidation work is work which is designed to address the above issues in the belief that people are entitled above all to life itself, to feel safe in choosing where to work or live, and to feel free to speak their minds about all contentious issues, without fear of intimidation.

There are various levels at which anti-intimidation work needs to occur to be effective. The work, by its nature, is often very difficult to deal with, and will usually need concerted action to be safely carried out.

Within community intimidation can be addressed by reconciliation and other groups using community surveys to identify what is not acceptable at community level and thus sending clear messages to the paramilitaries and others involved in intimidation. The use of significant figures within the community -

such as ministers and priests - to challenge unacceptable practices can be helpful, as can the use of external bodies such as Amnesty International, and Helsinki Watch.

Mediation, carried out by facilitating groups and individuals between threatened persons and paramilitaries, can also help, although the danger of colluding with the paramilitaries in their desire to expel anti-social young people from the community can be problematic. Discussions involving community and statutory agencies to address criminal and anti-social behaviour within communities, other than through the use of violence are also necessary.

Existing community groups e.g. tenants associations, women's groups, church groups can also be helpful by assisting community discussion about practices such as kerbstone and wall paintings, collections etc. so as to ensure that they are agreed, rather than imposed by a few within the community.

Inter - community intimidation can sometimes be dealt with through the use of intermediary groups, or individuals, particularly those who come from the same community as the intimidators. It can also be facilitated by inter community groups who can agree to try and alert each other to tension and possibilities of sectarian intimidation, and agree upon possibilities to protect minorities living within their communities. Advice bodies can also help by giving advice to the victims of intimidation, thus not only providing a necessary service, but also openly indicating to the public that the issue is present in our society and needs to be addressed.

Groups can also openly question the validity of their being any 'legitimate targets' for murder, and unite across all community divides to condemn such murders.

In order to address concerns about intimidation by the security forces, groups can use their own community groups or spokespersons to convey such concern to the police, if they feel in need of such support. Or they can avail of the services of such organisations as the C.A.J. In addition they can use informal liaison groups existing in some communities to address such complaints, or they can set up such community liaison groups, to ensure that such complaints are speedily heard and unacceptable patterns of behaviour are identified, and prevented.

Examples:

Counteract (ICTU) Anti-Intimidation Unit.
 Citizen's Advice Bureau - advice on intimidation.
 Families Against Intimidation and Terror.
 Base 2 - work with young people.
 Derry Peace and Reconciliation Group.
 R.U.C. (including anti-racketeering helpline).
 Peace Train Organisation.
 C.A.J. (Records and deals with concerns about the security forces).
 Non-Violent Action Training Group.
 C.R.C. networking group on Intimidation.
 Drumcree Faith and Justice group.

The use of significant individuals within a community can also be helpful, and in particular the work of community workers, ministers and priests.

Methods:

- Skills training in giving advice and dealing with instances of intimidation.
- Community protection of those likely to be intimidated.
- Community surveys and public campaigns re intimidation.
- Counselling service for those who are intimidated.
- Victim/offender mediation.
- Police/community liaison committees, formal or informal.

Cultural Traditions work

Objectives: Work designed to affirm and develop cultural confidence and an acceptance of cultural diversity.

Rationale and development

Cultural Traditions work is based on the belief that diversity within a society is to be respected and not necessarily to be regarded as a threat. It presumes that different cultural and religious perspectives, and even differing preferences for political options, can co-exist within a society and that no one group or community should regard it as their right or duty to dominate or intimidate the other into adopting alternative beliefs and practices. It suggests that arrangements to express such plurality should be developed, and that differing cultural values must be respected in the development of legislation.

It believes that denying a community a distinctive cultural development can contribute to feelings of alienation on the part of many members of that group. It also suggests that the development of cultural confidence work can contribute to the capacity of a community to enter into negotiations with other communities without the excessive defensiveness which can result from insecurity about identity and hence it believes that such work can usefully precede e.g. political options work.

It may be useful to think of cultural traditions work happening through a variety of processes, and in groups of differing composition and pace.

Affirmation

Cultural Traditions work offers a useful way for groups to both affirm and reassess their histories, and feel assured in their identities. Affirmation work concentrates on validating the existence of particular groups, with their differing cultural, social and theological expressions and perspectives. The aim of such work is to increase the confidence of the particular community, affirming their right to be different and ensuring such differences are validated through government and, if necessary, legislative structures.

