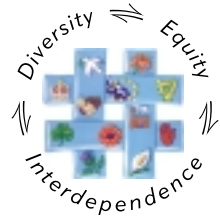


Community Relations Council



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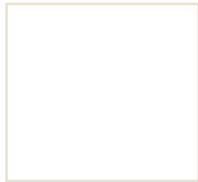


*Towards a Shared Future*

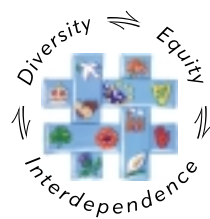


14TH ANNUAL REPORT

# *Towards a Shared Future*



Community Relations Council



# *Equity Diversity Interdependence*

The Council seeks through its membership to be broadly representative of the Northern Ireland community. Council Members are appointed for a period of three years and serve in an unpaid, voluntary capacity, except for the Chair who is paid an honorarium. Two-thirds of the potential membership is chosen by the existing Council and up to one third may be appointed by the Government Minister for Community Relations. The places for Government nominees remained vacant from 2000. Since June 1998 the non-government vacancies have been filled after interview following public advertisement for nominations. The criteria for membership are as follows:

## **Essential**

A proven capacity to understand and support the need for community relations and cultural diversity work.

An ability to represent and work for the overall tasks of the Council, as opposed to a particular constituency focus.

A track record which will contribute to the overall credibility of the Council.

Sufficient time to undertake the work (approximately one day per month).

## **Desirable**

A history in actively supporting and/or facilitating cross-community and cultural diversity activity.

A capacity to contribute to the strategic development of community relations work within an important sector.

**Eamonn McCartan (Chair)**

*Chief Executive, Sports Council NI*

**John Cousins**

*Business Consultant*

**Eamonn Deane**

*Director, Holywell Trust*

**Ward Erwin**

*Principal Officer, NI Housing Executive*

**Maureen Hetherington**

*Director, The Junction, Community Relations Resource Centre, L'Derry*

**Karen Johnston**

*Co-ordinator, Derry City Shadow Council*

**Nelson McCausland**

*Director, Ulster Scots Heritage Council, and Belfast City Councillor*

**Damien McIlroy**

*Programmes Development Worker, St Columb's Park House, Derry/Londonderry*

**Maria Miskelly**

*Equality Co-ordinator for Further Education, Association of NI Colleges*

**Maura Muldoon**

*Corporate Diversity Manager, PSNI*

**Colin Neilands**

*Programme Manager, Workers Educational Association*

**Chris O'Halloran**

*Director, Belfast Interface Project*

**Declan O'Loan**

*Schoolteacher and Ballymena Borough Councillor*

**Myran Pollock (resigned June 2003)**

*Manager, Group Equality and Human Resources, Viridian Group plc*

**David Stevens**

*Leader of the Corrymeela Community*

**Michael Wardlow**

*Chief Executive, NI Council for Integrated Education*

**Caroline Wilson**

*Good Relations Officer, Belfast City Council*

**Robin Wilson**

*Director, Democratic Dialogue*

## Community Relations Council



## CRC Staff : April 2003-March 2004

**Jo Adamson** Administrator *from August 03*

**Patricia Armstrong** Development Officer (European)

**Joan Clements** Victims Corefunding Officer (Funding and Development)

**Maurna Crozier** Programme Director (Cultural Diversity)

**Eileen Deacon** Administrative Assistant (Funding and Development) *from August 03*

**Jim Dennison** Programme Director (European)

**Jessica Ellis** Administrative Assistant (Policy Development) *until August 03*

**John Fitzsimons** Programme Director (Administration, Finance and Personnel)

**Jacqueline Irwin** Director of Operations *from September 03*

**Paul Jordan** Assistant Programme Director (Funding and Development)

**Michaela Mackin** Programme Director (Funding and Development)

**Ali McAllister** Project Officer (Creating Common Ground) *from August 03*

**Vanessa McCrory** Finance Officer (European) *from October 03*

**Dympna McGlade** Programme Director (Policy Development)

**Roisin McGuire** Project Officer (Funding and Development)

**Derrick Mathews** Victims Development Officer (Funding and Development) *until February 04*

**Alison Montgomery** Core-funding Officer (Funding and Development)

**Duncan Morrow** Chief Executive

**Brian Mullan** Victims Core-funding Officer

**Ray Mullan** Programme Director (Communications and Learning Resources)

**Linda Norney** Resource Centre Assistant *from August 03*

**Patricia O'Neill** North Belfast Project Officer *from May 03*

**Sarah O'Neill** Administrative Officer (European) *from May to November 03*

**Philip O'Keeffe** Project Officer (Policy Development) *until October 03*

**Mary Pantaleoni**, Receptionist

**David Russell** Project Officer (Policy Development) *from October 03*

**Holly Scott** Secretary to the Chief Executive

**Jenny Shaw** Project Officer (Funding and Development)

**Libby Smit** Research Officer (European) *from July 03*

**Carol Taylor** Administrative Assistant (Funding and Development)

**Ian Thompson** Administrative Officer (Finance) *from September 03*

**Peter Thompson** Administrative Assistant (Policy Development) *from August 03*

**Ellana Tomasso** Resources Centre Manager *from June 03*

**Claudine Walls** Development Support Officer (European)

The 2003-04 year has been a very busy one for the Community Relations Council. There have been enormous demands on the Council and its staff to support community relations projects and initiatives throughout Northern Ireland. New grant schemes, including the European Peace II Programme and the Victims and Survivors core grant scheme, have required meeting tight expenditure deadlines.

The Council now operates ten grant schemes, many supporting activities which impact beyond immediate localities. Altogether the Council issued grants worth £3.5 million in 2003-04 and administered Peace II awards worth £8.7 million. Over 500 projects were supported, and the details of all of these can be examined in a supplement to this Annual Report. On behalf of all the grant recipients the Council would like to express gratitude to the government funders (particularly the Community Relations Unit in OFMDM and the Victims Liaison Unit) and the European Commission. As a result of CRC grants many more people are engaged in the essential bridge-building work to construct a shared future.

While grant aid to voluntary and community groups formed a considerable part of the Council's programme the Council has also been involved in advising and supporting other organisations, including government. Some of this work has been generated by the statutory duty of public bodies under section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to promote good relations. Council staff have also been involved in partnerships with a number of public bodies in initiatives which address division in our society. These



CRC Chair, Eamonn McCartan (left), with Chief Executive, Duncan Morrow, and Angela Smyth MP, Minister responsible for Victim Support.

have included the Department of Social Development's North Belfast Community Action Unit, Belfast City Council, OFMDM's Race Forum and the Creating Common Ground Initiative managed by a consortium which includes the NI Housing Executive. The Council also undertook a leading role on behalf of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in organising public consultations on the government's strategy document on community relations 'Towards a Shared Future'.

In all this the Council has been able to use its considerable experience since 1990 of working with community-based initiatives for peace and reconciliation in order to inform work at policy level with other strategic partners.

