

Young People

Rosellen Roche

Introduction

This paper aims to assist the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and the Community Relations Council (CRC) with their policy and strategic triennial action plan for *A Shared Future* (ASF) by suggesting specific areas of implementation within the remit of Young People. The condensed paper briefly outlines areas of ASF that relate to issues connected with Overarching Recommendations and those specifically for the area of Young People. Based on multiple draft papers and discussions as commissioned by the Community Relations Council (Roche 3/3/06; 20/3/06; 22/3/06) the paper is divided into two main sections: 1. the **Grounding for the Recommendations** for young people encompassing a discussion and bibliographic review of key areas (including aspects of integration and education: forgotten areas, recreation and innovation, and well-being and sectarianism) and 2. the **Recommendations Sections**, covering both overarching recommendations and recommendations for the area of Young People.

Young People

The term “Young People” is as large and complex as the many individual and group personalities of the young people who live in Northern Ireland. Youth should be conceived of as a period of life between childhood and maturity, a period of existence, growth and development of a person in and of themselves, in relation to each other (peers), and in relationship to their community and larger society. In addition, I use here the term “young people” in accordance with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), as those under 18 or those with a disability or leaving care up to the age of 21 (Cf. *Children’s Rights in Northern Ireland*, NICCY, 2004: 6). However, regarding young people, I particularly highlight concerns that pertain to those in their adolescent or teenage years, starting at age 12.

Although some specific recommendations will be made as appropriate to the sex of an individual, all recommendations are made with both males and females in mind, and regardless of gender.

ASF and interlocking aims with importance to Young People

Referring to ASF in relation to promotions that have a strong connection to young people, ASF promises that at the Central Government Level the triennial action plan will make a long-term commitment to improving relations in Northern Ireland, and that these plans will be reviewed annually and rolled forward (cf. ASF all sections 3.1). ASF underscores the need for all society to play a role in promoting good relations (3.1.2). All Fundamental Principles contained within ASF (cf. all sections 1.4) and particularly including aspects of leadership, progress, addressing the legacy of the past and violence, and diversity are principles to be addressed when considering initiatives for young people.

Specifically and at the community level, ASF and the Government recognises support and continuing efforts of grass-roots organisations such as faith-based organisations, children’s organisations, youth organisations, and health organisations in the preparation and the completion of action plans (3.4.2). This author agrees with these strategies in relation to successful completion of plans to improve areas related to young people and will integrate many of these organisations into suggestions below.

Equally, ASF highlights areas specifically linked to Targeting Social Need initiatives (TSN) and disadvantaged and segregated communities (Cf. all sections 2.8), appropriately highlighting that “(s)ectarianism and racism have particularly negative impacts on disadvantaged communities” (2.8.1). ASF strives wholeheartedly to continue good community development work both internally and externally (2.8.3) and states that approaches which reinforce segregation should be challenged (2.8.13).

ASF also strives to support the initiatives of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), which promote both a culture of tolerance and good relations through communities that are creative and proud of their heritages (Cf. all sections 2.6). Aspects of DCAL’s initiatives will be further highlighted here and are imperative for the personal and social development of young people.

Finally, all aspects of Human Rights and the rights of young people are imperative. All recommendations of ASF and subsequent recommendations in the area of young people should comply with the Human Rights Act 1998 which came into effect on 2 October 2000. Many of the articles contained in the Human Rights Act will be highlighted in this document as areas that need further improvement to see compliance with the Human Rights Act.

Suggestions for ASF main objectives in relation to Young People

This paper aims to inform on fundamental areas that fulfil both the ASF criteria and recommend initiatives for young people who are most socially excluded.

ASF should ensure that effective youth work and policies surrounding young people should address three major social imperatives. Following the UK Youth Work Alliance themes addressed in “Agenda for a Generation” (1997) ASF and the OFMDFM should seek to:

- *Build the capacity of young people, and promote their skills, self-worth, creativity and enterprise.*
- *Promote social inclusion by supporting more disadvantaged young people, re-engaging them in learning, and helping them to enhance their employability.*
- *Encourage active citizenship and develop in young people an awareness of their rights and their responsibilities to the community.*

Aspects of integration and education

Forgotten areas

ASF makes considerable recommendations regarding shared spaces and shared curricula of education. Further reviews (cf. Draft - Promoting Shared Education, Russell 2006) also acknowledge the statutory duty placed on the Department of Education (DE) within the Education Reform NI Order 1989 (ERO 1989) toward integrated and shared education in Northern Ireland and makes further suggestions toward that goal. ASF also informs that the remits of further and higher education must be included in the initiatives to prepare

teachers, lecturers, providers and students for a shared society (cf. all sections 2.4).