Reflection

This is work which assumes that a community has developed sufficient confidence to be able to reflect upon, and even challenge possibly simplistic beliefs about its own past and present perspectives which may have contributed to sectarianism. It can provide a safe way to acknowledge contentious historical material which challenges simplified views of allegiances, past and present. This is work which is probably best done on a within-community basis and the aim of such work is to address beliefs which prevent the development of empathy and cross cutting interest between the communities.

Sharing

This is work which continues the type of reflection outlined above, but which is developed on a cross-community basis. Its aim is to permit shared information, reflection upon differing perspectives of similar events and the reasons for such differing perspectives, and facilitate the gradual development of understanding and respect between communities for each other's viewpoints of history.

Pluralism

This is work which concentrates on both legitimising and even celebrating the existence of different cultural traditions. People involved in such work will accept that communities have valid but differing perspectives about their cultural and political hopes for Northern Ireland and that these must all be considered and accommodated in any future negotiations about legal and constitutional structures.

While much of the above work has been happening over the last few years in Northern Ireland, possibilities for its further development would seem to abound. Much of such work can happen through local historical societies. The Federation of Ulster Local Studies has been encouraging the development of networks for furthering contact between groups from different communities through shared meetings, presentations across the divide of research that is informative of differing cultures, and even provocative of reflection upon accepted historical simplicities, and the use of 'dual perspective' presentations on historical events which are seen very differently from each side of the divide.

Community Arts i.e. work which happens through the energise and commitment of local people offers many possibilities for encouraging discussion of an affirming, reflective and challenging nature between communities. Local community projects in particular provide possibilities for communities and individuals to reflect upon their present and past preoccupations and relationships, particularly if allied with parallel discussions upon the dramatic themes.

The development of musical programmes and projects which respect the validity of differing musical traditions has also been significant, as has the promotion of such work through local festivals, and as part of community relations activities.

Many cultural celebrations, particularly at local level now often include marching and other bands from both traditions, and such inclusion can offer a public validation of pluralism in action.

Examples:

Cultural Traditions Group.

Ulster Society.

Federation for Ulster Local Studies.

Irish Language Development Groups e.g. Newry and Mourne Council.

Irish Language Programmes of the B.B.C.

John Hewitt Summer School.

W.E.A. Seminars Series on Radical Dissenting Tradition, and on Writers in the Irish Language.

Farsset Project on the Somme.

Siege of Derry Project.

Charabanc Theatre.

Different Drums project.

Echoes Exhibition.

Methods:

- Local history groups.
- Scottish and Irish language and dance classes.
- Conferences/seminars/lecture series.
- Publications.
- Writer's classes.
- Exhibitions - visual arts, historical, artefact.
- Oral history and reminiscence projects.
- Cross community trips to areas of historical interest.
- Community drama, accompanied by discussion and workshops.
- Videos, radio programmes, films, books.
- Shared festivals and marches.

Justice and rights work

Objectives: The development of collectively agreed principles of justice and rights.

Rationale and development

Unfortunately, addressing issues of rights and justice has often been contentious in Northern Ireland. Frequently, such issues have been addressed by communities only in terms of their own particular communities rights, and the rights of the other community are often ignored, or viewed suspiciously. Ensuring cross community agreement on what constitutes issues of rights and justice is crucial, if difficult, work.

The Development of Bills of Rights/Charters of Rights is often seen as a useful way for nations, communities and groups to clarify the bases upon which they wish to protect individual and collective rights and design their legislation. It is believed such charters provide a useful yardstick towards which a society can aspire to move in its structural and legislative development.

There has been a considerable amount of work done on the promotion of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland with various organisations and politicians and a general consensus appears to be that such would be useful, although the particulars of such a Bill have still to be agreed.

It would seem useful therefore to encourage the development of such work at a collective community level as well in order to facilitate the wide ranging discussion which such a delineation of the particulars of such a Bill would entail.

The work involved in the development of such a Bill, particularly if done collectively between groups, can provide a useful basis for future political progress and through its development people and groups can tease out and define interests, take account of group fears, and provide for the particular protection of community and individual rights in a society aspiring to be pluralist.