The Council has also managed to raise the profile of its work by higher level partnerships, by greater outreach work by its staff and by a greater promotional effort as illustrated by the successful

Community Relations Week which succeeded in attracting extensive media coverage for community relations work.

Much of the new energy of the Council can be attributed to the addition of new staff. Ten new staff arrived in 2003-04, mostly to fill posts which had been vacant as a result of previous staff departures, internal movement and expansion into new areas. The advent of new staff was also an opportunity and encouragement to introduce staff training for the whole staff on good relations and equality issues.

The Council has now come to the end of its 3-year strategic plan for 2001-04 and it has now embarked on its new strategic plan for 2004-07, and the yearly operational plans which follow from it. Whatever decisions finally emerge from government we believe that the work which the Council is currently involved in will be crucial to building a Shared Future.



Duncan Morrow, CRC Chief Executive.

### Reconciliation is not an event.

Making peace in a whole society has many dimensions. Ending violence is but one of them. Much harder, especially in a context of suspicion, injury and trauma is the job of building sustainable co-operative relationships and structures for the future. Trying and failing to reach agreement can become the new fuel for resentment and bitterness, the peace process just another element in Northern Ireland's 'factory of grievances.'

Measuring progress or regression is a question of the weight to be placed on different indicators. On the one hand, events in America and beyond seem to have underpinned a growing confidence at home that violence can play no further part in deciding political affairs. On the other, the failure to agree the steps to promote mutual trust and reconciliation in politics meant that there was no devolution of power in Northern Ireland during 2003/4. Many commentators interpreted the Assembly election results of November 2003 as evidence of growing political polarisation rather than increased mutual understanding. The truce is holding but confidence in the future remains tentative at best. Paradoxically, violence may have decreased while community antagonism may not.

### Promoting a shared future

These paradoxes have had repercussions for all those working in the field of peace-building and reconciliation, not least for the Community Relations Council (CRC). While political attention has been focussed on necessary talks and deals, CRC played a leading role in promoting participation in the government's review of policy and structure for improving relations, 'A Shared Future'. By the close of

the consultation in September 2003, we estimate that many more than 10,000 people had participated through joint written submissions. These submissions came from loyalist, republican and minority ethnic communities across Northern Ireland and beyond, from churches, business groups, trade unions and voluntary groups and bodies, from elected representatives, local Councils and political parties and from core agencies and government departments, such as the Housing Executive, those working in education, the Police Service and the Royal Hospitals Groups. A major conference to mark the end of the consultation, where additional survey material gathered during the consultation was also analysed and presented, drew over 500 people.

The core findings of the consultation confirmed that political difficulties could not be equated with a widespread wish to return to polarisation at every level. Instead there was broad support for the vision of a shared society in which group identity could continue to be recognised, and a willingness to orientate policy decisions to support this vision. There was also recognition of the need for sustained action at the level of government as well as a critical role for a regional body and local councils. We in the CRC look forward to hearing and implementing many of the outcomes of the consultation during 2004/5.

### Strategic Partners

For a relatively small organisation like the Community Relations Council, practical co-operation with major organisations is an important element in any strategy to ensure that the issue of sharing becomes a central part of planning and development. While segregation between working class estates continues on its trend towards polarisation, the Housing Executive has become active in pursuing ways to promote sharing and space for the increasing number of people of mixed background looking for public housing. The active work of the Football for All campaign has continued to play a central role in the development of the Irish Football Association. Belfast City Council launched its own Good Relations Strategy with renewed support at elected and chief executive level. Various Departments of government indicated a wish to give greater priority to building good relations through the inter-departmental Community Action Group. The North Belfast Community Action Unit encouraged people in some of the most difficult and strained areas of the North to reflect on inter-community aspects of their areas.

### Growing the grassroots

As well as working with Departments and institutions, CRC has continued to work closely with communities under pressure and people seeking to bring long term change. Despite the pervading sense of political apathy and pessimism, we have seen a considerable growth in interest and involvement in community relations work during 2003/4. Throughout Northern Ireland many new groups were engaged for the first time in community relations work. Applications for support increased across the board, with core funding under particular pressure. During 2003/4, CRC saw a 21% increase in the number of groups receiving support from the Council's small grant scheme (Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Grant Scheme). Awards were distributed by the Council to groups in every District Council area in Northern Ireland. One third of CRC grant aid went to projects based west of the Bann, encouraged by the Council's new mid-Ulster office in Dungannon.

During 2003/4, we also paid particular attention to interface communities and groups working on interfaces both in Belfast and beyond, supporting them through all of our grant schemes including core funding and the European PEACE II programme. This year, additional support was provided to establish mobile phone networks, peer support programmes and summer diversionary programmes for young people. The summer of 2003 demonstrated that peaceful summer periods are possible, partly achieved through the hard work of community activists and agencies over a sustained period.

The range of activities supported by the Council demonstrates not only that there is an increasing awareness of community relations elements to so many aspects of life in the six counties, but also that we have moved far beyond the cliché of community relations as 'nice people talking about nice things in nice places'. During 2003/4, 'CR work' took many different guises: support for the development of good relations in a number of district council areas or for groups working in actively mixed areas. We promoted work with families, young people and professionals as well as work which actively crossed sectarian barriers and work in 'single identity settings'. CRC supported work in churches and in adult education, including the Universities as well as the promoting the development of skills such as mediation or of media resources for young people and adults. Better relations were encouraged through work in the fields of sport and the

arts as well as research activity on subjects as diverse as flags and emblems, interpreting the census of 2001 and the reintegration of prisoners. Through all of this ran the Council's commitment to the promotion of equity, diversity and interdependence as constant but changing dimensions for any sustainable society in Northern Ireland.

### From two tribes to many stories

The challenge of moving from a bi-polar society to one in which variety is assumed as the reality of modern living puts a particular burden on smaller groups. During 2003/4, the reported level of attacks against people from minority ethnic backgrounds increased at an alarming rate. Research by Paul Connolly and Michaela Keenan indicated that people in Northern Ireland are even more likely to be racist than sectarian.

Responsibility for supporting groups for minority ethnic communities is distributed across many agencies in Northern Ireland. In the context of 'Good Relations', CRC considerably increased its own contribution to work in this area during 2003/4 through involvement in key Government consultations on the issue and by ensuring full participation in the Shared Future consultation events. We also sought to demonstrate practical support for community and inter-community activity in new areas. Under the EU PEACE II programme, the Chinese Welfare Association was supported to engage in community relations work. Through smaller awards, we were also able to support many other activities aimed at creating greater awareness, appreciation and understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity. The Council initiated a project on cultural diversity in the Northern Ireland Museums Council. This will result in exhibitions throughout our local museums in 2005 focussing on the cultures of some of the minority communities now living in Northern Ireland, highlighting shared aspects of life and different ways of expressing and understanding them. Preparatory work in 2003-04 included conducting an audit of current cultural diversity in museum structures, staff and programmes, and work with curatorial staff and incomer communities to raise awareness of cultural diversity and ways of appreciating it in the context of heritage.

