



YouthAction
NORTHERN IRELAND

“The patience of peace in a runaway world”

**YouthAction Northern Ireland
- Peace education work with
young people in youth work**

Building human and social capital to support reconstruction
and transformation in Northern Ireland and the border counties
of the Republic of Ireland





YouthAction Northern Ireland is working with young people to explore the impact of the conflict on their attitudes, perceptions and behaviours. Young people are supported to actively play a role in creating a shared, different, stable, fair and peaceful future. This work is one part in the cog of peace-building work in Northern Ireland and the border counties, and as such, YouthAction Northern Ireland builds on a collective and co-ordinated approach to maximise the potential. To complement our direct work with young people, we also *“support adults to learn to talk with young people about sectarianism and controversial issues.”* This reflects our full approach of supporting individual or group knowledge, understanding and skills (human capital) and in supporting co-operation and social relations (social capital).

We recognise that sectarianism in Northern Ireland is not simply a matter of religion. It is a wider intersection of religion, politics and territorialism. Leichty and Clegg¹ 2001:37, define sectarianism as: *“a complex set of problems – including dividing, demonising and dominating – which typically arise from malignant interactions of religion and politics.”* So rather than sectarianism being confined to religious labelling, it is in reality more about ethnicity and identification of Catholic/Nationalists with Ireland and Protestant/Unionist with Great Britain. We also recognise that in creating a shared, different and peaceful future, we need to be proactive in addressing organised hatred and hate crimes, which compound the problem further, especially as minority groups based on race, ethnicity, sexual identity and sex/gender feel the full brunt of victimisation and hatred. The Council of Europe has insisted that intercultural dialogue, building on universal norms, is the key to managing diversity. It holds out the vision of an integrated society of diverse individual citizens, each of whom sees the others as his/her fellow citizens.

At YouthAction Northern Ireland we contribute to a social reconstruction model in helping to bring a ‘damaged society’ to a normal level of interpersonal and group relations:

1. Formal relationships – representatives providing leadership in working together
2. Normalising of relationships within communities – addressing ‘us and them’
3. Mutual interdependence – respect for needs and interests of other groups
4. Developing trust – negotiating common issues and problems to improve quality of life
5. Reconciliation

We acknowledge that peace education, social justice and equality are not an easy journey, or one that is carried out in solitude. It is painstakingly slow, difficult to identify progress, difficult to measure and in some instances unsupported by sections of the community (sometimes known as ‘spoilers’). While recognising these blocks

1. Leichty J and Clegg C (2001), *“Moving beyond sectarianism: religion, conflict and reconciliation in Northern Ireland”*, Columba Press

in peace development it is also important to gain understanding of why there might be resistance to a peaceful model of working and in particular the implications for children and young people.

Throughout our practices young people have cited their frustrations at the slow nature of peace-building and the often lack of progress or visible results. Young people live in a fast paced world in which the technological age has increased opportunities and communication in a more prompt and arguably efficient way. This however has brought with a sense of instantaneity and urgency in which people do not have time to wait. *"We live in a world of transformations, affecting every aspect of what we do. For better or worse, we are being propelled into a global order that no one fully understands, but which is making its effects felt upon all of us"*² (Giddens, 2002; p.7). For young people therefore life is fast paced and instant, while peace-building work is slow and time consuming. This has led us to formulate our model based on **"The patience of peace in a runaway world."**

The role of youth work in supporting peace-building in Northern Ireland and the border counties of/with the Republic of Ireland

"There aren't very many people different to me living in my street. People need to be educated about others and difference." (young person)

Youth work has been developing within the context of a society emerging from many years of conflict and unrest. Throughout this youth workers have been at the cold-face and been responsive to the needs of young people in providing opportunities for informal and non-formal education. Youth work has, can and does play an important role in supporting and encouraging young people's participation in a society moving away from conflict towards peace. Much of this work is

underpinned by a belief in human rights, equality of opportunity and participative democracy. The educational nature of youth work is characterized by a specific value system relating to social justice and this is what distinguishes us from other approaches to learning.

Youth work supports young people directly to understand their lives in a way which they focus on self, others and their potential to actively contribute to positive changes both for themselves and that of wider communities. Young people have unique opportunities to explore issues which affect their lives, such as the impact of the conflict and deep rooted sectarianism on their lives. Young people who are marginalised, such as young mothers or young people from the LGBT community, have been targeted by youth work interventions to provide them with a safe space in which they can grow and flourish. Youth work recognises that peace-building work, community relations and reconciliation work, coupled with other practices addressing inequalities, are longer term processes rather than short term 'quick-fix' interventions, which also involves a wider holistic community education – a learning and action approach. Within youth work we need to have an appetite for this work and for embracing and espousing change. It is our choice to pursue a path of fairness, equality and change.

