



CRC e-Bulletin

Update on attitudes to community relations in Northern Ireland



By **Dirk Schubotz** and **Paula Devine**

Every year the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey and the Young Life and Times (YLT) monitor attitudes to community relations and cross-community contact in Northern Ireland. Both surveys are undertaken by ARK, which is a joint research initiative by the two Northern Irish universities that aims to make social and political information available to the widest possible audience. NILT is a survey of a random sample of 1,200 adults aged 18 years and over. YLT is a postal survey of 16-year olds based on a random sample drawn from the Child Benefit Register. 627 respondents completed the 2007 YLT survey. This article is based on the 2007 data from both surveys, which are the most recent results available. Where appropriate, we make comparisons with previous surveys.

Community relations now, in the past and in future

Over the past few years, respondents to both NILT and YLT surveys have been asked whether they thought community relations in Northern Ireland were better or worse than five years previously, and whether these will be better or worse in five years time. Over time, the responses to these questions revealed how particular sections of the community felt about the progress – or lack of progress – in the Peace process, often linked to particular events, such as the breakdown of negotiations or the signing of a new treaty. In 2007, 65% of all

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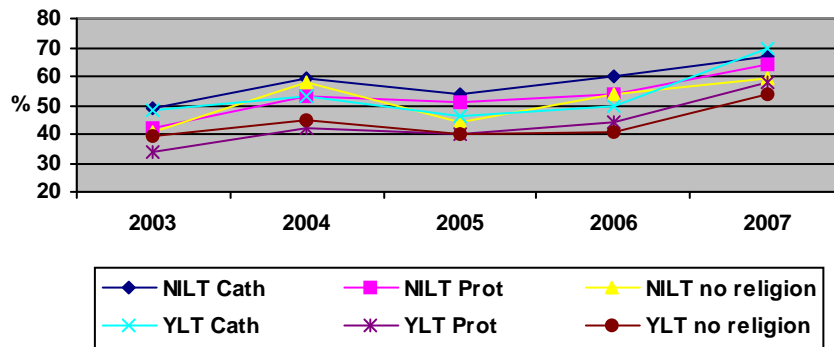
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NILT respondents and 61% of all YLT respondents felt that community relations were better than five years ago. In both surveys this was a marked increase in confidence compared to the previous year, in which only 56% in NILT and 46% in YLT had this view.

The increased confidence in community relations was also reflected in respondents' views about the future of community relations. In the 2007 YLT survey there was an increase of 10 percentage points in the proportion of 16-year olds saying that community relations would be better in five years' time (39% in 2006 and 49% in 2007). The recorded increase in NILT was similar with 64% and 55% saying relations would be better in future in the 2007 and 2006 survey respectively.

Whilst we did not ask respondents for the reasons for their optimism, in our mind there is no other meaningful explanation for this substantial increase other than the fact that successful negotiations led to the re-emergence of a power-sharing government in Northern Ireland, this time under the leadership of the two parties that have recently enjoyed the greatest support among Northern Ireland electorates. To indicate how substantial this increase is, we have included graphs showing the time series of these two questions over five years. Figures 1 and 2 indicate that in 2007, YLT Catholics were most likely to say that community relations were better than five years ago, followed by NILT Catholics and NILT Protestants. Whilst Catholics in NILT and YLT have been persistently the most optimistic group with regard to this question, it is remarkable and noteworthy that respondents with no religion are now the most pessimistic with regard to community relations both among adults and 16-year olds.

Figure 1: Respondents saying community relations are better now than five years ago

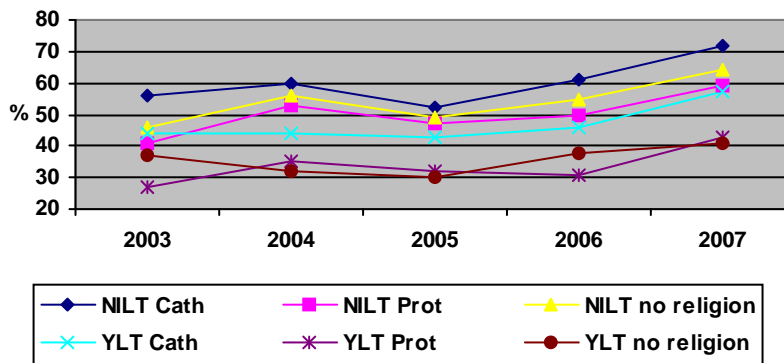


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Figure 2 shows another interesting finding, namely that even the most *pessimistic* group of respondents in NILT – that is, Protestant respondents – are still more likely to say that community relations will be better in five years' time than the most *optimistic* respondents in YLT, that is, 16-year old Catholics.

Figure 2: Respondents saying community relations will be better in five years' time than now



Attitudes to mixing

But how do 16-year olds' preferences for mixed environments compare with those of the adult population? YLT and NILT annually ask respondents whether they would prefer mixed-religious environments in three scenarios: in their neighbourhood, at work and if they were deciding where to send a child to school. Figure 3 shows that respondents with no religion in both surveys are most favourably disposed towards religious mixing. However, the last column in the Figure shows that support for mixed-religious schools is weakest, in particular among Catholic respondents. Whilst approximately one half of Catholic respondents to NILT would prefer to send a child to a mixed-religion school (54%), a much smaller proportion of 16-year olds thought the same (38%). The main finding again is, that, despite the fact that they are overall overwhelmingly positively disposed towards religious mixing, 16-year olds are significantly less likely to favour mixed-religious environments than adult respondents in all three scenarios.

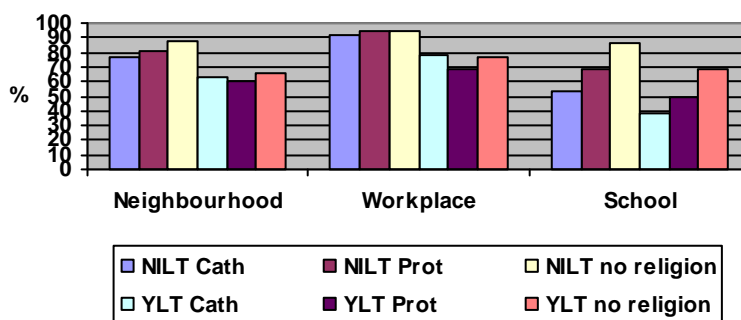


Figure 3: 2007 NILT and YLT respondents preferring mixed-religion environments

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Figure 4: NILT and YLT respondents preferring mixed-religion environments