### Working with the injured and bereaved

Different, but no lesser, challenges apply to work with those who have suffered most from the direct effects of inter-community violence. This was the Council's first year as the body responsible for core-funding



Community Relations Week Clean-up in Derry.

support work for victims and survivors groups, challenging us to play an important role in development and change. As reported last year, applications to the Victims and Survivors core-funding scheme outstripped the availability of resources. Despite this, CRC staff established good working relationships with all the funded groups during 2003/4 through regular contact and development support meetings, information seminars and training opportunities. Smaller grants for project costs were awarded through the Victims and Survivors

Support and Development Scheme enabling a diverse network of activities and development across Northern Ireland. In an area of work which will never be easy, the Council has developed many new relationships as well as growing new skills in support and programme management.

#### Effective, efficient and economical

The Council now supports a wide variety of work at many levels to promote its values of fairness, variety and sharing. As chief executive, I am particularly pleased that this has been achieved with courtesy and efficiency by the staff of the Council. While coping with a huge portfolio of work, staff have successfully delivered on targets. Special mention this year should be made of the EU Programme, where CRC was one of the most effective and efficient funders in the entire programme, and of the Victims team, who contributed to an important change in atmosphere among many of the recipient groups.

In addition to funding and development support, the Council has considerably increased its public profile over the last year. Community Relations Week proved to be an important opportunity to promote the work of many organisations across Northern Ireland and to convey the importance of the goal of a peacefully shared future. The Council also organised a series of roundtables to promote deeper insight and sharing of views around key issues as well as establishing a regular programme of events to promote networking among people involved in building better community relations.

#### A sustainable future

The cliché of sustainability applies to social as well as environmental affairs. As we move from a context of public sector dependency in Northern Ireland, the challenge of making the best of our existing resources while planning for the future is critical. At the Council's first Live Issues conference in October, we were pleased to welcome John Paul Lederach as our keynote speaker. Addressing the topic of sustainability in peace building work, he drew attention to the need to distinguish between the sustainability of particular groups and the long run value of the work. He also suggested that the future will entail the development of more work involving volunteers and fee-for-service activity. Other activities currently undertaken by small voluntary groups will and should become part of mainstream services. All of this poses challenges for Northern Ireland, and for CRC, especially if we soon move into a period of political stability. Although PEACE II may be extended until 2008, the challenge of evolving a sustainable culture based on respect and trust will be one for many people, for many years ahead.

The sustainability of organisations is only one part of a wider question. Peace building organisations become redundant when peace is presumed in the wider society. Ten years after the ceasefires, peace cannot yet be presumed in Northern Ireland. Community relations work on small scale budgets will not resolve this low level crisis on its own. But the existence of so many examples of good and improving practice gives continued grounds for hope for those who work in this field. Tragically, progress in Northern Ireland has been best where it has been protected – either through legislation as in the workplace, or through the incentives created by finance. PEACE II has created many such examples. But a full scale voluntary wish to end the endemic antagonism of Northern Ireland remains elusive. This antagonism is so deeply embedded in the 'normality' of Northern Ireland that we in the CRC constantly have to ensure that it does not return by default, even in projects that we fund.

Yet it is already clear that the only sustainable future is a shared future. It is our hope that the medium term disappearance of dedicated community relations work will become more and more credible as a result of a deeper and longer commitment to good relations beyond the confines of cash and compliance and into the fabric of society. In the interim, there is much still to do.

**Key Issue 1: Addressing sectarianism and segregation**

Sectarianism continues in Northern Ireland and the segregation of communities remains one of its most visible features, with few communities identifying themselves as 'mixed'. While some segregated and interface communities have been successful in developing cross-community structures, others have encountered greater difficulty. The challenge of raising and addressing community relations issues in segregated and interface communities is one that the Council has sought to face.

**CRC Action:**

The Community Relations Council has continued to work closely with interface communities supporting them through its various grant schemes. This has included its core-funding and small grant schemes and European Peace and Reconciliation Programme (Peace II). Support was provided through the provision of mobile phone networks, peer support programmes and summer diversionary programmes for young people. The summer of 2003 for many demonstrated that peaceful summer periods are possible. This was achieved however through the hard work of community activists and agencies over a sustained period.

Among the many projects aimed at promoting community relations at the local level were the Ballymacarrett Arts and Cultural Society which, in partnership with the Irish Football Association and the Inner East Youth Project, removed sectarian graffiti and slogans from the area around the footbridge leading into Windsor



Gerry Armstrong and Billy Hamilton, veteran N.I. soccer stars, at a project to remove sectarian graffiti from the area around the footbridge leading to Windsor Park.

Park football ground and replaced it with artwork acceptable to all sections of the community.

In West Belfast continued support for the Springfield Inter-Community Development Project (now renamed as Inter) and Forthspring Inter-Community Group served to ensure that cross-community dialogue and participation continued throughout the year.

In North Belfast a capacity building programme in both unionist and nationalist communities was provided through the Council's core grant scheme for the Lower North Belfast Community Council and the Ashton Community Centre with an overarching cross-community management structure. The Council has also seconded a full-time member of staff to work with the Government's North Belfast Community Action Unit and the Community Empowerment Partnerships to help them and the local communities develop and deliver a community relations strategy. This has led to a number of local community-based organisations embarking on training to build the skills necessary for dialogue and negotiation. Others have been working on initiatives to



A celebration of Indian culture through the Arts during Community Relations Week by Nisha Tandon, Culture and Arts Officer at Belfast's Indian Community Centre.

relieve tension in interface areas. Dedicated community relations workers, placed in key areas in North Belfast, have been devising long term strategies to replace the short term reactive measures of the past.

Throughout Northern Ireland many new areas and community groups were engaged for the first time in community relations work, in large part as a result of planned CRC information events. There was a 21% increase in the number of groups receiving support from the Council's small grant scheme (Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Grant Scheme) in 2003-04.

In addition to work in interface and segregated areas the Council has also supported work in mixed communities to develop good practice models of living with diversity. Ballynafeigh Community Development Association (which receives grants from the Peace II and Core-funding schemes) in South Belfast worked in partnership with Belfast Community Theatre ( which is also core-funded) to develop a piece of forum theatre, called *Stevie's Big Game*, which addressed issues such as mixed relationships and flags and emblems, as well as common social and economic issues. Members of the community audience were invited to come up

with their own solution to the protagonists' 'dilemmas'.

## Key Issue 2: Responding to racism

The level of racist attacks during 2003 against Northern Ireland's small ethnic minority increased at an alarming rate. 226 racial incidents were reported in 2002-03, representing an increase of 900% since 1997 when record keeping of racial incidents began. Research indicates that people in Northern Ireland are even more likely to be racist than sectarian and that racial attacks here are at a higher level than in England and Wales. (Paul Connolly and Michaela Keenan, University of Ulster)

### CRC Action:

Race Relations, in the context of 'Good Relations', is an expanding area of work for CRC. The Council has been involved in key Government consultations on this issue and sits on the Race Forum for NI and committees such as the Chinese Welfare Association Advisory Group. It also ensured that minority ethnic and minority faith groups were included in the Shared Future consultation events which were facilitated throughout Northern Ireland in Spring 2003.