Despite the peace process and those young people born in a time of relative peace, violence remains an immediate memory for many young people, particularly the experiences they witness in their everyday lives and the spheres of influence around them such as peers, parents and grandparents who often reinforce separation and distrust of any 'other'. This often makes them wary of building friendships with young people from another tradition. In recent years this prejudice and mistrust has been fuelled due to perceptions about motives of those from minority ethnic communities living,

2. Grattan A. (2007) "Reflexive Modernisation, Existential Anxiety and Sense of Identity: An Exploration of 'Perceived' Identity in Crisis", International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations, Volume 7, Number 4



working and socialising in Northern Ireland and the border counties. In any community relations approach there needs to be a focus on intercultural approaches. Likewise, the relationship between gender expectations cannot be underestimated in any discussion about addressing conflict, violence and diversity. For example, young men's involvement in sectarian violence has been closely associated with male identity – violence is often an expression of young men's hopelessness, frustration, isolation, boredom and energy. YouthAction Northern Ireland and the University of Ulster Centre for Young Men's studies have been working in partnership for more than 5 years researching the impact of masculinity on addressing personal and societal conflict and in developing models of practice in both schools and local communities. The visibility of young men can often lead to the invisibility of young women and subsequent targeting of support. The YouthAction Northern Ireland "Still Waiting"³ (2007) research report indicates that there is a growing concern for women as perpetrators and victims of violence, and in particular sectarian violence. Young women often cited 'hatred' as their reason for their involvement in violence.

Youth work can proactively address hatred, and in turn support diversity, integration, inclusion and inter-culturalism in supporting young people to prepare for a shared, different, stable, fair and peaceful future. YouthAction Northern Ireland, as a Regional Voluntary Youth Work Organisation, has experience in both developing equality and inclusive practices but in also demonstrating the impact and measurement of these in terms of both outputs and outcomes.

Our practices at YouthAction Northern Ireland strive to break down walls, remove barriers, build bridges and to safely share spaces. We adopt and combine a tripartite approach. Firstly, there are generic mechanisms in which youth environments

are inclusive and can challenge attitudes and perceptions. Secondly, we target specific groups such as young people from minority ethnic communities and single sex environments, in which young people can firstly look at themselves and in turn look outwards to exploring the realities of others different from them. Thirdly, we attempt to embed integration in which young people can have meaningful encounters between other young people. These encounters often reinforce commonalities as well as the differences. Ultimately young people should be exposed to and learn to acknowledge the 'gift' of the other. They can then begin to understand and learn to embrace difference whether religious, cultural or other.

Sociologist Emile Durkheim⁴, in writing about social solidarity, refers to the term "collective effervescence." YouthAction Northern Ireland utilises this term within peace education to support young people's collective conscience and action as a contagious behaviour which others find difficult to resist. By such collectivity, an energy emerges which can transcend conflict to stimulate social action and change. We believe in the power and potential of young people in contributing to sustainable change.

"The challenge for education providers, both in the formal education sector and in the less formal community and voluntary sector, is to find ways to broaden young people's knowledge and understanding of recent Northern Irish history, and to do so in a way that does not simply reinforce a perception of two parallel histories that only intersect through acts of violence, but rather encourages greater recognition of the complex ways that past events unfold and impact upon contemporary and future lives. (The Troubles aren't history yet – young people's understanding of the past."⁵ (Bell, Hansson and Mc Caffrey, 2010))

3. "Mc Alister S., Gray A. and Neil G. (2007), "Still Waiting - the stories behind the statistics of young women growing up in Northern Ireland", YouthAction Northern Ireland

4. Emile Durkheim, French philosopher and sociologist, 1858 - 1917

5. Bell J, Hansson U. and Mc Caffrey N. (2010), "The Troubles aren't history yet - young people's understanding of the past", Community Relations Council

The model: A Youth Work Perspective

"Peace education is a context-defined, transformative and intrinsic political pedagogy aimed at generating and reinforcing a culture of peace and active responsibility." (INCORE, University of Ulster, 2010)

Our model is based on that of John Paul Lederach⁶ wherein peace building works at the 4 levels: Individual, Interpersonal, Community and Policy. This is not a staged approach nor based on working in silos. It is also educative in which young people's experiences, knowledge, understanding and skills development form a crucial component in the possibility of change.