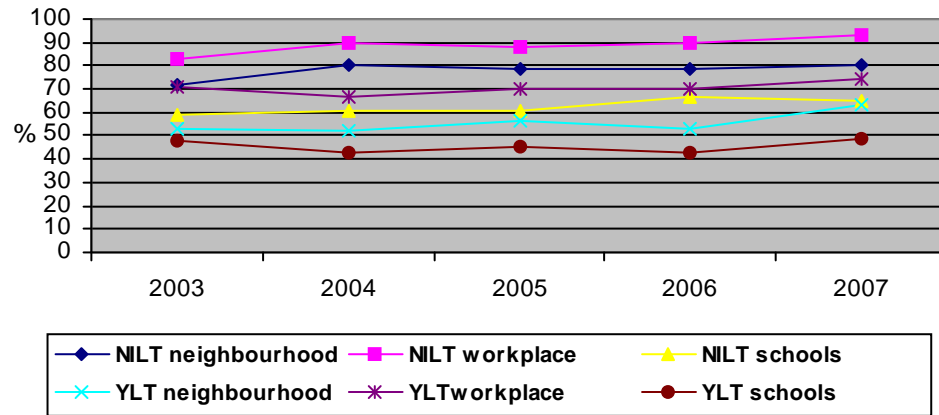


Figure 4 shows that attitudes towards mixing have remained relatively stable over the past five years both among NILT and YLT respondents. This suggests that these views are relatively independent from respondents' optimism or pessimism with regard to community relations at present and in the future, which seem much more volatile and dependent on macro-political events and developments.

Minority ethnic groups

It is much more accepted now that the community in Northern Ireland is increasingly multi-faceted and multi-cultural. NILT and YLT have recently incorporated larger numbers of attitudes question which don't purely focus on the socio-religious aspects of the relationship between Catholics and Protestants. Rather we have asked respondents about their views on, and experiences of, contact with minority ethnic groups and migrant workers living in Northern Ireland. In 2007, NILT asked a whole module of questions on minority ethnic groups, whilst YLT incorporated a number of questions within the 2007 survey as well.

Over two thirds of YLT respondents (69%) agreed or strongly agreed with a statement saying that sectarian hatred is now directed towards people from minority ethnic backgrounds and migrant workers. This underlines the relevance that increased inward migration in Northern Ireland has had for young people and their perceptions of community relations.

YLT found that only 6% of respondents overall said that they felt unfavourable towards people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Interestingly, males were approximately twice as likely as females to respond in this way (9% and 4% respectively), whilst Catholics (2%) were less likely than Protestants (8%) or respondents with no religion (7%) to say they felt unfavourably. Only 12% of YLT respondents agreed with a statement saying that, in relation to colour and ethnicity

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they preferred to stick to people of their own kind. Again, there was a significant difference between males (19% agreeing) and females (7% agreeing) as well as Catholics (9% agreeing) and Protestants (16% agreeing).

NILT asked the same question and found that, overall, 29% of respondents – over twice as many as YLT respondents - agreed with this statement. Males in NILT were only slightly more likely than females to agree (32% and 28% respectively), but as in YLT there was more difference in attitudes among people with different religious backgrounds. Whilst, as in YLT, in NILT Catholics were still somewhat less likely to agree than Protestants (27% and 35%), amongst the adult population, respondents with no religious background were least likely to support this statement (19%).

Summary

We only have space here to present a snapshot of the results of the most recent NILT and YLT surveys. Complete tables of results can be accessed through the respective survey websites (www.ark.ac.uk/nilt and www.ark.ac.uk/ylt.) What we wanted to highlight here are essentially three note-worthy points:

Firstly, there is no doubt that despite controversies and increased political polarisation, the establishment of a Sinn Féin-DUP shared government has coincided with significantly improved perceptions of community relations in Northern Ireland.

Secondly, 16-year olds remain much more sceptical about the future of community relations in Northern Ireland and are, at the same time, much less positively disposed towards religious mixing. Thirdly, interestingly, the reverse is true for ethnic mixing, where 16-year olds seem to be much more open than their adult counterparts.

At this point, we should still be careful to come to definite conclusions, but at least it appears that young people are more comfortable with the idea of a multi-ethnic society and inter-ethnic mixing, whilst more resistant to religious mixing. Perhaps this is a sign for both, an opening up of Northern Irish society beyond historic divides and evidence that those who think that the old Northern Ireland has gone should think again.

Dirk Schubotz is Young Life and Times Director at ARK and *Paula Devine* is Research Director at ARK, Queen's University Belfast

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Children of the Troubles

What is the Legacy of the Troubles for Northern Ireland's Children? By Dr Neil Ferguson

There have been over 250 wars and conflicts across the globe since WWII resulting in many children from many countries living with costs and consequences of political violence. As children are a highly vulnerable and voiceless population during war and political conflict, more needs to be done to understand the impact of exposure to conflict on the mental health of children and bring this to public attention. In Northern Ireland we, like many of the globe's citizens, have had to live with decades of political violence, the 'Troubles' led to the deaths of over 3,600 people and the injury of at least an additional 40 to 50,000 and given the small population of 1.68 million and the small geographical area of 5,456 square miles this conflict had a substantial impact on the population with an estimated 10% of the population having had relatives killed as a result of the Troubles while as many as 50% of the population will know someone who has been killed. Indeed even since the early 1970's observers of the conflict such as the media, churches and academics (especially those not from these shores) have feared for the physical and psychological well-being of those who lived through the Troubles. This fear is succinctly expressed by Rona Fields, an American psychologist who in 1976 stated that "the inhabitants of that place (Northern Ireland) are being destroyed both physically and psychologically" while others feared that the psychological impact of the conflict would stay with us long after the conflict was resolved. This article will briefly review the evidence and discuss the impact of the Troubles on the psychological well-being of Northern Irish children.

The unpredictable and random nature of the violence that took place here during the conflict and the resulting stress caused has been viewed as a source of significant emotional stress, especially for children. As a consequence researchers have paid keen attention on the impact that the violence would have on the mental health of children. Some Northern Irish children have had to deal with intense and potentially overwhelming experiences of violence, but for many their only experience is through the nightly television news. Therefore it is difficult to know how many children have been harmed by the conflict and even the estimates of the proportion of children and adolescents killed during the Troubles can vary from 8% to 17% depending on who is counting, and what criteria are used. Research also demonstrates that factors such as gender, age, socio-economic status, religion, ideological commitment and family structure can mediate the impact of political violence on a child's psychological well being.

Northern Ireland is one of the most researched places in the world and there have been decades of research on the psychological well-being of Northern Irish children. This research has tended to focus on three areas, namely, (a) child mental health, including instances of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), (b) the coping strategies children employ to diminish the stress caused by political violence, and (c) antisocial or moral behaviour and reasoning.