While “Education” as a dedicated remit continues to be reviewed and updated by ASF and the OFMDFM, a note on training and shared initiatives concerning those outside of primary and secondary classroom education is necessary. All sections of the education sector, whether at levels of primary, secondary, university, further education or vocational, represent opportunities for greater sharing. Further, more refined and specific initiatives need to be put in place with regard to the institutions which provide training and educational services for young people who leave formalised schooling at 16 or who are looking to train in subsequent skills post formal education. Particular emphasis should involve those delivering Jobskills, Jobskills Modern Apprenticeships and New Deal 18-24 Programmes.

Previous research in areas of the UK illustrate that school achievement and academic attainment have shown that, overall, young people from areas experiencing higher rates of deprivation and other social stressors coupled with these economic burdens are more likely to leave school (Roche, 2005a; “Measures of Deprivation in Northern Ireland”, Social Disadvantage Research Centre, 2001; Fay et al. 1999; Atkinson and Hills, 1998; Cormack and Osborne, 1983; Cormack et al. 1980). In NI, areas experiencing higher levels of deprivation experience a “double penalty” (Smyth 1998:22) and are also at risk of having their young people becoming involved in antisocial activities. NI is also experiencing new difficulties dealing with burgeoning racial and ethnic tension with an influx of immigration to the area (Betts and Hamilton, 2005; Bell et al. 2004).

Young people in Northern Ireland who have left school find themselves faced with the options of unemployment or enrolling in a Jobskills training programme (age 16-24) sponsored by the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL). Jobskills programmes are available throughout NI through a variety of training providers who offer the programme. DEL also pays special attention to the implementation of the Equality and Good Relations Duties under Section 75 NI Act 1998 (DEL “Progress Report, 1 April 2004-31 March 2005) and is innovatively responsible for funding the Cultural Diversity Project Initiative Pilots which are intended to break down barriers in current and prospective students at Further Education Colleges. DEL has certain regulators in place and the results of DEL’s equality monitoring on eligible groups (females, Catholics and disabled persons) following the NI Act 1998,

monitoring sex of candidate, community background and disability, have been published and available in the Labour Market Bulletin since 2001.

As many young people leave school and continue with vocational training through the Jobskills, Jobskills Modern Apprenticeships and New Deal (18-24) programmes, initiatives should be put in place to formally educate the providers in the ASF initiatives and integrate young people in these programmes in the Shared Future agenda. Providers and young people involved in these programmes should not be forgotten in the ASF process as the participants are apt to be young people from areas suffering from disadvantage, deprivation and social exclusion.

Preschoolers and their parents also should not be forgotten. Programmes such as NIPPA's Media Initiatives For Children (in partnership with the Peace Initiatives Institute) recently launched in April 2005, should be wholeheartedly supported and encouraged. Others, like these initiatives, should follow suit. Key stakeholders involved in preschool well-being should be involved.

Subsidised classes for parents should also be considered. These classes would benefit parents not only in the basic skills of parenting but also should promote issues of integration and non-sectarian language. 'Little children have big ears'. Specific proposals touching on these areas are included in the RECOMMENDATIONS sections.

Recreation and innovation

ASF supports creativity, innovation and cultural projects. New initiatives across Northern Ireland encouraging sport and other creative initiatives are blossoming and CRC should more concretely assist these processes and be creative with these agendas to enhance the recreational capacity for young people.

Decades of Troubles related violence and strife have limited facilities and programmes for young people across communities. More recently local community organisations have accessed funds from myriad sources for youth programmes in each community. And many of these have successfully integrated young people on the cross community level. Funding for these programmes, however, often remains under threat or is inaccessible due to

dwindling support from European initiatives. Youth club staff consistently feel underpaid and underappreciated while young people complain that access to programmes, while developing, needs much improvement.

On the ground level, recent research actively involving young people continues to discuss young people's feelings of boredom and limited avenues for recreation (Hannaford 2005, Hansson 2005, Roche 2005a, Off the Streets 2004). Young people have also expressed a situation of burn out — where limited facilities and socialising in the club and pub scene in their early teens have left them bereft of options in their later teens and early 20s (Roche 2005a).