The level	The Intervention (Youth work and peace education model) – based on felt needs, evidenced based needs and comparative needs	Educational OUTCOMES (Department of Education, Northern Ireland):	Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy Outcomes (Department of Education, Northern Ireland)-
Individual level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The relationship between adult and young person lies at the heart of youth work. This is based on voluntary participation where young people are able to freely enter into and end relationships with youth workers when they want - Youth work supports young people to understand the benefits of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourages the development of mutual understanding and promote recognition of and respect for diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide formal & non-formal opportunities to build relationships with those of different backgrounds & traditions - Understand and respect rights, equality & diversity (incl linguistic diversity) of all - Develop skills, attitudes & behaviours to value and respect difference and engage positively with it
Interpersonal level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth work supports young people as peace champions or ambassadors for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase young people's capacity to participate positively in a society emerging from conflict 	
Community level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth work promotes young people's safe mobility beyond their 'bubbles' or 'bounded contentment' - Youth work encourages action which stems from young people's own perceptions of their communities - Youth work promotes a positive contribution of young people, often through group association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Youth Work Strategy for the delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland (2005-2008) and the "Shaping the Future of the Youth Service" (2009) emphasise core educational values which include: Peace-building, equality and inclusion, participation, political development and personal and social development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute to improving relations between communities by educating children & young people to develop self respect, respect for others, promote equality & work to eliminate discrimination

6. Lederach J.P. (2005), *"The Moral Imagination - The Art and Soul of Building Peace"*, Oxford University Press



<p>Community level continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth work contributes to social capital, through creating stronger, more sustainable communities (youth work connecting young people to communities) - Youth work plays a vital role in building relations between generations - Youth work supports community development, going beyond the residential proximity to include micro communities. So, rather than always assuming that young people within a geographical community have collective shared interests and activities, it is about recognising places and spaces in which young people interact on a regular basis such as sports associations, music gig nights, youth friendly cafes etc 		
<p>Policy level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth work supports participative democracy where young people participate in and influence decisions and actions to shaping a better society - Youth work supports young people to celebrate difference and speak out against inequality, exclusion and discrimination (religion, gender, ethnicity, race) - Youth work supports political awareness and development in which young explore what politics means to them - Youth work addresses both local and global issues with a particular focus on equity and social justice (creating a global community) 		

Components within the model:

Within this model John Paul Lederach also notes 4 core components that inter-link in supporting practices in peace building, reconciliation and reconstruction.

- 1) Centrality of relationships (listening, understanding, appreciative enquiry)
- 2) Practice of paradoxical curiosity (scratch beneath the surface)
- 3) Provide a space for creative act and
- 4) The willingness to risk

OUTCOMES BASED EVALUATION

(Peace education work with young people in youth work)

The Youth Action peace education model is surrounded by an outcomes-based evaluation approach to support the impact measurement. This attempts to chart progress and movement for individuals, groups and communities in terms of learning (knowledge and attitude) and skills development (behaviour). This is about a conscious effort to establish purpose and intention, monitor progress and report upon discoveries. Everybody should be fully aware of the peace-building outcomes.



Example of project outcomes for young people:

Aim: Young people have increased trust among members of their group and their support worker / youth worker (altogether supporting the engagement process)

Aim: Young people are better able to identify and avoid any prejudices they have toward others

Aim: Young people have improved knowledge, confidence and abilities/skills to enable them to contribute to the building of a peaceful, different and stable society

Aim: Increased approaches for integration with others which promote dialogue alongside practical reconciliation activities and projects which address prejudice, discrimination etc

Aim: Young people have improved confidence and skills to work with local community or others who can help them to identify and progress peace-building activities such as 'symbols' in each community that signify their vision for peace and celebration of difference

Example of baseline for young people:

I feel comfortable and feel trust within the group

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I want to meet people from different communities and backgrounds

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I understand the significance of the Northern Ireland conflict and can recognize how it affects my opportunities and other areas of my life (and that of others)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I feel energised to making positive changes which make our communities and society safer and more peaceful

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I feel I have the skills which can really make a difference to making our communities and society safer and more peaceful