Political Violence and Child Mental Health

Research from countries other than Northern Ireland tends to support the argument that exposure to the stress of political conflict can have negative consequences on child mental health, however, perhaps surprisingly, researchers from Northern Ireland are

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showing this resilience and ability to successfully cope with the stress of the conflict. Researchers in Northern Ireland using coping mechanisms such as denial and distancing, in addition to a tendency to seek social support, in order to help them deal with the violence. It has also been argued that in conflicts like that experienced in Northern Ireland which continue for decades the children and adults can become habituated to the conflict, or in a way build up an immunity to the stress caused by conflict related events, with repeated exposure to stress leaving the person better equipped to deal with future stress, till the abnormal becomes the normal.

Antisocial and Behaviour

Research from areas of conflict, such as Israel and Northern Ireland suggests that exposure to sustained conflict and witnessing violent incidents is related to antisocial or delinquent behaviour and studies in Northern Ireland employing psychometric measures suggest an increased potential for acting out behaviour. The rationale for this link between exposure to political conflict and increased antisocial behaviour is that the child watches adults, his/her friends and/or older siblings engaged in violence, and thus reasons that it is appropriate and joins in. Research on this topic has explored the levels of school absenteeism, self reported delinquency, juvenile crime, levels of moral maturity, attitudes towards the use of violence, etc and many of the studies have made comparisons with other areas in Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland, Europe and North America. A cautious interpretation of these studies indicates that although in the early 1970's levels of delinquency may have risen with the increased turmoil caused by the Troubles. However, the predictions that this level would increase with successive generations acting out the amoral behaviour of older siblings or role models did not follow. Indeed recent studies comparing levels of moral maturity among Northern Irish children, adolescents and young adults, with their peers in England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland paints a very favourable picture of the ability of the Northern Irish to make mature moral judgements which are on par or even more advanced than their cross-national counterparts.

Conclusion

Although people have theorized that living with the political violence faced in Northern Ireland would have a negative impact on children's psychological well-being, few of these studies have provided evidence to support the theory that people in Northern Ireland became psychiatric casualties of the political violence during the Troubles or grew into amoral adults. Instead most evidence seems to suggest that Northern Irish children appear to be well adjusted and really rather 'normal' in comparison to their contemporaries in the South of Ireland or across the Irish Sea. However, these findings must be viewed with caution, as holding the expectation that children are resilient may lead to a situation where the psychological distress encountered by children is underestimated. In addition, it must be remembered that there are children who are severely harmed when violence touches them or their family and their suffering must not be undervalued or forgotten.

Neil Ferguson is Associate Professor of Political Psychology and Director of the Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies, at Liverpool Hope University.

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Core Funding Programme

By *Alison Keenan*, Core Funding Officer at CRC

CRC has had a core funding function since 1995. At a time when there were limited funds available, the core funding programme supported organisations that were willing to push boundaries and take risks to challenge sectarianism. In some ways not much has changed in thirteen years and in others they are virtually unrecognisable.

Many of the organisations which were amongst the first to put their heads above the parapet in the mid 90s are the keystones of community relations work today. Many others have ceased to exist or have moved into other fields.

The underlying purpose of the core funding programme is to support a community relations infrastructure in Northern Ireland. The programme funds a network of organisations that are using a range of methodologies to engage a range of constituencies both locally and regionally. We support networking organisations, reconciliation centres and community based groups. Organisations supported by the core funding programme have facilitated dialogue on contentious parades, have worked with local communities to remove paramilitary murals and have helped diffuse tension at interfaces.

What sets the core funding programme apart from other funding streams is its longevity. Approximately a third of the core funding portfolio has been supported by the programme since it was transferred to the Community Relations Council from the Central Community Relations Unit in 1995. By no means have these groups continued unchanged in this period, but rather they have grown, developed and evolved. For example many organisations which grew out of the need to respond to violence in interface communities are now focused on conflict transformation. The Peace and Reconciliation Group in the North West has moved from being focused on interventions at interfaces and at grass roots to enhancing the capacity of the sector and society through a range of accredited training programmes on skills such as mediation and conflict management.

There is no one right way to address community relations issues and the core funding programme is testament to that fact. The organisations we fund use mediation, dialogue, drama and training to bring individuals and communities together. Partisan Productions (formerly Belfast Youth and Community Theatre), works with groups and communities to develop pieces of drama on issues relevant to them and their community, it then uses a forum theatre approach to engage audiences with the issues and enable them to re-design the outcomes.

The CRC core funding programme has been in operation for 13 years now. In that time the community relations sector has grown in size and in competence. The core funding programme supports a number of organisations such as TIDES, the WEA and the Ulster People's College who develop and deliver training courses to build capacity in communities to

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address difficult issues and also to build capacity among those who work in this sector. Through support of this type of work CRC hopes to leave a legacy of skilled and confident individuals and groups who can continue to engage with new and emerging issues in society.

Some of the organisations supported by the programme wouldn't be viewed as "community relations" organisations as such, but in the context of Northern Ireland society, their work has a very clear community relations benefit. An example of this is Groundwork NI which is ostensibly an environmental regeneration agency. In a Northern Ireland context this work has a particular dimension – the creation of shared space. The Nerve Centre in Derry, better known as a concert venue and for its multimedia productions has a community relations/cultural diversity strand to its resource development.

As a relatively small funding programme, the benefit of the core funding programme is less in the individual groups supported than in the sum of its parts. It is a network and an infrastructure of local and regional groups which when taken as whole are creatively addressing the issues associated with continuing sectarianism in our society. The programme will continue to evolve alongside the sector it supports and will continue to fund both the established and the more innovative community relations groups in Northern Ireland.

New Migration, Equality and Integration: Challenge or Opportunity?

By Agnieszka Martynowicz who works at the Institute of Conflict Research in Belfast

In recent years, Northern Ireland has witnessed unprecedented changes to the make-up of its population, largely as a result of increased international in-migration. The onset of the peace process, combined with two consecutive enlargements of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, and improving economic viability of the north of Ireland meant that many people have come here to take up employment; some have come for educational reasons, while growing numbers in more recent years accompanied or joined relatives, friends or family members who have settled here.

The unprecedented scale of this phenomenon quickly highlighted the difficulties in the strategic preparation by government, employers, and service providers for dealing with additional needs and expectations of the new communities. This lack of preparation was significantly documented in research by organisations who were at the forefront of 'plugging' the provision and information gap – STEP and Animate Dungannon, the Law Centre in Belfast, and many others who provided information and support services so needed by the new residents and, increasingly, their families. The reactive nature of the initial official policies failed to consider the rapidly changing reality of the demographics of the new immigration and to recognise the increasing diversity of its impact. While making immediate provision available, some agencies until recently considered the increased inward migration a 'temporary phenomena' and did not see the need to factor it into future planning.

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New Migration, Equality and Integration: Challenge or Opportunity? (contd)

In particular, and for a considerable time, they failed to recognise that newly arrived residents have needs and expectations going beyond their role and contribution to the labour market, and to the economy and extending into education, health care, housing, and leisure, as well as political participation and community activism.