When it comes to socialising, young people mainly prefer venues that surround pubbing or clubbing, venues that serve alcohol and often provide easy access to illicit drugs. While the Young Life and Times (YLT) survey 2004 shows higher percentages of those who have used drink and drugs a few or many times is higher in urban areas than more rural areas, use of these substances is prevalent across the board. For those out of school, the Toward Reconciliation and Inclusion Project, showed even higher use of substances (Roche 2005a). This finding is concurred by the recent YLT 2004 survey with higher correlations of substance use with those who experienced higher levels of boredom and lack of leisure time.

Young people also demonstrate that they are “aware” of their usage to a certain extent by “choosing” to take part in using alcohol and drugs (Roche 2005a, Ellison 2001) and that peer pressure about using them was not a major concern for them (Cairns and Lloyd 2005, Off the Streets 2004). However, it is important to note that young people often expressed dismay at the *results* of these endeavours, being often surprised at or unaware that intake was excessive or could lead to long term damage (Roche 2005a). In this way, while young people are aware of their choice, they may not be aware of the full consequences of their action, and that further education is imperative (Hannaford 2005, Doherty and McCormack 2003).

Across Northern Ireland young people from both urban and rural areas have different complaints. While all young people expressed issues regarding safety and are aware of their potential dangers (Hansson 2005, Roche 2005a, Off the Streets 2004), young people from more rural areas found that access to programmes and social venues on the weekend were limited and that they had to rely upon taxis or family (Roche 2005a). Furthermore, very little study

and time is spent in rural and semi-rural areas. In 1997 authors Geraghty et al. state: “Young people in rural areas have been largely neglected by youth work and professional training in Northern Ireland. Their needs have been assumed to be identical to their urban counterparts” (1997:iv). While rural initiatives are beginning to take shape through the Rural Development Council (RDC) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), including this year’s first celebration of “Rural Life Week”, young people’s concerns and studies about their concerns are still relatively limited.

Equally, concerns between the sexes differ. Although it is impossible to note all the variations here with regards to specific concerns needed within the remit of young men and young women, in the suggested areas for recommendation, young women’s lack of participation in sport across Northern Ireland and young men’s less frequent interest in creative activities should be considered and encouraged.

As young people’s facilities increase and provisions for them become further enhanced, ASF should encourage the participation of young people in the processes. Suggestions in the areas of sport, the creative arts, pilot initiatives supporting alternative non-alcohol socialising venues, and for the implementation of a broad and connected, governmentally supported Youth Service in each community are submitted for review at the end of this document in the RECOMMENDATIONS sections.

Well-being and sectarianism

ASF takes into account the special importance of dealing with violence in and among housing areas in NI and the importance of dealing with the legacy of the conflict (1.4.1), and particularly dealing with tension at interface areas (cf. all sections 2.3). Equally, ASF highlights the need to pay attention to areas of low economic activity and their special needs whilst working within TSN initiatives. Considering this, it is recommended that the CRC suggests that specific pilot programmes be put in place to begin to examine the issue of youth violence across the communities. These programmes should include interface coordinators working in line with the Good Relations Framework and economically supported on the state and local governmental level. These programmes should also be in effect during heightened seasons of rioting and anti-social activity in which many young people become involved. Further

research also needs to be conducted in this area and the monitoring of these pilot programmes is imperative.

While youth violence is not exclusively an urban or interface concern (Roche 2005a and 2003; cf. also Blaser 1995), much intercommunity violence in Northern Ireland occurs at interface areas, in areas that young people have demarcated as “good” engagement spots, and at times of heightened tensions in urban estate areas – importantly including (1) times of political assembly (such as voting), (2) marching, (3) sporting events or (4) in reference to faith (attending services/schools). While it also must be remembered that the victims of such violence are those who usually live in the interface areas (Jarman and O’Halloran 2001 and 2000), this does not necessarily mean, however, that the young people involved exclusively come from these areas.

One of the specific concerns to which intercommunity violence is subject is the concern of sectarianism. While the concept of what is “sectarian” can be at times subjective and hard to pin down, reliant on personal interpretations and “feelings” of stress and threat (Roche 2005a and 2005b), the concept is something that permeates through all levels of society through sets of social relationships (Brewer 1992). In this way it is possible to record crime of this nature as the RUC (cf. Jarman 2002) and the PSNI, as well as the Community Safety Unit (CSU) of the NIO, have created database systems for the recording of sectarian (and other) hate crimes. Acts of violence, however, and their motivations and executions can be exacted from a variety of reasonings and to declare that an act was motivated out of sectarian hatred may be difficult to record.