Civil Liberties Education work is also an area through which issues of a contentious nature can be discussed between communities, providing a focus for groups to assess the reality of a communities law and order and security needs and their possible management within a democracy. In particular, discussions about existing extra-ordinary legislation, such as the EPA and the PTA, can provide some useful grist for discussions about the appropriate and inappropriate use of legislation to address security needs.

An extension of Civil Liberties work e.g. through Adult Education and Community bodies and Advice and Law centres would also seem to provide a useful focus for cross community discussion on the necessary and possible balances between security and liberty in Northern Ireland and what is both right and effective.

Addressing the significant abuses of human rights by paramilitaries is best done by communities addressing such rights in a principled way i.e. one which is equally concerned by such abuses in either community, and where possible co-operating between communities on best ways forward to address such abuses.

Examples:

P.A.C.E. public discussions on the PTA and ETA.

C.A.J.

Queen's University Human Rights Centre.

S.A.C.H.R.

Participation in Amnesty, Helsinki watch and Liberty consultations.

F.A.I.T.

Methods:

- Group discussions on possibilities for a Bill of Rights.

- Civil Liberties Education with cross communities groups.
- Local action to curtail paramilitary abuses e.g. community surveys, debates with those who support such abuses, use of external bodies such as Amnesty International, etc.

Political options work

Objectives: Work designed to facilitate political discussion within and between communities.

Rationale and development

Political Options work is work based on the belief that the conflict in Northern Ireland needs to be addressed through the development of political frameworks, at both the local and regional level, which are more widely accepted than those which exist at present. The participants in such work commit themselves to listening to those whose preferred political options might be different to their own and attempting to understand the reasons for convictions which are different to theirs. The work is also about collectively trying to develop alternatives which can satisfy the valid aspirations of the majority of both communities.

Those who develop and promote political options work believe that the eventual development of satisfactory political options by the major political parties will be inhibited unless discussion about such options can take place at a more local level. Such local discussion can help to delineate the complexities of any proposed solutions, and encourage the development of collective social interests upon which such negotiations can take place.

Such discussion of interest and possibilities can and should occur at a much wider and more varied level throughout the communities than at present. The response e.g. to the New Ireland Group political seminars, and those of Corrymeela, and the interest in the Initiative '92 process testifies both to such possibilities and to the interest they generate.

It might be useful therefore for e.g. political parties themselves to encourage much more open consideration of their policies than those that occur at party conferences, possibly through discussion evenings open to both communities. If such discussions could be widened to include speakers from a variety of political opinions, the opportunities for profitable debate, if handled carefully can prove extremely productive.

Discussions which also encourage political parties to collectively address social issues which transcend their immediate political concerns can also prove useful in facilitating effective inter-community political dialogue. Such work can be usefully be developed in conjunction with some of the many reconciliation, community, youth and professional organisations who wish to support the development of such work. Schools can also extend invitations to local councillors and other politicians to enter into debate with them, and all broadcasting stations, including those which are more local, can encourage wide participation and debate and political preferences and options. Often such stations are willing to take on board suggestions from individuals and communities about such how such debate can be facilitated.

The more ghettoised a community, a group or a political party is, for reasons of history, segregated territory, or deliberate exclusion, the harder it can be for it to enter into productive political debate with other communities. Community groups in particular, because of the informal nature of much of their work can help alleviate the exclusion of such groups or individuals from the challenge of political debate by arranging informal opportunities for cross community contact between such groups, and facilitating listening between them. In this way, stereotypes can be challenged by such contact, and political perspectives, often simplified at a distance, can be teased out in greater complexity.

Examples:

New Ireland Group.

Northern Consensus Group.

Quaker House meetings.

Corrymeela Political Conferences 1988 and 1989.

People's College Political Seminars Work.

Conflict Mediation Network Political Group.

Q.U.B. Social Studies Seminars.

W.E.A. development sessions and facilitating political discussion.

Initiative _92.

- Methods:
- o Political discussion work, through groups, seminars, workshops and publications.
 - o Pre-election cross community discussions with politicians.
 - o Training to facilitate political discussion.
 - o Broadcasting community discussions on politics.
 - o Encouraging greater participative involvement in the representative political structures.