Some of the initial reactions have been necessary to enable the provision of fundamental services such as health care, and there are indications of a growing recognition that the presence of new communities in Northern Ireland ceased to be, if it ever was, a temporary occurrence. As many others working on these issues have argued before, the experience of sustained large-scale inward migration should now convince policy makers that forward planning is central, if the pressures and inequalities that follow are not to become a cause of sustained community conflict.

These arguments are in no way less valid even now when the situation on the labour market is becoming more difficult and we may see a downward trend in overall levels of inward migration. However, the perception that new residents will decide to return to their home countries in large numbers does not as yet seem to be borne out by available statistics, or empirical evidence from most recent studies. While those indicate that some people may decide to re-locate due to the worsening economic situation locally, the nature of migration into Northern Ireland has also significantly changed in the last two to three years, with more people settling here with their families permanently or at least for the foreseeable future. It is because of that changed nature of migration that planning and consideration for diversity need to be at the centre of public policy making.

While some significant progress has been made in relation to access to basic rights and entitlements by the new residents, current research suggests that the situation is still far from ideal, and inequalities of treatment remain in a number of areas. These include continuing difficulties in access to employment rights, discrimination in career progression and pay, access to education and training, and difficulties in access to affordable housing. The issue of racism and prejudice is a continuing concern, as are the limited opportunities for participation by new residents in civic and public life.

Significant improvement of access to basic rights by our new residents is a condition prerequisite to any discussion of integration. On the basis of the findings of our paper, as well as a plethora of research into the working and living conditions of migrant workers and their families, and the issue of discrimination and exclusion, we argue that unless and until access to basic rights is provided to all the new communities, their chance for 'integration' is minimal. Can there be integration where there is no equality? This part of the discussion should also include a wider look at structural inequalities built into the UK's immigration system that differentiates between those who come here from within the EU, and those who come to seek work in the country from outside of the European Union.

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New Migration, Equality and Integration: Challenge or Opportunity? (contd)

The diversity of structured inequalities among the different sub-sections of the migrant population contradicts the wider process of providing for equality among the population of Northern Ireland. It thus presents a central question for integration policy – how is it going to ensure that all the new residents, temporary or permanent, have an equal status in society?

The debate on integration in Northern Ireland has to consider the specific context of the local society, not only in relation to historical segregation and the legacy of armed conflict, but also the particular nature of inward migration in relation to national groups, sectors of employment, specific future migration plans. The debate has to move from perception of ‘migrant workers’ as one homogenous group, with identical needs and circumstances, to recognition of relationships within and between the different communities, and their respective expectations. It also needs to consider the needs of existing, long-standing Black and Minority Ethnic communities who have contributed enormously to the development of integration policies so far, and who have considerable experience that can positively contribute to public policy making.

It was against this background that the Equality Commission approached the Institute for Conflict Research to produce a “challenge paper” that would enable the Commission to lead on the change of current policy making in relation to this area. The paper, published by the ECNI in October 2008, makes a number of recommendations for public policy, including for the forthcoming Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration in relation to the impact of economic policies, monitoring, language policy, and the inclusion of community and voluntary sector in policy development. We hope that those recommendations can provide a good starting point both for the continuing debate on the nature of ‘integration’ in the context of Northern Ireland, and for finding practical solutions to the difficulties that have been identified in the report.

Full report: **Martynowicz, A.** and **Jarman, N.** *New Migration, Equality and Integration: Issues and Challenges for Northern Ireland*, was published in October

Out of the Quagmire

Ray Mullan, CRC’s Communications Director, reports on a meeting in November of the Community Relations Practitioners’ Forum.

The eventual convening of meetings of the NI Executive on 20 November after a gap of five months has been of some relief to the very many people across the community who have been awaiting government decisions on many vital bread and butter issues. The political deadlock now shows some signs of shifting but for community relations practitioners this five-month episode has been a sorry experience demonstrating a frustrating failure of political leadership in a society which needs to heal the sectarian divisions which underlay more than three decades of violence and destruction.

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Out of the Quagmire (contd)

In the week prior to the decision to reconvene the Executive a meeting of the Community Relations Practitioners Forum was held by CRC in Belfast at which a number of speakers gave vent to their frustration.

Michael Doherty, Director of the Peace and Reconciliation Group (L'Derry), pointed out that the lack of co-operation at the top level of our society does not help those working in local communities. He singled out the fact that language used by some at the DUP conference made little attempt to be inclusive. 'Now that we are in a peace process we should not become complacent,' he said. 'The only thing that has changed is that conflict has transformed to be less violent. There is still more work to do.'

The impact on the ground of the Stormont impasse had been very serious according to Michael Doherty. 'There have been a significant number of death threats coming through our office (and) I have had to get safe passage out of Northern Ireland for two young men. These threats have come from both loyalist and republican paramilitaries.'

He also added 'The rise in the number of republicans in the 'NO' camp has become alarming for loyalists.'

It was a view shared by **William Mitchell**, project worker at NI Alternatives, who works with loyalist groups and ex-prisoners to support them move away from violence. He pointed out that 'Lord Alderdice makes what he calls a reciprocal link between the Executive's failure to act and the rise in *dissident* activity. He claims there is enough factual evidence going back four years to suggest this (but) adds that thankfully the dissident activity has....not been as successful as (the dissidents) would like it to be.'

'In the long run', according to William, 'what I find equally concerning is the rise in *dissidence*- the change in attitude, rhetoric, behaviour, beliefs and so forth from our so-called leaders which is gradually subsumed by the 'ordinary' person on the street.'

So what needs to be done urgently?

'Encourage all our political leaders to find ways to accommodate each other', according to Michael Doherty, 'encourage republicans who wish to seek a military solution to think politically... (and) encourage loyalists to enter the debate face on with republicans.'

'We need to talk about the issues that divide us. Sectarianism is as raw today as it ever was.'

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Out of the Quagmire (contd)

Cyril Moorhead, who works for PLACE, a community engagement project in Portadown, is involved in both community development and political development. He recognises that the uncertainty, despondency and detachment at local level manifests itself in a lack of leadership and direction, a local vacuum and the potential for an increase in extremism.

‘In Northern Ireland it is generally accepted that it is not possible to resolve the conflict between those who believe in a United Ireland and their opponents who seek to maintain Northern Ireland’s place within the UK. Thus we seek to transform the argument from an armed violent one to a peaceful democratic one.’

‘The need to restore hope and confidence is an urgent one’, argues Cyril. ‘Projects like PLACE affecting and effecting change need to remain determined, focussed and resolute, providing the necessary courageous leadership as we tip toe through the sinking sand working towards a ‘Social Peace’.