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

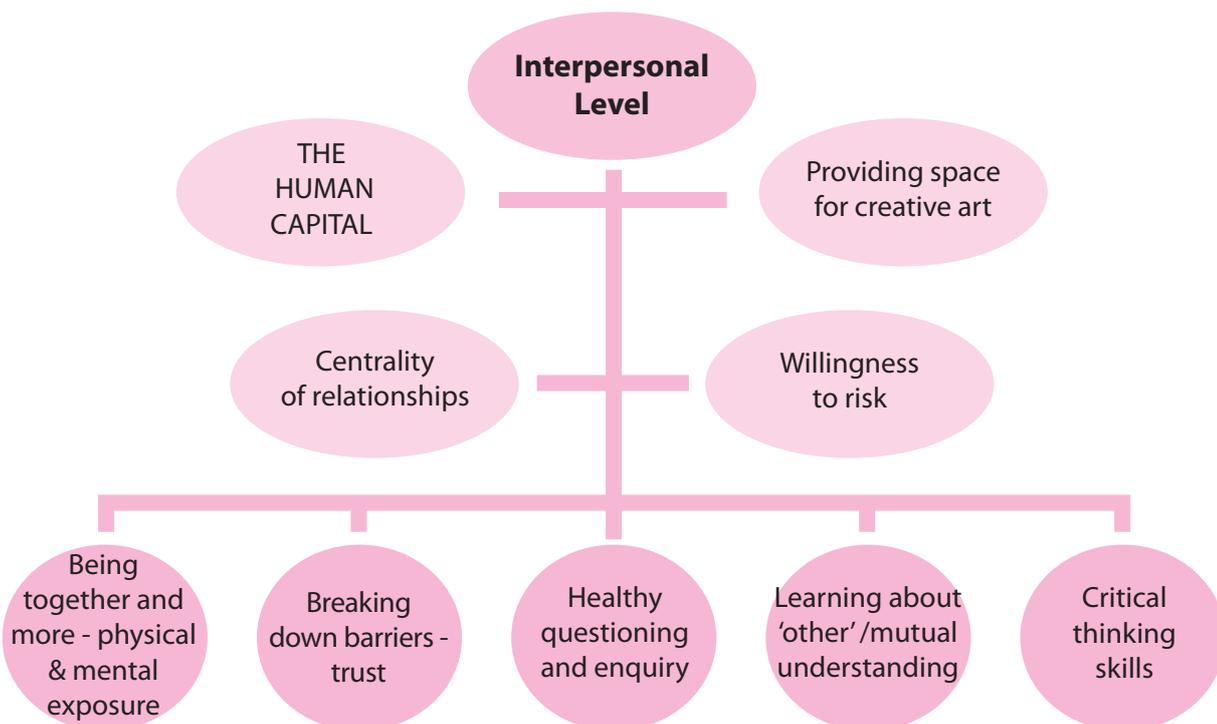
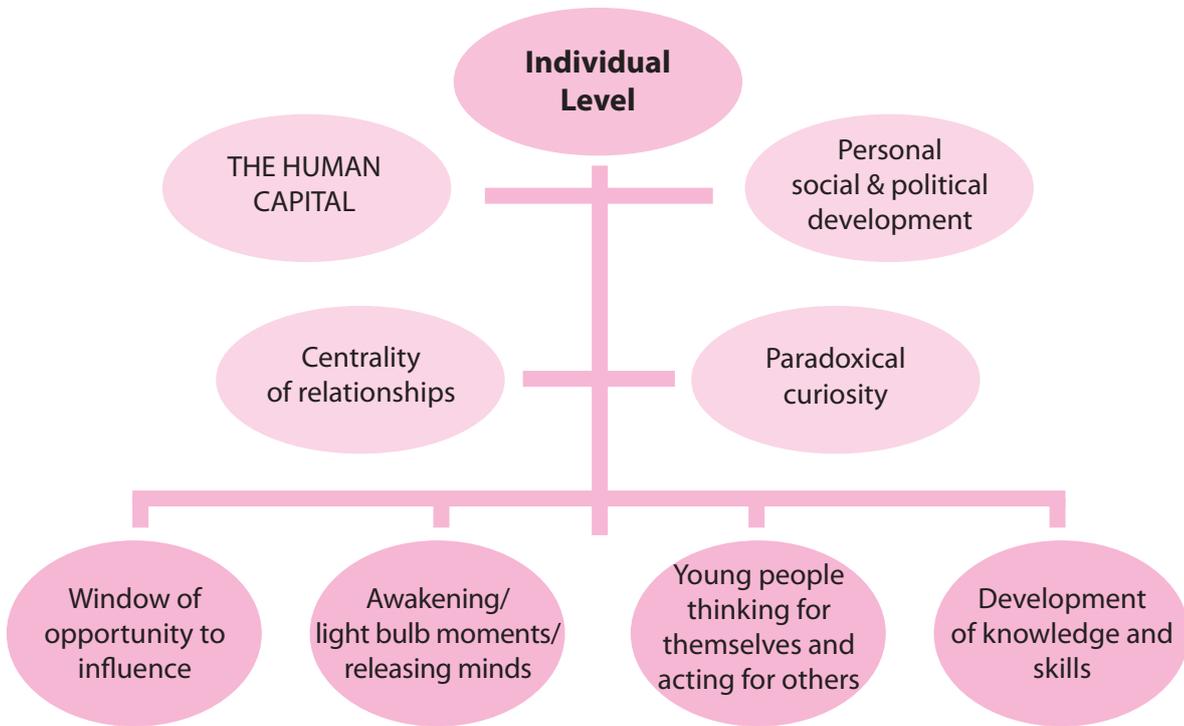
I feel there are opportunities for me to display my peace-building achievements and which signify my/our vision for peace