The Chinese Welfare Association has been corefunded under the Council's Peace II Programme to engage in community relations work and the Council's small grant scheme also supported projects of local ethnic groups aimed at creating greater awareness, appreciation and understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity. These included information sessions where representatives from various minority ethnic backgrounds gave presentations on their experiences,

culture and traditions to various community groups and individuals. Community Relations Week 2004, co-ordinated by the Council, featured many ethnic minority projects including the Belfast Islamic Centre which invited the local community to visit and learn more about the Islamic faith and traditions. The race issue was particularly prominent during Community Relations Week.

The Council initiated a project on cultural diversity in the Northern Ireland Museums Council. This will result in exhibitions throughout our local museums in 2005 focussing on the cultures of some of the minority communities now living in Northern Ireland, highlighting shared aspects of life and different ways of expressing and understanding them. Preparatory work in 2003-04 included conducting an audit of current cultural diversity in museum structures, staff and programmes, and work with curatorial staff and incomer communities to raise awareness of cultural diversity and ways of appreciating it in the context of heritage.

**Key Issue 3: Ensuring that good quality community relations work is funded and supported**

**CRC Action:**

The Community Relations Council supported over 500 community relations projects in 2003-04 covering a wide range of activity with a good geographical spread across Northern Ireland. One third of CRC grant aid went to projects based west of the Bann, encouraged by the Council's new mid-Ulster office in Dungannon.

The Peace II Programme, under measure 2.1, supported 62 projects, from 141 applications, with awards worth over £8 million spread across a three year period. These included contentious work at interfaces, faith-based activities, work with young people, resource development, training, single identity work and programmes to facilitate and mediate in difficult situations. Specific EU criteria were set to ensure that funded projects were those that were likely to make a positive, practical, meaningful and cost-effective contribution to community life and relationships. Additional training was provided by CRC to the European-funded projects to enable them to deal with practical issues such as budgets, accountability, communications, evaluation and community relations.

Research projects were also funded by the Peace II Programme covering a range of issues related to peace-building. These included attitudes of young people to community relations, politicians and community relations, the impact of interface violence on communities and

community relations, and the appropriateness and benefits of a 'truth recovery' process in Northern Ireland.

The threat from the EU funder that Peace II funding would be lost if it was not spent on schedule put extra pressure on CRC and funded groups to meet the 'N+2' rule, ie that 33% of the total grant allocation needed to be spent by 2004. CRC was one of the few Intermediary Funding Bodies to meet the target and as a result was identified by the Peace II Monitoring Committee as an appropriate funder to be awarded additional grant aid should it become available.

The Council also supported 31 organisations through its core-funding grant scheme, many of these at the forefront of developing strategic models and good practice in addressing sectarianism, prejudice and intolerance. The provision of salaries and running costs to these organisations enabled them to make strategic community relations responses at a local and regional level.



Duncan Morrow with representatives of West Belfast's Interaction Project, Jim McCorry, Roisin McGlone and Billy Hutchinson.

Through its small grant scheme the Council supported 269 projects, such as the Future Voices project which ran a Mediation and Conflict Skills training programme for young adults involved in the consultation over the Shared Future document. Many of the projects (over 20%) were organised by groups engaging in community relations work for the first time. Newly established rural community groups have shown interest in community relations work through seminars, such as 'Cultural diversity through the Arts', organised in CRC's mid-Ulster Centre. Projects supported by the small grant scheme have also included numerous community relations audits carried out by voluntary groups to examine perceptions of themselves by the local community. These were often followed by action plans to become more inclusive.

The production of learning resources was encouraged by the Media and Publication Grant Schemes which led during the year to support for eleven publications and three broadcast film productions. The latter included the

Channel 4 film drama for schools 'You Looking at Me?', produced by the Derry-based company, Besom Productions, which addressed issues of sectarianism, racism and paramilitarism, used local teenage actors, and was filmed in Belfast interface areas in the summer of 2003. The Nerve Centre was also supported to produce an animated version of the Ulster-Weans A-Z on CD as an educational resource for young children in primary schools.

#### Key Issue 4: Supporting Victims and Survivors

This was the Council's first year as the body responsible for core-funding support work for victims and survivors groups. The challenge was to communicate to the groups involved that the Council was not simply a funder but also a development agency.

#### CRC Action:

The Victims and Survivors core-funding scheme was heavily oversubscribed, at a ratio of 3:1, but staff successfully processed applications within the required 7-



Kilcranny House and WAVE Trauma Centre organised a Victims conference in Coleraine. Pictured above: Lynn Moffett, Bill Eadie and Rae Kirk with CRC Member Eamonn Deane.



Kathleen Feenan, on behalf of the Women's Information Group, received a CRC-sponsored *Opportunity Now* Award from Cheri Blair at Belfast City Hall.

week period. Once the grant awards were made CRC staff established good working relationships with all the funded groups through regular contact and development support meetings. These included regular review meetings, discussion of difficulties in project delivery, provision of briefing and training sessions, and assistance with recruitment and selection.

Regional information seminars were carried out by CRC staff throughout the year to offer advice. Training needs of the groups, who were at different stages of development, were identified. Some required training to raise the capacity of their members to engage in befriending projects; some needed training opportunities for their staff and management committees in administrative skills, financial management and counselling.

A major conference was organised in April 2004 to help members of all the groups gain more knowledge and understanding through hearing about the excellent work of others. Many groups gained confidence and a sense of empowerment by hosting

and co-ordinating workshop sessions, which helped them in their efforts to create a shared and inclusive society. Workshop themes included: promoting relationships in a divided society; concerns about suicide; creative models for sustainability; and effective use of volunteers.

The Council also operated a small grant scheme for victims groups, worth £750,000 over the period of the scheme. This was available for project costs and it allowed CRC staff to gain a better knowledge of the activities which the victims groups were involved in, and thus enhancing the advice that could be offered them. For the most part, with self-help organisations, groups were encouraged to focus their work on developing the skills of their volunteers, as these are the people who will carry the work forward when salary funding ends.

Development grant support was provided to 126 projects including, among others, Claudy Memorial Group to hold a residential programme, providing a safe space for people to develop the

confidence to re-engage with society. Contact Youth was supported to provide training for volunteer counsellors working with young people affected by The Troubles. The volunteers were staffing a YouthLine telephone service and regional counselling service and worked with 15 schools in interface areas. VAST were supported in an educational and training project to develop self-esteem and coping mechanisms and engage in the healing process.

#### Key Issue 5: Increasing awareness and sharing good practice

One of the key challenges in community relations work has been to promote the idea that change is not only necessary but achievable within and between communities in the short and medium term. The living out of conflict over a long period of time breeds ambivalence and apathy among the wider community. Ordinary citizens need to be encouraged to active participation to address unresolved conflict and create a shared future. Those already involved need to document their good practice and learn from others.