Community Workers

By **Anne Hailes**, columnist with *the Irish News*

Community relations come in all shapes and sizes. They are all over the place and in all areas of living! There’s the community of home, of work and, on the wider scale, throughout Northern Ireland. Relationships are vital in all these areas but sometimes we need an intermediary to break down barriers be they religious or ethnic.

Every year the Community Relations Council hold a week to highlight their work bringing together local councils, public bodies as well as community and voluntary groups. They meet each other and the public to discuss a variety of issues. This year at the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre in Craigavon, Charo Lanao, Good Relations Officer with the Rural Community Network in Cookstown invited representatives from government departments, politicians, local councils and community groups to discuss the difficulties of living in a rural community, what services are available and what should be available, the needs of families including migrant families, the vulnerabilities and the tensions experienced by people working in rural Northern Ireland. It’s interesting that this woman from Peru in South America who came here seven years ago as an exchange student and decided to settle, is spearheading this initiative. “I love the place I was born but sometimes our soul finds another place you can love and that’s why I’m committed to this work, I see so many possibilities here.” Another woman making an impression has come to this country from her home in Pakistan; Mrs. Amtul Salam Khan, is a Muslim who has lived in Belfast for over 20 years and when we talked she told me she was accepted and has never experienced any discrimination although she admits that since 9/11 and 7/7 there’s a hardening of attitudes but usually based on an ignorance of the facts. There are about 4000 Muslims living in Northern Ireland, many of them students; she spoke of one young Muslim woman standing at a bus stop in the city centre when a man took the ends of her scarf, pulled them tight round her neck and told her to ‘go home’.

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Community Workers (contd)

Another woman sat in a hospital queue for hours in her traditional dress, her head covered. When eventually she asked what the delay was, she was told they were waiting for an interpreter – without checking and discovering that the woman had perfect English.

“I wish for mutual respect,” Amtul told me, not only for herself but also for those in her community. She was awarded an MBE for her voluntary work including establishing Al-Nisa Association NI Centre based in the Stranmillis area where Muslim women get together to prepare to take their place in the wider community and she launched the Muslim Culture and Traditions information booklet last year. Mrs. Khan is very devout and, not unreasonably, feels this shouldn't bother anyone else. “The fact that I pray five times a day doesn't affect anyone, if I cover my head that shouldn't offend anyone or if I am fasting during the month of Ramadan; the same if I'm laughing with my grandchildren, shopping, going to the doctor – it doesn't threaten anyone else. I don't harm anyone.”

Respect has grown in the Stewartstown Road area of Belfast thanks to an Interface Group established in 2002. There I spoke to Renee Crawford from the Catholic Lenadoon and Jean Brown from a Protestant area within Suffolk. Throughout the Troubles both women were working within their communities bringing people together but neither ventured into the other's territory even though they were separated only by a main road. Jean was intimidated out of her house, the hedge set on fire, the windows broken, chewing gum jammed into door locks. Renee kept pillows in the front room and when the rocket launchers were set off everyone grabbed a pillow and huddled against the only brick wall in the house. She pulled the wardrobe over the window to stop the blast coming through but despite this, once, holding her son in her arms she was blown through a plate glass window and her son has had serious hearing problems ever since.

12 years ago, the two women came together and their friendship and joint determination has resulted in a most successful project. Where once stood a row of derelict shops in a dangerous condition there now stands a smart, bright new building offering a variety of services from after school clubs to men's health groups, a youth forum and outreach to pensioners who are facing the dilemma of 'heat or eat'; it also incorporates Sparkles playgroup for children of all backgrounds, a chemist, a post office and shops. So this is a busy centre for every member of the community and it's testament to women all over Northern Ireland who weren't prepared to give up and worked together so their families could enjoy a more settled future.

Friendship used to be a normal part of life, knowing your neighbours and being there to help in time of trouble but this intimate contact is decreasing with the apartment culture. Even in streets and avenues many don't know their neighbours because a lot of people live in fear of opening their doors, especially the elderly, so they have no communication with the people around them.

Community Workers (contd)

“I wouldn’t know if my neighbours were in trouble,” one woman told me. “They go out early and come home late and as far as I know we’ve nothing in common.” The day of bringing a little present of welcome to a new neighbour seems to be long gone and the informal neighbourhood watch is becoming a thing of the past. When I was first married we had a vegetable man who came round every week, the bread man most days and the fish man on Friday – all gone. Many post offices and corner shops have closed and a lot of people buy and sell on e-Bay, order their groceries by Internet and have them delivered to the door - no need to leave the house. Nowadays friendly contact might only come with visits from the home help service, meals on wheels or a health visitor.

Then there’s VSB, an organisation which coordinates volunteer support through centres in Belfast, Castlereagh, North Down and Ards where people offer their time and are then linked with one of 760 helpful organisations. This might be to swing into action as they did following serious flooding in Belfast, from undertaking large scale practical work to clearing debris and helping householders with essentials. There are a number of such organisations but they are threatened because of a lack of funding. This must be addressed, they must seek more publicity and gain respect.

The bottom line is we all need each other and our support organisations.

Community Relations Week

For the last six years the Community Relations Council has co-ordinated a Community Relations Week in Northern Ireland featuring events of a community relations nature planned by individual organisations, mostly voluntary and community groups, but increasingly also District Councils and other public bodies. The aim of the Week has been to highlight the range and variety of community relations work that takes place and to raise public awareness and media interest. Last April’s Community Relations Week was highly successful, containing a programme of 150 events across every part of Northern Ireland ranging from public discussions and debates to cultural events, publication launches and award ceremonies. Half of the events were organised by public bodies. Media coverage was extensive.

Building on this success CRC has therefore decided to organise a **Community Relations Week** for 2009 to take place during the week from 27 April to 2 May 2009.

CRC is keen to encourage voluntary and community groups to organise appropriate events for inclusion in the programme. Grant aid from CRC’s small grant scheme (CR/CD Scheme) may be available to support this (the scheme closes on 12 December but re-opens for applications in early February 09). Application forms can be obtained from the CRC website (under Funding).

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Compiled and edited by Patricia O’Neill and Ellana Tomasso



CRC Council Member Profile—Tony Kennedy OBE

Tony Kennedy has been Chief Executive of Co-operation Ireland since 1992. He has extensive experience and involvement in promoting and delivering reconciliation activities between people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, in the management of cross border grants programmes and in the decision making structures for grant aid.

He has wide ranging experience in public service being the Chair of the CORE consortium, managing a major cross community project between East Belfast, Short Strand and Finglas in Dublin in partnership with community networks from those areas. He is also Chair of the North/South Ad hoc group which links non-governmental organisations that work on a North/South basis. In addition Tony sits as Deputy Chair of Ulidia Housing Association. He is a member of the Task Force on Active Citizenship (Ireland), Interreg Steering Committee and the Arts Council Northern Ireland where he is Chair of the Audit Committee.