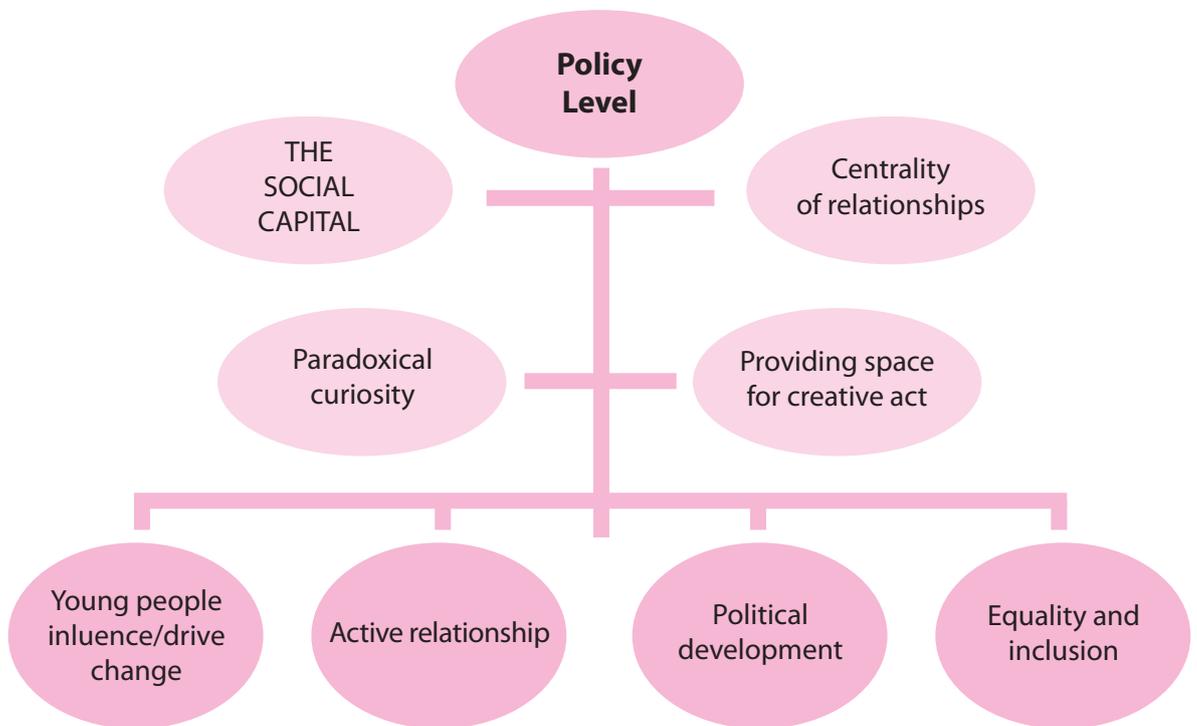
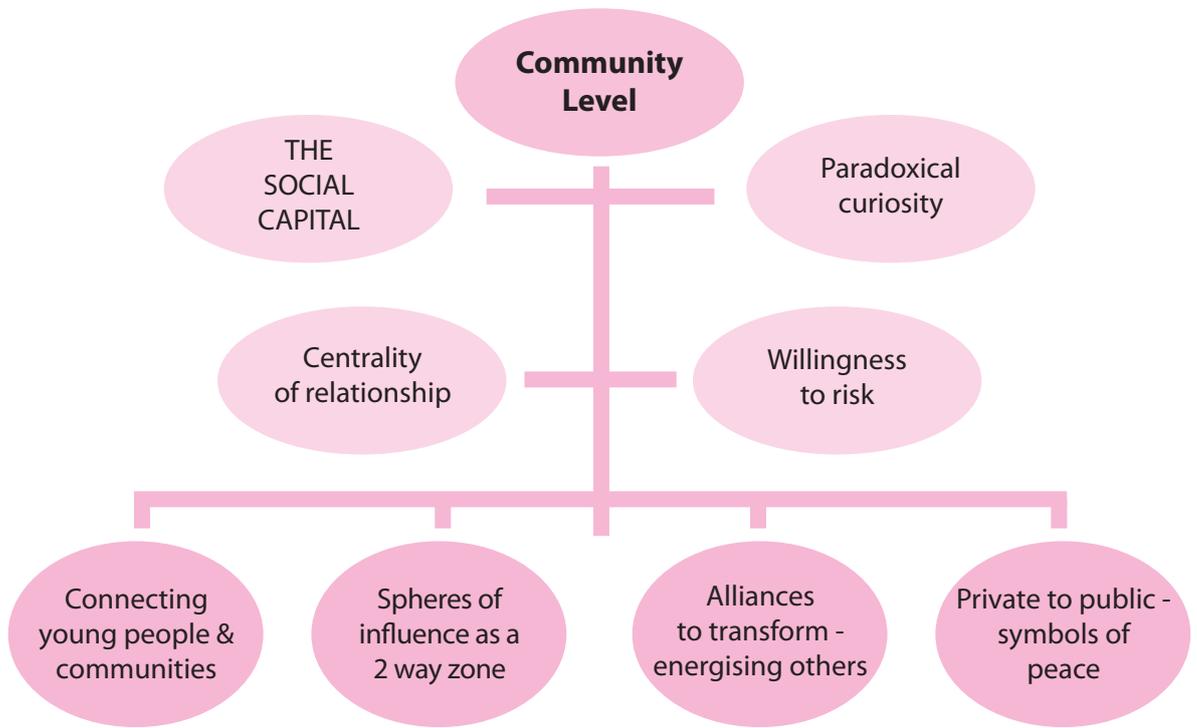
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