#### CRC Action:

April 2003 and April 2004 saw the staging of successful Community Relations Weeks which are now becoming a regular feature of the CRC Year. They both illustrate and celebrate practical community relations work being done at every level of society right across Northern Ireland. The 2004 CR Week was the most successful yet with 80 events in the programme and extensive media coverage to raise general public awareness of what is possible. In 2004 the Week featured a



Duncan Morrow with Professor John Paul Lederach, guest speaker at CRC's Live Issues Conference in October 2003.

significant increase in the involvement of public sector bodies such as District Councils, underlining the fact that community relations work is a whole society task involving both private and public action.

A partnership with the students' union, NUS/USI enabled the production and circulation of 50,000 beer mats challenging sectarian attitudes. The Bigots' Beer mats were included in 30,000 Fresher student packs issued in September 2003 to all new students at FE and university campuses in Northern Ireland. Bars on student campuses were also supplied with the mats throughout the year and these were in great demand.

Other public awareness raising events included the Opportunity Now Awards ceremony at Belfast City Hall in October 2003 which selected examples of best practice in good relations being encouraged by employers in

Northern Ireland. CRC sponsored the voluntary and community sector award which went to the Women's Information Group, with a special commendation to Counteract. The Good Relations Public Sector Award (sponsored by the Equality Commission) went to the Association of NI Colleges which receives CRC Peace II funding for its training work..

In October 2003 CRC organised a special *Live Issues Conference* with numerous workshops aimed at community relations practitioners. This was both a learning and a networking opportunity. Other networking opportunities for funded groups were organised throughout the year. A series of Peace II seminars were also planned over the next two years which would contribute to knowledge of and learning about peace and reconciliation work in Ireland, North and South.

Dissemination of knowledge and general awareness about

community relations work continued through the publication of CRC literature, including *CRC News*, and also CRC's own website. In September 2003 a radical redesign and update of the site led to an eight-fold increase in its user numbers and this high figure has since been maintained. The Council also established a Communications Committee and initiated work on a new CRC communications strategy which could be implemented next year to further engage both its specific audiences and the general public.

#### Key Issue 6: Addressing sustainability issues

Sustainability beyond the dependence on funding is a key issue for all organisations in the voluntary and community sector. This is particularly the case for those organisations which compose the community relations infrastructure in Northern Ireland. As the sector continues to fragment and pressure on funding resources increases, many key organisations are re-evaluating their position and direction. Organisations core-funded by CRC or through the Peace II Programme face the insecurity of their funding cycle coming to an end.

#### CRC Action:

The theme of funding and sustainability in peacebuilding was the main focus of CRC's Live Issues Conference in October 2003 where the key speaker was American Professor John Paul Lederach. The address was warmly received by a large audience of community relations practitioners and widely disseminated (and also made available on the CRC website). In the address Professor Lederach



Mary McKee of Groundwork and Paddy McIntyre of NI Housing Executive with CRC Chair (centre) at the Shared Space Conference.

suggested a number of helpful review tests and assessments for all working in this field.

Later in the year CRC's core-funded groups were invited to apply for additional funding to address organisational issues, many relating to sustainability issues. This included raising organisational profile through the production of promotional literature and website development, and also the development of strategic plans that would allow responses to a changing environment, including funding.

Some victims groups, which are core-funded for a two year cycle, have been very proactive in their search for greater financial security. Some that are primarily offering counselling services have sought service level agreements with local Health and Social Service Trusts. Another particularly imaginative approach was by SAVER/NAVER, a self-help group based in Co. Armagh,

which set up a second-hand clothes shop in their premises which has been very successful both commercially and for the sense of self-esteem of volunteers.

Concerns of Peace II funded groups about their future when the current cycle of EU funding comes to an end were noted by CRC and the Council has taken the lead in voicing these concerns insofar as these relate to sustaining community relations work. This has included lobbying Ministers and briefing the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at Westminster, European Commission representatives, the special EU Programmes Body, as well as liaison with other Intermediary Funding Bodies, Local Strategy Partnerships and Government Departments.

#### Key Issue 7: Engaging policy makers

Community relations work on the ground needs to be supported by good relations perspectives and

approaches at a strategic and policy level within public bodies. Engaging the policy makers to adopt and implement a good relations strategy, as they are required to do under section 75 legislation, has been a major challenge.

#### **CRC Action:**

CRC played a key role in promoting and organising consultation events, which continued until September 2003, to encourage public responses to the Government's Shared Future document on improving relations in Northern Ireland. The Council also submitted its own very comprehensive response to the document, including specific recommendations for placing at the heart of all public policy the aim of 'a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust' (First Programme for Government, 2000). These recommendations covered issues such as housing, education, policing, interfaces, town centres, youth services, cultural policy and race relations.

CRC also sought to engage with public bodies directly to develop good relations policies and was able to serve on several committees with a good relations remit. These included Belfast City Council's Section 75 consultative forum, the North Belfast Agency Reference Group, the NI Housing Executive Section 75 consultative forum, and the NI Race Forum. The Council was also able to second a member of its staff to work with the North Belfast Community Action Unit as a community relations manager and was thus able to work in partnership with Government to help shape the

policy and strategic direction of community relations in North Belfast.

The Council responded formally to several public consultations. These included the Department of Social Development's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, the Department of Education's proposed revised RE core syllabus, the Race Equality Strategy, the Review of Public Administration, draft proposals for a Criminal Justice Order, NIHR's Bill of Rights for NI, the NI Affairs Committee inquiry into Hate Crime in NI and its inquiry on the Parades Commission and Public Processions (NI) Act. The Council was aided in this by the establishment of a CRC Policy Development Committee.

#### **Key Issue 8: Identifying and developing strategic partnerships**

In order for CRC to take community relations work beyond the bounds of existing practice and break into new ground it is necessary to establish strategic partnerships.

#### **CRC Action:**

The Council agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the statutory authority for monitoring and advising on the implementation of the Section 75 Good Relations Duty. The Commission recognised the developmental work being undertaken by CRC and viewed this as complementary to the Commission's statutory role. This created the possibility of CRC being able to assist Government bodies in developing practical good relations strategies.



Belfast City Council panel discussion on 'A Shared City'. Pictured above: Dympna McGlade (CRC) Anna Lo (CWA) David Whyte (anti-racist trainer) Cllr Nelson McCausland, Cllr Tom Eakin.

In addition to partnership with the Department of Social development and other statutory agencies in the North Belfast Community Action Unit, the Council also continued its involvement with the Creating Common Ground Consortia of voluntary and statutory agencies in working on environmental projects with disadvantaged communities. A CRC field officer is employed in the project in facilitating work in seven of the forty community-led programmes in the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland and has an opportunity to develop and support community relations initiatives across all forty programmes.

Belfast City Council's initiative to develop a Good Relations Strategy was informed by a partnership with CRC in which an audit of current anti-sectarian work and initiatives in the city was conducted, identifying gaps in provision, citing examples of best practice and producing practical proposals for the way forward. This led to an action plan to accompany the City Council's Good Relations Strategy and a work plan for the Good Relations Officers who were appointed.