Inter-church work

Objectives: *Work concerned with developing understanding, respect and co-operation between the churches.*

Rationale and development

The churches in Northern Ireland are still very much an integral part of most people's lives, with church attendance in Northern Ireland (and in the Republic of Ireland) among the highest in the world. The capacity therefore of the churches to positively contribute to breaking down divisions within Northern Ireland is extensive. Such divisions can be addressed in a variety of ways by church attenders and groups, and in particular by their various ministers and priests.

Inter church work can be designed in such a way as to lead to more open interpretations of previously held theological convictions which may have assisted in the development of defensive or discriminatory behaviour. It can challenge us to re-address our beliefs in the context of a pluralist society and the need to take account of differing belief perspectives by e.g. reassessing possibilities for equal expressions of religious loyalties in national legislation or in mixed marriage. Opportunities for Inter-Church work can usefully be developed by all churches.

Such work is sometimes more successful if it is done, at least in the first instance, within particular churches or groups, where threat is very low and questioning can be safely done with a minimum of defensiveness. Local discussion groups which have thus gained some confidence can gradually begin to involve themselves in cross-community sharing.

Inter church work can also ensure that, where possible, people from different churches can co-operate together on social and cultural issues, and in addressing issues of sectarianism together. The work can ensure that where attacks or murders occur, the churches are united in condemning such actions, and joint attendances at wakes and funerals resulting from such actions can limit community tension accruing from them.

Cross-community church groups can also prove extremely useful in helping communities to deal with the aftermath of sectarian attacks and the prevention of intimidation at both individual and community level. The development of such work can be assisted by clear policy statements condemning such actions by all of the major churches. The responsibility of communities to protect minorities living within their neighbourhoods community can also be usefully fostered by the churches.

Examples:

Drumcree Faith and Justice Groups.
 Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland.
 Rostrevor Christian Renewal Centre.
 Corrymeela Community.
 Y.M.C.A. Anti-sectarian work.
 Scripture Union Mutual Understanding programme.
 Frontier Youth Trust.
 Falls/Fitzroy Bible Study Group.
 The Churches Trust.
 Cornerstone Community
 Columbanus Community.
 Castledearg Clergy Fellowship.
 1st Lisburn/St.Patrick's group.
 Lurgan Inter-Friendship prayer group.

Methods:

- Publications.
- Discussions/conferences.
- Bible study sessions.
- Inter-church visitations.
- Joint church services.
- Clergy meetings.
- Peace wall meetings.
- Visiting preachers from other churches.
- Joint prayer groups.
- Joint action/discussion on local social issues.
- Clergy training for community relations work.

Conflict resolution work

Objective: Developing approaches to resolving conflicts at local and regional level which are non-violent, just and effective.

Rationale and development

Since the end of World War II there has been an increasing interest on the part of both academics and practitioner alike in analysing and reviewing the occurrence of conflicts and how they can be resolved, or at least managed more effectively. It is now believed that conflicts do not necessarily have to take place on a 'win/lose' basis and that in many cases 'joint problem solving' i.e. where the problem is seen as a collective one rather than the problem of the other side, can produce mutual gain. Considerable time has been spent analysing the skills needed to achieve such results which have included joint interest identification, structured listening between groups, and the development of creative approaches to local conflict management. Some emphasis has also been placed in such work on the development of the skills of mediation for third parties willing to serve as facilitators between conflicting parties.

Work has already started in Northern Ireland in promoting alternative models of conflict resolution in a variety of areas, particularly within schools, and such work can be usefully encouraged to develop. The development of local mediation and conflict management services has also been developing, either through the informal availability of skilled individuals, or through structured services such as neighbourhood dispute resolution centre, which can be used as an alternative to the sometimes inappropriate use of e.g. the Housing Executive, the R.U.C., or the paramilitaries to solve disputes. The hope is that such skills can empower people to deal with conflict in a manner that is less aggressive and more widely useful.

Through developing alternative models of conflict, and increasing the skills of people to deal with conflict in their particular communities e.g. in schools, neighbourhoods, and work places, it is hoped that this can contribute to their capacity to deal more constructively with conflict at an inter-community or political level.