Tony is Chair of CRC's newly formed Policy and Communications Committee.

Interfaces

Interfaces - this four part television documentary series looking at the interfaces of Belfast made by Northern Visions/NvTv in association with Belfast Interface Project is now available free to download from iTunes. Each documentary is of 40 minutes duration.

The first takes an overview of what an interface actually is, the different kinds of interfaces and common attributes, history and demographic change; the second exploring youth issues including violence at the interfaces and community based responses; the third examining the role of ex combatants in helping to build and maintain peace; the fourth examining issues of investment and regeneration, reflecting on an economic shared future, lessons learned and what changes would make a difference.

Just visit www.nvtv.co.uk and click NvTv Podcasts to be directed to the NvTv on iTunes site. Then click NvTv Documentaries to download the Interface series.

If you're thinking that your group would like to become involved with us on a similar project in 2009 or if you have a pressing local issue which you feel needs to be highlighted then please write or email us at the address below.

For those groups who have supported Northern Visions, we are pleased to report that the community media sector across Europe has been successful in its advocacy work. The European Parliament passed a resolution on Community Media in Europe in late September 2008. You can find more information at this link:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0456+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Any groups wishing to support the call for Northern Visions to become a local public service broadcaster should visit http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/psb2_1/responses/ to read the responses and find out more. This consultation is now closed to

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Interfaces (contd)

submissions but Northern Visions is happy to include responses from local community groups with its own briefings. The next meeting with the DCMS Minister is scheduled for mid January 2009 and we will be attending.

More information at www.nvtv.co.uk

Email address - marilyn@northernvisions.org

or write to

Marilyn Hyndman,
Northern Visions,
23 Donegall Street,
Belfast,
BT1 2FF

New Books in CRC Reference Library

Shadows of the Gunmen: Violence and Culture in Northern Ireland

Edited by Danine Farquharson and Sean Farrell
Published by Cork University Press

The book examines the complex relationships between violence and its representation using a series of essays from historians, film scholars, literary critics and philosophers. This collection of essays explores the connection between political/historical violence and aesthetic representations of such violence and is relevant to the Irish experience as well as the contemporary world.

Countdown to Unity – Debating Irish Reunification

Author – Richard Humphreys
Published by Irish Academic Press

The author explores how a united Ireland could be achieved by consent in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement. He looks at the legal implications and suggests a way of moving towards reunification in a spirit of reconciliation and peace. He examines the historical legal backgrounds, the legal changes that would be required now and finally the sequence of legal steps required to achieve reunification.

Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics

Edited by Aaron Edwards and Stephen Bloomer
Published by Irish Academic Press

The book focuses on the decade since the signing of the Belfast Agreement. It delineates the key stumbling blocks in the current peace and political processes and examines how the conversion from terrorism to democratic politics is being managed. The book draws its contributors from across the disciplinary boundaries of political science, history, anthropology, sociology and political sociology.

The Library is open daily between 10am-12noon and 2pm–4pm. The Library is reference only.



News/Events/Dates for your Diary

Anti-Sectarianism Fund—Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland

The purpose of the Anti-Sectarianism Fund is to assist local efforts aimed at tackling sectarianism, supporting projects in communities seeking new and more effective ways of addressing sectarianism and division in society. Closing date 31st December.

For further information and application forms see <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id+42931>

Belfast Voices: theatre in the communities

Belfast Voices is a unique project devised by theatre and performance professionals along with community activists. We use theatre techniques to address issues of diversity and understanding between people of different cultures; facilitating direct contact and genuine dialogue to dispel myths and stereotypes.

People will work in individual groups to produce a short performance piece which says something about how they see themselves and the other people of Belfast. At regular intervals the groups will all come together to present their piece and swap ideas, get feedback and work together. People return to meet in their groups, taking on board what they have heard from everybody else.

We are happy to arrange workshops for groups or to fit individuals into an already established group. You don't need any theatrical skills - whatever you can bring will be welcome and you will learn the techniques that you need. You will also develop communication and other transferable skills.

There will be performances at the end of the project but no pressure will be applied to make anyone do anything they don't want to or to work at a pace they are uncomfortable with. The work is owned by the participants and can be used in whole or in part at meetings, festivals, seminars or for any purpose that suits. Belfast Voices is willing to send someone along to do a 'taster' workshop or to speak at a meeting.

Funded by Belfast City Council Good Relations, Community Relations Council
Supported by ATL, UTU, Irish Congress of Trades Unions(NI), Stranmillis University College, St Mary's University College, South Belfast Round Table on Racism, Beyond Skin, Arts Ekta and many other organisations in Belfast

Contact Doug Holton to discuss how you can participate and share in this process.

d.holton@stran.ac.uk

07956 426 316

Interpreting course

An interpreting course is being run at the end of January 2009 by the NI Health & Social Services Interpreting Service (NIHSSIS).

The course is free of charge, however there is strict eligibility criteria including fluency in English and Country of Origin language, as well as Police checks. The Police checks are needed to actually work as an interpreter and usually takes about 6 weeks to process, however applicants can start the course without having the checks completed.

For an application form please contact:

Project Office Phone: 028 90563783 ext: 3783 Applications are also available to

download from the link www.workingwithdiversity.org/div/racialgroup/interpreters.php10.

Applications should be in by 18th December.

News/Events (contd)

Northern Ireland: A Triumph of Politics - interviews and analysis 1988-2008

by Frank Millar.

Published by Irish Academic Press, price £19.95 paperback (£45.00 hardback). Orders may be placed at the publishers website www.iap.ie

London correspondent of the Irish Times, Frank Millar, has produced a new book based on interviews he has conducted over the last twenty years with key players in the political peace process. These include Gerry Adams, Bertie Ahern, Tony Blair, John Hume, Ian Paisley, Peter Robinson, David Trimble, Mitchell Reiss and many others. Together with the author's own analysis and his engagement with key participants the book provides an insight into the shifting political peace process.

Latin American Festival

Latinoamerica Unida Association invite you to a Latin American Festival on Sunday 14th December between 11am–4pm at Shaftesbury Community and Recreation Centre, Balfour Avenue, Belfast. For further information phone 02890 319963.

Who is my Neighbour? Christian faith and the Protestant Working Class

In 2008-2009 the gulf between Christian churches and working-class communities has never been greater. Many ordinary people feel totally alienated from an institution that they think looks down upon them. Many churches are fearful of communities which give the appearance of being dominated by paramilitaries. Yet there are also a number of Christian activists who now commit themselves to living in and for working-class communities and breaking down the barriers that have grown much wider in recent decades.

Philip Orr has written about this topic in his recent publication *New loyalties—Christian faith and the Protestant working-class*.