Based on its work and experiences during 2003-04 the Community Relations Council has drawn a number of lessons for the future.

- 1 Despite so many bad news stories it has been the Council's experience that there is great interest in and desire to be involved in community relations work. This could be seen through the response to its various grant schemes and the involvement in Community Relations Week of so many community and voluntary groups across Northern Ireland. In North Belfast there have been positive signs of change as Community Empowerment Programmes adopt community relations policies and dedicated community relations workers devise long term strategies in the area. But, as the Creating Common Ground Project in deprived areas has shown, community relations initiatives will need to vary greatly in respective communities to reflect different needs and levels of development.
- 2 CRC work to support initiatives to challenge sectarianism can and should be tailored to also challenge racism.
- 3 The Council's provision of support and advice to groups and organisations involved in community relations work is crucial to them. Articulating their concerns and lobbying for more resources will be important. Equally, as the Peace II Programme has illustrated, there is a need to simplify administrative requirements for EU funded groups where it is within the power of the Council to do so. Although new and innovative work is important it cannot replace or take precedence over the need for good quality and productive practice across a range of activities. Groups and communities seeking Council funding need to be made more aware that this funding is prioritized on the basis of primary community relations needs. Outreach work in rural areas also needs to be maintained.
- 4 There is a large amount of local expertise on victims issues and organisations working in this field have grown in number and maturity. This work needs long term commitment and greater co-operation between victims and survivors groups and the wider



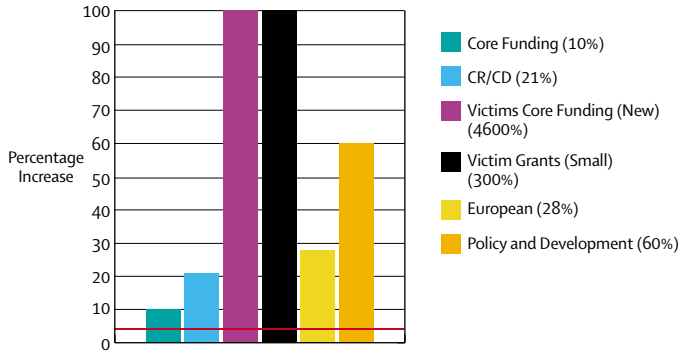
Lisburn Mayor, Billy Bell, and Chair of the Institute of Directors, Denis Rooney, with CRC's Duncan Morrow at an event looking at the role of business in promoting good relations.

community sector. Victims groups also need to be encouraged to see themselves as part of the solution to the political conflict and of a healing process for the whole community.

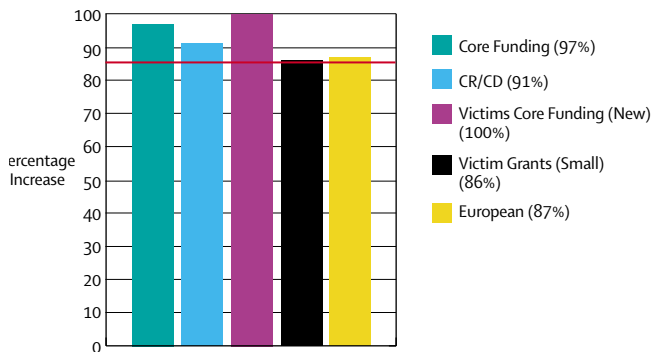
- 5 Promoting a Learning Culture is part of the Council's strategy. There is therefore a need for the Council to record and disseminate research findings as the basis for future action and interventions. Communications will be the key to making an impact and raising the Council's profile. The success of Community Relations Week needs to be built upon by the Council making it a regular pre-planned feature of the CRC Year and imbed the developing communications strategy at the centre of its plans for the future.
- 6 Good Relations work will not happen without guidance and the Council has an important role to play in this. Voluntary and community organisations funded by the Council have valuable contributions to make in the promotion of good relations and the Council needs to continue to find ways by which their good practice can be shared.. For this to happen with the public sector the Council needs to have a strong working relationship with the Equality Commission.
- 7 The experience of the Council's partnership work with Belfast City Council of undertaking community relations/good relations audits should be replicated in different District Council areas. This would better inform the development of local good relations strategies by the various Councils.

**(Aim 1) To support local people in building a shared, inclusive and peaceful society where there is co-operation and respect for diversity**

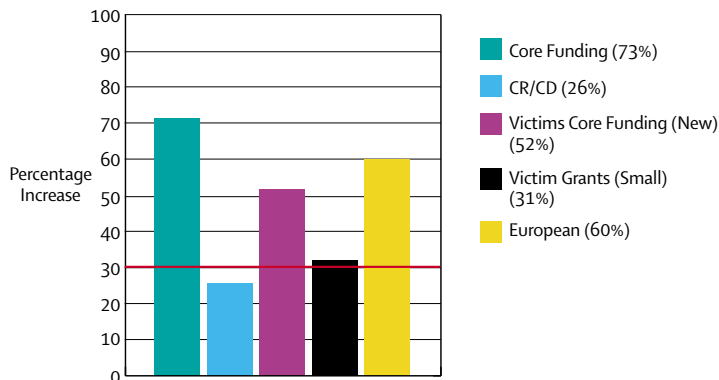
Target 1 – 5% increase in the number of new organizations that CRC works with in 2003/2004 (target indicated by red line)



Target 2 - 85% of CRC funded groups in 2003/2004 to achieve project plans (that contribute to the development of community relations) (target indicated by red line)



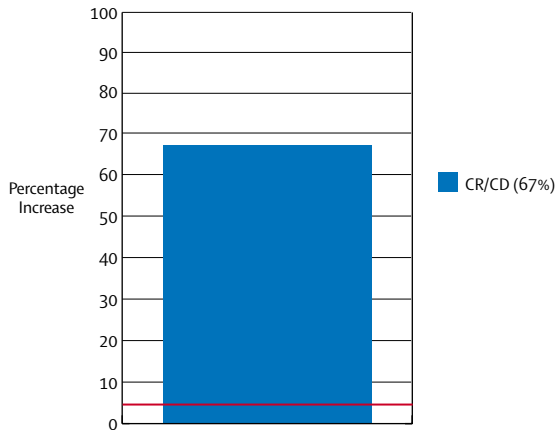
Target 3 - 30% of CRC grants in 2003/2004 to be allocated to projects outside Belfast and Derry (target indicated by red line)



Target was achieved across CRC grants as a whole. Individual schemes achieved the target also, most substantially over the target, with the exception of CR/CD small grants where 26% were awarded to groups outside of Belfast and Derry.