Those who are developing skills training in conflict resolution at a political level will focus on increasing people's capacities to handle contentious discussions constructively. Such work will include dealing with prejudice and bigotry, the hurts of history and present day injustices. It will encourage adequate ventilation of fears between groups, empathetic listening between conflicting groups, and the development of scenarios for mutual gain solutions to the political conflict.

The encouragement and training of people to facilitate such work can be developed through some of the many institutions who already provide training e.g. youth, and adult and community education sectors, local community development groups, women's and trade union groups and university training courses.

Examples:

Conflict Mediation Network.
Non-Violent Action Training Group.
Quaker Peace Education Project.
Understanding Conflict Project.

Methods:

- Conflict management skills.
- Cultural awareness training for conflict managers.
- Anger and aggression management.
- Mediation work and training.
- Prejudice reduction workshops.
- Political mediation skills.
- Alternatives to Violence Programme in prisons.

2. Contextual community relations work

By Contextual Community Relations Work is meant that work which, while not usually seen as the direct responsibility of bodies whose prime focus is Community Relations, nevertheless would appear to be necessary or useful to its effective development. Such work can be undertaken by the Government directly, by various statutory and semi-statutory bodies and by other institutions, particularly those involved in education and training.

Community development

Where there has been a history of effective community development work at a local level in Northern Ireland, the effectiveness of community relations work has been greatly enhanced. Such work can happen more easily and more effectively when there are already structures and networks in place through which contacts can be facilitated and the lack of such networks on either side of the sectarian divide, and available groups and community leaders with which to work, seriously hinders the initiation of work designed specifically to address cross-community division.

Community development work, as well as providing networks and structures that are fruitful for the development of initial contact work, can also contribute in other ways. It can provide opportunities for issue based work to be developed at a co-operative level and on an on-going basis between communities, which can in turn increase the possibility of people obtaining accurate information about each other and the gradual development of respect between them. It can provide mechanisms for developing confidence in people and communities to engage in the wider political process. It can also help to encourage the emergence of community leaders who are capable of moving beyond the simple clichés of much of our existing politics and of engaging with the actual complexities of developing a pluralist society.

For community development work to effectively assist in addressing the above community relations needs, community development groups need to recognise the extra work that is involved in addressing such needs, and ensuring that such issues are added to existing agendas. This can be done by involving themselves in qualitative cross-community work, as well anti-sectarian work, neutral venues work, and anti-intimidation work where necessary.

Trusted and accessible security forces

The clear impartiality of all government agencies and employees can contribute to the general belief of people in a system of government which is just and accountable. However, it is the obviously impartial behaviour of all security forces that may prove to be one of the most important factors in increasing possibilities for effective community relations work. Any evidence of a lack of such impartiality can make the development of community relations work in an area much more difficult. While many measures have been taken to ensure such neutrality and accountability, understanding of the necessity for a very positive interface, even in difficult areas, is sometimes too limited, and continued training and development work to achieve a neutral and positive interface, where such interface is necessary, is vital. The development of informal community liaison groups can often be useful in ensuring feedback about problematic interface issues, and in ensuring that such are addressed.

In addition, the development of transparent and accessible complaints processes and procedures are extremely important in developing trust in the process of law and order, and a programme to ensure greater clarity among communities about the particular responsibilities of the main bodies concerned with security i.e. the R.U.C., the Army (including the Royal Irish Regiment), the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, the Independent Commission for Police Complaints, and the Independent Commissioner for Army Complaints Procedures.

Pluralist environments

Because of historical circumstances, the capacity of people from differing communities to work, play, live and learn together has been effectively limited. For some people in some communities, it is still possible to reach late teens without having had any qualitative contact with people who come from a traditional community which is different to their own. Within such segregated environments, fears, prejudice and communal myths flourish and fester without opportunity for discussion or rebuttal. While recent attempts at Integrated Education are a welcome move in alleviating such segregation, they represent only a minor response to a major problem.

The development of more mixed housing estates, mixed leisure centres, youth clubs, etc. would seem to be worthy of substantial consideration. Such development, to be successful and resistant to intimidation, would need to happen in conjunction with residents' and tenants' associations committed to the retention of such pluralism, and District Councils committed to their development. Similarly, the further development of Trade Union work aimed at creating environmental pluralism within the work place could, if undertaken with greater vigour and through wider support and education, help work communities to examine their perceptions and practices and contribute substantially to the development of more pluralist workplaces.