You are invited to hear Philip talk about the findings in his book on 8th and 15th January 2009 at 8pm, in the Church of the Nazarene, Oakfield Drive, Carrickfergus. Admission is free.

Good Practice Guide

Mediation Northern Ireland have produced *Mediative Work with Local Governance—A good practice guide* for copies or further information contact Denise Hughes, Development Officer, Mediation Northern Ireland, 83 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HP or phone 028 9043 8614.

EU Peace III Programme 2008-10

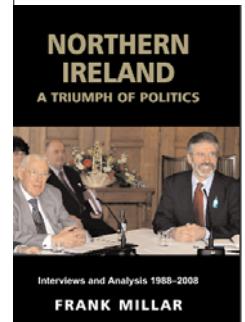
Belfast City Council has been awarded £6.3 million under measure 1.1 of Peace III, an EU programme 2008-10 to support peace and reconciliation. Our Good Relations Partnership will be responsible for allocating this funding to a range of groups and organisations in Belfast.

The Programme is now open and we are inviting: applications for Peace III small grants (up to £25,000)

The application form and guidance notes for small grants can be downloaded from the address below. The closing date for receipt of applications is Monday 5 January at 12.00 noon.

If you are planning any projects relating to securing shared city space, transforming contested space, developing shared cultural space or building shared organisational space, you may be eligible to apply for this funding.

For more information visit our website at:
www.belfastcity.gov.uk/goodrelations/PeacellIIGrants.asp



News/Events (contd)

Spirit of Enniskillen Trust 'Explore' 2009

'Exploring your potential, leading change'

The Spirit of Enniskillen (SOE) 'Explore' 2009 leadership and dialogue programme is now seeking applications from interested young people aged between 16 to 19 and resident in Northern Ireland.

Through Explore, the sixty young participants selected will take part in an overseas project hosted in Cyprus, Sweden, Canada or the USA where they will learn alongside others coming from diverse and sometimes conflicting backgrounds. In exploring how these regions are dealing with their differences, they will also develop the skills and capacity to open positive dialogue and learning in communities at home. Explore is accredited at three levels through the Open College Network NI.

We are particularly interested in attracting applications from individuals with the potential to impact positively on the attitudes of others. Through delivery of our 'Together' inter-schools' dialogue and learning programme in NI and Oldham, many young volunteers will bring their skills to a new and even deeper level. To facilitate this commitment the SOE provides further training and mentoring for all those who engage. Details of all SOE schools programmes can be found on www.soetrust.co.uk

Explore application forms can be downloaded from the website or by contacting 028 9038 1500.

All SOE learning programmes are carried out within an appropriate balance of seriousness and fun. To maintain a balance of individuals from across the community, the SOE will particularly welcome applications of those coming from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Final closing date for Explore 2009 applications is Monday 22nd December 2008.

Justice and the three Rs – Reconciliation, Restoration and Reparation

Ballymoney Community Resource Centre and Wave Trauma Support are holding a conference on Restorative Justice in Ballymoney Town Hall on Friday 12 December 2008. The conference is being funded by the Community Relations Council.

Ballymoney Community Resource Centre and WAVE are working together to address a number of difficult issues that affect the local community. This one-day conference on the theme of Restorative Justice will look at possible community led restorative justice solutions to issues in Northern Ireland today, including, *Truth Recovery and Restorative Justice, Restorative Justice as a tool for combating Anti-Social Behaviour and Restorative Justice as a tool for Mediating Community Conflict*. At the centre of the event will be a debate in which conference delegates will be encouraged to participate and which will cover topics such as perceptions of justice in Northern Ireland today, how things might change in light of the new proposals for the devolution of policing and justice, and government recognition of community based restorative justice schemes.

For further information please contact either Pat McCauley of WAVE Pat's email address is projectmanager@waveballymoney.co.uk, and the telephone number is 02827669900, or myself, Lyn Moffett at BCRC on 028 2766 5068, or by email at manager@ballymoneycrc.org.uk.

Derry City Council Grant Aid

Derry City Council's Main Grant Aid (Including Community Relations Main Grant Aid) will be open for applications for the financial year 09/10 from Monday 8th December 2008. Applications close strictly 3pm on 23rd January 2009. Groups are advised to consult the website for fuller details on www.derrycity.gov.uk/grantaid

If you would like to comment or submit an article for this bulletin or advertise a community relations event or publication, please contact Patricia at poneill@nicrc.org.uk or Ellana at info@nicrc.org.uk.

NewsEvents (contd)

Concepts of the After-Life in the Different Religions

The regular meeting of the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum is being held on Wednesday 3rd December and we would be very happy if you could join us. The theme for the evening is: "Concepts of the After-Life in the Different Religions",

The meeting is being held at 7.30 pm, in the Senior Common Room, on the ground floor of Stranmillis House, Stranmillis University College, Stranmillis Road, Belfast. Tea, coffee, fruit juice and biscuits will be available on arrival.

Entrance to the College is by the main gate on Stranmillis Road, and Stranmillis House is situated up the hill at the top of the campus, and is identifiable by the two stone lions at its entrance. Parking is freely available within the College grounds.

All our main Forum meetings are open meetings and we are happy to welcome everyone to them. We hope to have a good attendance for what should prove a very interesting evening, and we hope you will be able to join us.

Devolution—how are we doing?

Coleraine Borough Council and Kilcranny House invite you to a Community Dialogue on Devolution on Thursday 4th December 2008 from 7-8pm at Lodge Hotel Travelstop. Guest speakers are John Dallat MLA and David McLarty MLA deputy speakers for the NI Assembly. RSVP to Rachel Rafferty at Kilcranny House, phone 028 7032 1816 or email rachel.rafferty@kilcrannyhouse.org.

Light refreshments will be served.

Cultural Diversity Events in Limavady

Language Diversity Event, Limavady Borough Council Offices, Wednesday 3rd December 2008, 11am -2pm (Lunch will be provided)

The event will be facilitated by Liam Logan, a catholic and Ulster Scots speaker and Dr Ian Malcolm, a Protestant and Irish speaker.

The event will focus, not only on the differences in heritage and culture of Ulster Scots and Irish, but also serve to highlight shared areas, examine the inter-related nature of language and culture, and explore some of the mutual issues around language diversity.

Emphasis will be placed on the need for Irish and Ulster Scots to be removed from politics, together with the promotion of a culture of respect for difference as well as a celebration of diversity.

RSVP required: patricia.cameron@limavady.gov.uk

"What About Me?" Cultural Diversity as you have never seen or heard before.

Film Screening of 'What About Me?' (15 cert) will take place in Limavady Council Offices on Thursday 18th December, 2.30pm - 4.30pm.

(The film start at 3pm and will be introduced by Darren Ferguson from the organisation 'Beyond Skin').