**(Aim 2) To assist Northern Ireland communities to work through and beyond the legacies of the Troubles**

Target 1 Increase by 5% during 2003/2004 in the number of organizations supported by the Council working in areas of high conflict (target indicated by red line)



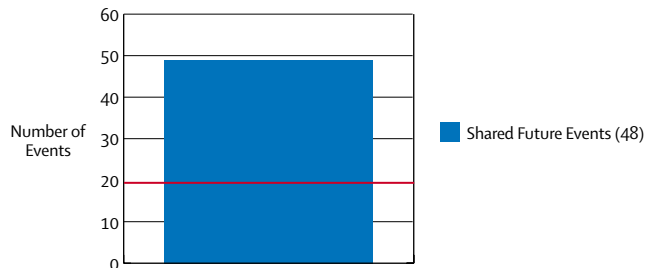
Six new interface groups were funded in 2003-04 by CRC's small grant scheme, representing a 67% increase in such groups supported by the scheme. In addition three support organizations operating in North Belfast were assisting by CRC in partnership with the North Belfast Community Action Unit.

Target 2 - Establishment of a new funding stream for victims of the troubles that has processed at least 25 applications by March 2004. (target indicated by red line)

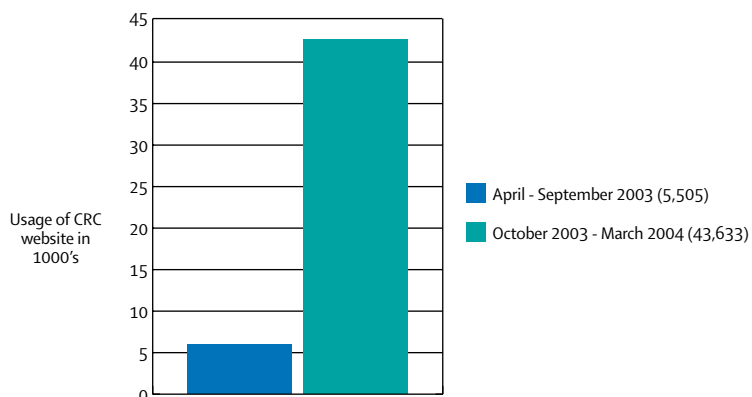


**(Aim 3) To identify and develop new approaches to peacebuilding and reconciliation, working in partnership with people and organizations across Northern Ireland.**

Target 1 Facilitation of 20 events by September 2003 as part of the Northern Ireland wide consultation on the current needs and issues in community relations work (Shared Future)  
(target indicated by red line)

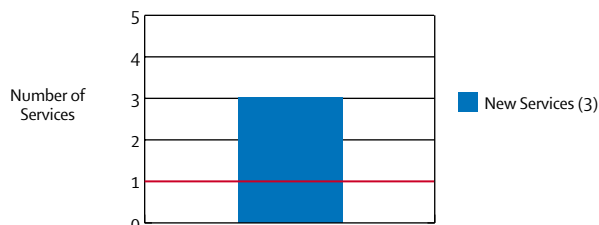


Target 2 - Redesign and upgrade of CRC web-site by March 2004 to increase public awareness of community relations issues (website upgrade completed September 2003)



Redesign and upgrade were completed in September 2003. Public awareness was increased as evidenced by 800% increase in website users.

Target 3 - Development of 1 new service to meet reconciliation needs by March 2004  
(target indicated by red line)

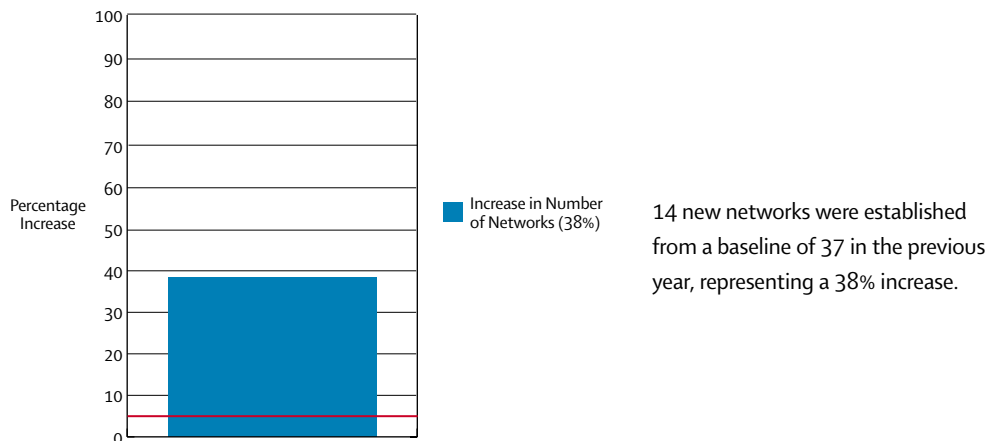


Three new services developed:

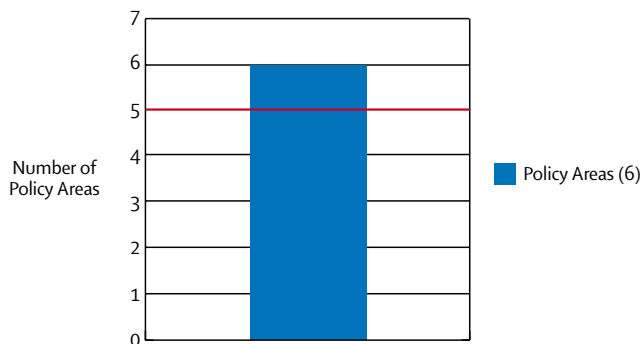
- 1) Dungannon Outreach Centre
- 2) New Core Funding Scheme for Victims and Survivors
- 3) North Belfast Community Empowerment Programme supported by a fulltime seconded member of CRC staff to inform the work of the North Belfast Inter Agency Interface group and produced a directory of training and projects to assist

**(Aim 4) To promote the mainstreaming of community relations work at both community and institutional level.**

Target 1 5% increase by March 2004 in the number of networks (community and institutional) with which CRC is actively engaged (target indicated by red line)



Target 2 - Evidence of positive CRC impact in 5 policy areas by March 2004 (target indicated by red line)

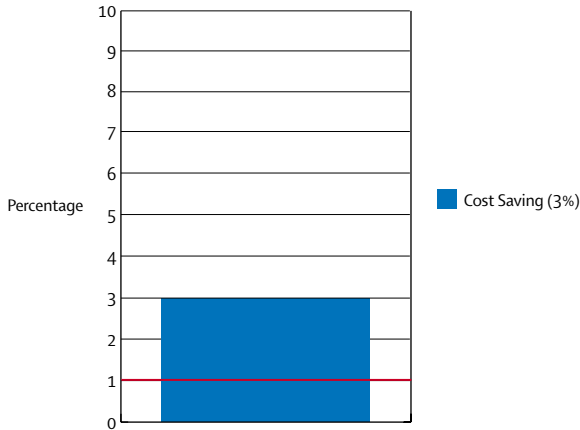


Positive impact on 6 policy areas:

- 1) Shared Future Consultation
- 2) Belfast City Council Good Relations Policy and Good Relations Unit
- 3) Number of improved networks at key interfaces
- 4) New Northern Ireland Housing Executive policy of shared housing
- 5) Increase in CR focus in EU Peace II Programme
- 6) Development of Government strategy in addressing weak community infrastructure