With this in mind, intercommunity violence also should be considered through an ecological model of influences such as the environment, community, family and individual concerns. Approaching the subject of intercommunity youth violence on these levels is beneficial to understanding the “risk factors” (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Centre 2001; Fagan and Wilkinson 1998) and everyday factors (such as sheer boredom) (Hansson 2005; Roche 2005a, 2003; Todd 2002; Hall 1999) that influence violent organisation and behaviour among young people. In this way, all factors should be considered when influencing policy-making regarding the control and prevention of youth violence across communities and at interface areas. Intercommunity youth violence should be perceived on two levels: (1) addressing the specific needs of “flashpoint” times in the calendar and in

specific areas in relation to sectarian concerns; and (2) addressing holistically the ecological factors that augment this violence.

Tying-in with aspects of recreation and innovation, young people should be involved on every level with anti-sectarian campaigns, media or otherwise. Further proposals surrounding these areas are included in the RECOMMENDATIONS sections.

The areas recommended for review seek to:

- *Clarify expectations and standards in relation to these specific areas,*
- *Encourage innovation in project evolution, delivery and management,*
- *Illustrate the need for further study and cooperation between research and outcome,*
- *Improve arrangements within community youth sectors to work with lead department agencies and to be monitored,*
- *Create further official machinery to coordinate governmental responsibilities for youth policies and services.*

Recommendations on Young People

- The Department of Education as key agency for young people in Northern Ireland will provide a lead role in the progression of A Shared Future's (ASF) objectives. It will provide support and strategic co-ordination to all organisations working with young people and, in particular, to voluntary and community agencies working at neighbourhood level.
- Government will provide appropriate resourcing for the move from the policy to the practicality of youth work delivering ASF's objectives. Programmes will need provision for short-term funds for diversionary programmes; others will need core and secure funding for at least 5 years based on the philanthropic-style of 1-3-5 year assessment.
- An intermediary body, such as the Community Relations Council (CRC), will be given responsibility to deal with sourcing for funding of individual projects in partnership with the Youth Council and the Department of

Education. This body will act as an intermediating body, providing guidance for projects and sourcing alternative funds, while also supporting smaller projects which will eventually be mainstreamed into the Government's Triennial Action Plan (TAP).

- A scoping exercise of available and existing resources and programmes promoting good practice in relation to ASF will be prioritised. An overview of government policy will include key stakeholders such as the Northern the Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) and the Children's Law Centre.
- Young people will be involved at every level of the decision making process. This involvement should not be in token gestures, but in real engagement and in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which requires Governments to involve young people in all decisions being made about them. One opportunity to embed this ethos will be through the new council structures following the Review of Public Administration (RPA). Another opportunity is via the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy which includes the extension of life chances for children and young people as a key theme. Local authority Shadow Youth Councils also have a crucial role to play in the delivery of ASF for young people.
- Opportunities to develop pilot programmes encouraging Good Relations should be identified, developed and delivered to young people who are out of school or who are unemployed. The Jobskills, Jobskills Modern Apprenticeships and New Deal programmes will be able to formally integrate ASF initiatives into its programme through opportunities for pilot initiatives and more access to funding.
- A media campaign aimed at young people, made with the help of young people, will be developed and delivered. The plan should be aggressive and inventive.
- There will be support for alternative youth facilities, to include art and sports; music and drama; non traditional skills development etc. Activities such as alcohol-free out of hours venues, midnight football and the Women's Tech.

- The Children & Young Peoples 10 year strategy will embed the objectives of ASF at its core and be resolutely committed to the achievement of all the principles contained in the UNCRC.
- Involving parents is an imperative issue and should start with the pre-school years. Parents will be supported to become more confident in fulfilling their responsibilities in a difficult and demanding role. Every effort will be made to enhance programmes that support good relations in parenting programmes and state funding should support these efforts.