Following the success of their first double Grammy nominated film & album, What About Me? is the latest offering from 1 Giant Leap. This visionary project took Jamie Catto and Duncan Bridgeman to over 50 locations as they explore through music, the complexities of human nature on a global scale, and aims to reveal how we are all connected through our creativity and beliefs.

RSVP by return email by Friday 12th December to: patricia.cameron@limavady.gov.uk

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Compiled and edited by Patricia O'Neill and Ellana Tomasso

News/Events (contd)

Tuesday 9th December - 7pm – 9pm, **Information evening for migrants**, Salvation Army premises, 18, Linenhall Street, Limavady

A range of agencies will be available to provide advice and information on current issues including, Jobs, Benefits, Housing, Training, Citizens advice and Credit Management.

Thursday 18th December 7pm – 9pm, Celebrating **International Migrant Workers Day**, Radisson SAS Hotel, Limavady

Family friendly event with international music. Enjoy the fun! Refreshments will be served!

Thursday 18th December – 7pm – 9pm, **World Party for Children**, International Migrant Workers Day, Glenshane House, 112-114 Main Street, Dungiven

International foods will be available for everyone to taste. There will be storytelling of different culture's traditional Christmas events. And a children's Disco with Santa Claus arriving at 8.15pm to distribute gifts to all the children.

For further information about any of the above events, please contact:
Patricia Cameron Good Relations Officer, Limavady Borough Council, Tel: 028 7776 0311 or email: patricia.cameron@limavady.gov.uk

Make Friends not Walls, Build Relationships not Barriers

Following on from the discussion paper produced by Tony Macaulay over the summer about a process for the removal of the 'peace walls', we are inviting youth workers based in, or with an interest in, interface communities in Belfast to come together to discuss this issue. We plan to see if there is a shared vision for the way forward and discuss possible symbolic gestures which might be done along the way. 9th November 2009 is the 20th anniversary of the Berlin Wall coming down, so this may be a date to work towards doing something symbolic around the walls in Belfast.

Date: 10 December, 2008 FROM 10am – 1pm at Fasset International Hostel, Springfield Road.

If you would like further information, contact John Peacock at Youth Link: NI, telephone 90323217 or email john@youthlink.org.uk

SELB Youth Service Good Relations Strategy Conference

This conference is aimed at full time Youth Workers and Youth Officers within the SELB Youth Service.

Venue: Armagh City Hotel
Date: Wednesday 17th December 2009
Time 9.30-4.00pm

Speakers include Dr. Duncan Morrow, CRC and Prof Joanne Hughes, Queens University.

For further information email sineadmcsane@hotmail.com

Traveller Focus Week 1- 5 December 2008

Traveller Support Services Event
Wed 3 December, Newry Town Hall / The Sean Hollywood Arts Centre
Full Day of Events starting at 10.00am with networking and a choice of Workshops— Education, Inclusion & Integration, Equality & Rights, Cultural Awareness, All Ireland Health Study, Needs Assessment.

If you would like to comment or submit an article for this bulletin or advertise a community relations event or publication, please contact Patricia at poneill@nicrc.org.uk or Ellana at info@nicrc.org.uk.

News/Events (contd)

Followed by lunch at 1.00pm and a performance of the Play, 'Mobile,' by Michael Collins at 2.00pm.

The event is part of a programme of events running across Northern Ireland for Traveller Focus Week.

For further information phone Nicola Doran, 02830 3174

Consultation of young people

The Department of Education is currently reviewing its Community Relations policy and Public Achievement is assisting with the consultation of young people. To help them with this, we have put their questionnaire on the Public Achievement site - which can be accessed here (<http://www.publicachievement.com/Surveys/Community-Relations-and-Young-People.aspx>). We are also keen to hear from young people through the discussion forum on WIMPS (www.wimps.org.uk), and there are articles and shortly a video on the WIMPS site to stimulate discussion. The video is based around a "studio" debate and will feature vox-pops from the streets of Belfast. Some issues raised include the peace-walls, the effectiveness of cross-community school visits, and a forum for young people to speak safely about CR issues. Here is one of the quotes from a young person involved "Thank God for an organization like WIMPS that brings young people together through politics and media. At the 108 campaign we had YP of all ages and religions fighting for the right to have their voices heard. WIMPS reaches out to all communities, not just RC and Protestant."

We are keen to involve as many as possible in this consultation so please encourage young people you work with or know to fill it in.

WELB Youth Service

Our Introduction to Community Relations (OCN Level 2) & Programme Development (OCN Level 3) course starts with a residential on Friday 16th Jan 09 at 7.30pm To Sunday 18th Jan at 4pm. The venue is the Drummond Hotel, Ballykelly

The aim of this accredited course is to inform & engage participants in Good relations/EDI work. Individuals from community based groups as well as WELB registered groups who are working with young people 4 - 25 yrs are eligible to apply.

Applicants must be Access NI checked prior to the commencement of the course

Application form and further details are available from either

Ann_mccausland@welbni.org

Lynsey_cathcart@welbni.org

Or phone 028 777 60930

Limited funding of up to £600 may also be available for preparatory programmes and further funds may be available depending on the type of programme. Support can also be offered in helping your group design a programme and assist with form filling

Application forms are available from local WELB youth offices in Enniskillen, Strabane, Derry and Limavady. For more details use the email addresses above

If you would like to comment or submit an article for this bulletin or advertise a community relations event or publication, please contact Patricia at poneill@nicrc.org.uk or Ellana at info@nicrc.org.uk.



Community Relations Council

Glendinning House
6 Murray Street
Belfast
BT1 6DN

Tel: 028 9022 7500
Email: info@nicrc.org.uk

Promoting a peaceful and fair society based on reconciliation and mutual trust

WWW.NICRC.ORG.UK



Posters available from CRC phone 90227500 and ask for Patricia O'Neill or Ellana Tomasso or email info@nicrc.org.uk

News/Events (contd)

Sanctuary

Sanctuary is a unique residential programme that offers quality time and a safe haven for those who are working in the caring professions to rest, restore and renew themselves in the beautiful unspoilt environment of Slieve Croob.

Who is it for?

Sanctuary is for those who are working in the helping professions. It is designed to be of particular benefit to those who are working with victims.

There will be a range of positive outcomes for those who attend according to the unique set of circumstances, needs and motivation, among them, fresh perspectives on your work and your leadership role in the current context of sustainable peace building

This is the first of a series of events designed to contribute to the new level of peace building. Places are limited to 12

Venue- Slieve Croob Inn, Clanvaraghan, Castlewellan, Co.Down.

Date -2nd-4th February, 2009

Cost -£300.00 inclusive.

For more information and an application form, please contact info@dara-consultancy.com or telephone Mary McAnulty on 02843798054 or 07989392270