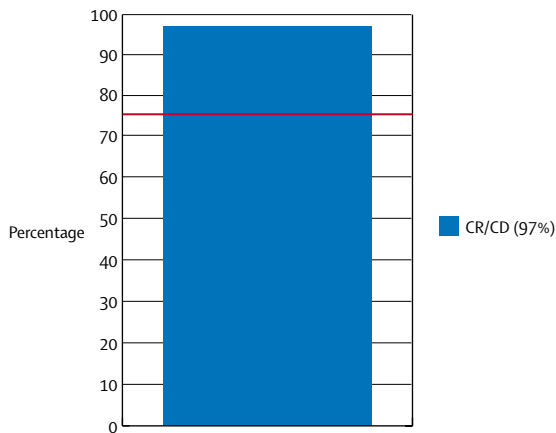
**(Aim 5) To manage the grant aiding and other services of the Community Relations Council in an effective, efficient and economical way.**

Target 1 - 1% saving on costs by March 2004 through the greater use of internal resources (target indicated by red line)



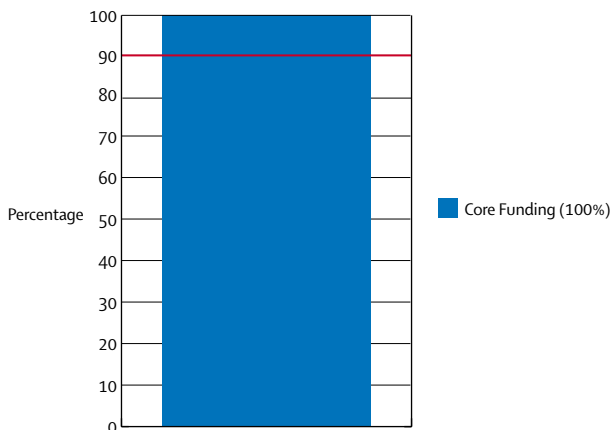
Cost savings of £21,100 (3%) achieved out of total running costs budget of £712,150 through better use of internal resources

Target 2 - 75% of all small grant applications processed within 12 weeks of receipt (target indicated by red line)



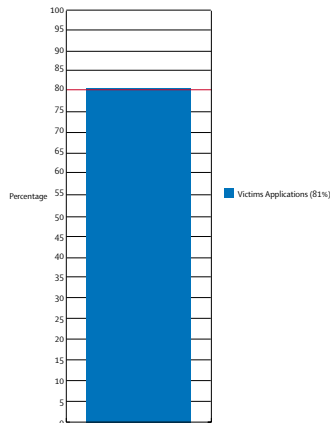
97% of applications were processed within the target period with the remainder delayed due to information awaited from the applicants.

Target 3 - 90% of core grant applications processed within 12 weeks of closing date for receipt (target indicated by red line)



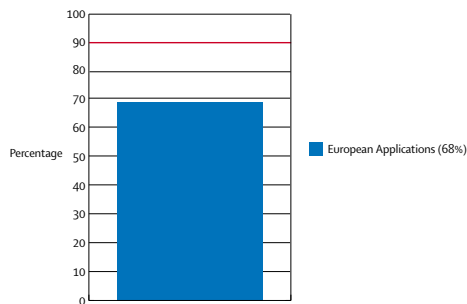
All applications for Core-funding and Victims core-funding were processed within the target period.

Target 4 - 80% of Victims Fund applications processed within 12 weeks of closing date for receipt (target indicated by red line)



81% of applications were processed with the target period with the remainder due to information awaited from applicants or to the restraints of the funding committee timetable.

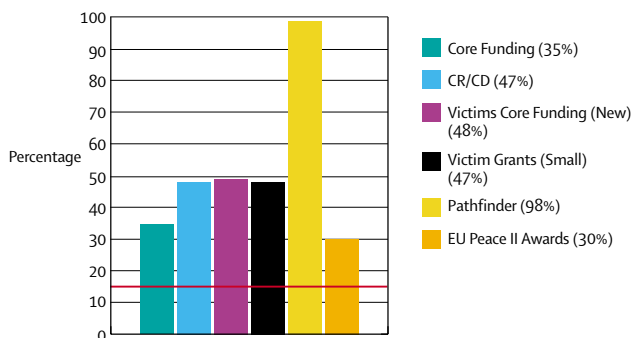
Target 5 - 90% of EU funded applications processed within 16 weeks of closing date for receipt (target indicated by red line)



68 % of applications were processed within 16 weeks, with remaining applications processed by the following week. Delay was due to the large volume of research bids and the need to ensure that all applications could be presented collectively to committee.

**Targeting Social Need - Ability to demonstrate that the CRC is supporting work in the areas of highest need**

Target 1 - At least 15% of CRC grants to go to groups in disadvantaged areas during 2003/2004 (target indicated by red line)



Target was achieved in all schemes.

**Equality - Ability of the CRC to demonstrate fair and equal treatment**

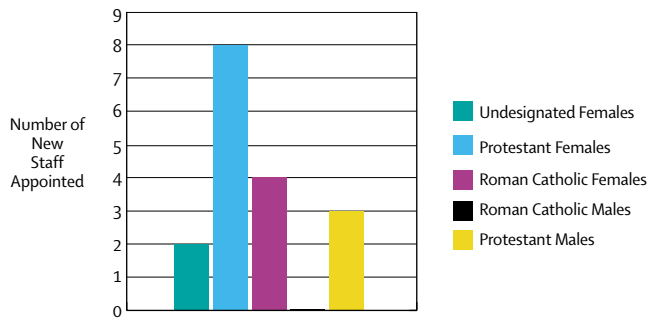
Target 1 - Appointment of Members to CRC during 2003-4 to reflect fair and equal treatment.

No new Members were appointed in the period.

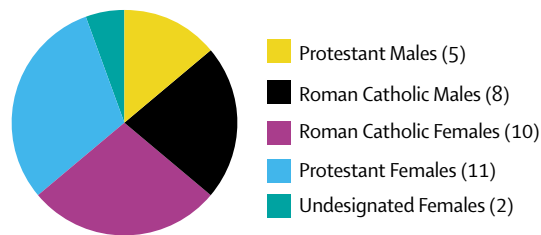
Target 2 - Distribution of grants during 2003-4 to reflect fair and equal treatment.

All grant schemes were publicly advertised through CRC website and community networks. Information sessions were held. Provision was made for the translation of the application forms and guidance notes into other languages and to audio tape. Review/complaints procedures were in place. All applications were processed in accordance with agreed Council practices and operating principles and received fair and equal treatment.

Target 3 - Processes for the appointment of Council Staff during 2003/2004 to reflect fair and equal treatment.



Breakdown of religious and gender backgrounds of CRC staff March 2004



Processes for appointment of CRC staff are conducted along the lines of best practice to comply with legislative requirements of the Equality Commission and employment law in general.



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