Selected references

- Atkinson, A. and Hills, J. (eds.) (1998), *Exclusion, Employment and Opportunity*, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics: London
- Bell, K., Jarman, N., and Lefebvre, T. (2004), *Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: ICR
- Betts, J. and Hamilton, J. (2005), *New Migrant Communities in East Tyrone*, Belfast: ICR
- Brewer, J. (1992), 'Sectarianism and racism, and their parallels and differences', in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 15 (3).
- Blaser, J. (1995), *Violence and Substance Abuse in Rural America* at <http://www.ncrel.org>.
- Cairns E., and Lloyd, K. (2005), *Stress at Sixteen* (Research Update), Belfast: Northern Ireland Social and Political Archive (ARK).
- Cormack, R., Osborne, R. and Thompson, W. (1980), *Into Work? Young School Leavers and the Structure of Opportunity in Belfast*, Belfast: Fair Employment Agency Research Paper 5.
- Cormack, R. and Osborne, R. (eds.) (1983), *Religion, Education and Employment: aspects of equal opportunity in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Appletree Press.
- Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) (2006), *Community Festivals Fund: Policy and Guidance Framework*, Belfast: DCAL.

- Department of Employment and Learning (2005), *Report on the Implementation of Equality and Good Relations Duties under Section 75 NI Act 1998*, Belfast: DEL
- Department of Employment and Learning (2003), *Cultural Diversity Pilot Initiative (Circular Number FE 19/03)* Belfast: DEL.
- Doherty, E. and McCormack, J (2003), *Underage Drinking in the Derry City Council Area*, Derry Londonderry: Western Investing for Health Partnership.
- Ellison, G. (2001), *Young people: crime, policing and victimisation in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Queen's University of Belfast.
- Fagan, J. and Wilkinson D. (1998), 'Social contexts and functions of adolescent violence', in D. Elliott, B. Hamburg and K. Williams (eds.), *Violence in American schools: a new perspective*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Fay, M., Morrissey, M., Smyth, M. and Wong, T. (1999), *The Cost of the Troubles Study*, Derry Londonderry: INCORE
- Geraghty, G., Breakey C., Keane, T. (1997), *A Sense of Belonging: Young People in Rural Areas of Northern Ireland Speak About Their Needs, Hopes and Aspirations*, Belfast: Youth Action
- Hall, M. (1999), *Young People Speak Out*, Newtownabbey: New Hill Development Team/Island Publications.
- Hannaford, S. (2005), *Drinking, Smoking, Drugs and Sexual Intercourse – Education and Influence for Young People in Northern Ireland (Research Update)*, Belfast: Northern Ireland Social and Political Archive.
- Hansson, U. (2005), *Troubled Youth? Young People, Violence and Disorder in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: ICR.
- Jarman, N. (2005), *No Longer a Problem? Sectarian Violence in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: ICR.
- Jarman, N. (2002), *Overview Analysis of racist Incidents Recorded in Northern Ireland by the RUC 1996-1999*, Belfast: OFMDFM.

- Jessor, R. (1993), 'Successful Adolescent Development Among Youth in High-Risk Settings' in *American Psychologist* 48 (2).
- Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence (2002), *Voices (Edition 2)*, Belfast: JEDI
- National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Centre (2001), *Risk and Preventative Factors for Youth Violence*, Maryland: NYVPRC
- Off the Streets (2004), *A Study of Values, Attitudes and Opinions: Young People in the Greater Shantallow Area*, Derry Londonderry: Off the Streets
- Roche, R. (2006 In Press), "'You Know America has Drive By Shootings? In Creggan We Have Drive By Beatings": Continuing Intracommunity Vigilantism in Urban Northern Ireland', in D. Pratten and A. Sen (eds.), *Global Vigilantes*, London: Hurst.
- Roche, R. (2005a), *Something to Say: The Complete TRIPROJECT Report on the Views of Young School Leavers in the Derry City Council Areas*, Belfast: Blackstaff.
- Roche, R. (2005b), *Something to Say: A Condensed TRIPROJECT Report on the Views of Youth School Leavers in the Derry City Council Areas*, Belfast: Blackstaff.
- Social Disadvantage Research Centre (2001), *Measures of Deprivation in Northern Ireland*, Oxford: Department of Social policy and Social Work.
- Todd, H. (2002), *Young People in the Short Strand Speak Out*, Belfast: University of Ulster.
- Tolan, P. and Guerra, N. (1994), *What Works in Reducing Adolescent Violence: An Empirical Look at the Field*, Chicago: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland (2000), *Taking the Initiative: Promoting Young People's Involvement in Decision Making in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Youth Council for NI.
- Zingraff, M., Leiter, J., Myers, K., and Johnson, M. (1993) 'Child Maltreatment and Youthful Problem Behaviour', in *Criminology* 31.