Targeting social need

It is now recognised by Government that the existing structural imbalances in wealth and employment need to be seriously addressed and resourced. Such imbalances, unless alleviated, will continue to fuel justifications for resentment and violence. If such inequality remains extensive, it will seriously undermine community relations work.

Similarly, if redressing imbalances at the macro level are seen to undermine existing employment tenures, or ignore differentials existing within communities on both sides, such redress work will inevitably be met with resistance on the part of those who feel such efforts threaten them, and make them less inclined to be responsive to work designed to increase understanding between the two communities.

In order to address existing deficits of wealth and employment, widespread economic development is vital. Such economic development and employment creation should take into account where possible the necessity to lay pluralist foundations to any future employee constituency and work practice, and consciously avoid developing employment opportunities which could perpetuate existing segregation. Work-creation agencies should also consider specifically encouraging enterprises which cross-cut the sectarian divide, assisting if necessary with practical advice about how to increase and implement such possibilities.

Training in critical thinking

The development of flexible and non-defensive thinking, the capacity to cope with complex political and social issues and to refuse to indulge in simplistic scape-goating can be cultivated through many different institutions and not merely those which are focused upon community relations work. Although research has shown that institutions in Northern Ireland have not been known for their capacity to encourage such complex and flexible thinking, there is some evidence that these skills, once acquired, are transferable and can be subsequently used to enable people to reflect upon issues which are pertinent to the sectarian divisions of Northern Ireland. Hence if the importance of such training and development through reflective and critical education were more widely understood, accepted and supported, it could be seen that there are very few institutions of an educational, social or theological nature that would not have at least some capacity, if they so desired, to contribute to the progressive development of such skills. Through such a development they could thus assist in the creation of a more tolerant and pluralist society

in Northern Ireland, which would have consequent benefits for sustainable constitutional politics.
Summary

Overall aim of community relations work:

To increase understanding, respect and co-operation between communities in Northern Ireland, in the belief that such development can assist communities in working together to develop a solution to the Northern Ireland conflict that is both just and sustainable.

Focused community relations work

1) Mutual understanding work

Work designed to decrease ignorance, suspicion and prejudices within and between communities.

2) Anti-sectarian work

Work designed to decrease discrimination and sectarianism at individual, group and institutional level.

3) Anti-intimidation work

Work which is designed to address intimidation occurring within or between groups or communities.

4) Cultural Traditions work

Work designed to affirm and develop cultural confidence and an acceptance of cultural diversity.

5) Justice and rights work

The development of collectively agreed principles of justice and rights upon which political frameworks can be based.

6) Political options work

Work designed to facilitate political discussion within and between communities.

7) Inter-church work

Work concerned with developing understanding, respect and co-operation between the churches.

8) Conflict resolution work

Approaches to resolving conflicts at local and regional level which are non-violent, just and effective.

Contextual community relations work

- 1) Community development
- 2) Trusted and accessible security forces
- 3) Pluralist environments
- 4) Targeting social need
- 5) Training in critical thinking

Abbreviations used

A.C.E. Action for Community Employment.
C.A.J. Committee on Administration of Justice.
C.R.I.S. Community Relations in Schools.
C.C.E.T.S.W. Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work
C.M.N. Conflict and Mediation Network.
C.R.C. Community Relations Council.
D.U.P. Democratic Unionist Party.
E.M.U. Education for Mutual Understanding.
E.P.A. Emergency Protection Act.
I.C.T.U. Irish Congress of Trade Unions.
N.I.C.V.A. Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action.
N.I.C.E.A. Northern Ireland Community Education Association.
N.U.S. National Union of Students.
P.A.C.E. Protestant and Catholic Encounter.
P.T.A. Prevention of Terrorism Act.
Q.U.B. Queen's University, Belfast.
R.U.C. Royal Ulster Constabulary
Y.T.P. Youth Training Programmes.
W.E.A. Workers Education Association.
S.A.C.H.R. Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights.
S.D.L.P. Social Democratic and Labour Party.
Y.M.C.A. Young Men's Christian Association.