YouthAction Northern Ireland Peace education model

– our model is based on an organisational youth work approach with various projects contributing to the outcomes







The model explained:

We believe that this practice involves a plethora of approaches, some intentional and some ad-hoc. In all these approaches the worker maximises the opportunity to explore elements of the legacy of the conflict, how it affects young people's choices, attitudes and behaviours as well as opportunities for creating change for a more shared, different, stable, fair and peaceful society. In short they seize these opportunities!

Purposeful learning and exploratory peace enhancing work must be embedded throughout and where possible transparency and clarity are key. This ensures that young people know why they are experiencing and learning, and in turn to articulate the learning that has taken place. Young people often do not cite 'peace-building' or conflict transformation as a 'need', but the skilled worker will recognise the absolute need for this work, and be able to support young people recall or recognise the impact that the conflict and its legacy have had on their everyday attitudes and behaviours. Unaddressed dormant issues will re-emerge in a negative way at a later time if they remain unexplored and unaddressed.

Within YouthAction Northern Ireland we appreciate and recognise that integration is one core element of peace-building work, surrounded by other layers of approaches including community cohesion, political development, participative democracy and active citizenship. Desired integration must come from young people and their communities, where possible, and should not be artificially arranged. We advocate that inter-community engagement should be mainstreamed within youth work. We believe that youth work can play a significant and powerful role in contributing to sustainable, vibrant and greater sharing among communities.

1. Centrality of relationships (listening, understanding, appreciative enquiry)

- Young people – worker/volunteer
- Young people – young people
- Worker/volunteer – worker/volunteer
- Relationships with local community associations and those responsible for a whole community approach
- Relationships between host groups/communities and guest organisations/groups
- Taking subtle cues from young people and communities as well as informed needs and evidence
- Bonding between young people who may have common similarities
- All these relationships have core elements of trust, respect, clarity, transparency and belief

2. Practice of paradoxical curiosity (scratching beneath the surface)

- Developing critical thinking to challenge the everyday held assumptions (contrary to common belief)/ challenging the habitual/challenging internalised bigotry (a critical consciousness)
- Developing a 'caught not taught' psyche – an inherent passion within for change
- Discussing the 'undiscussable'
- Asking the hard questions (confrontation to consensus)
- Exploring the spheres of influence and identifying actions to refine/alter these influences (family, school, media, politics, personal experience etc)
- Keeping it real and relevant to the lives of young people



- Awakening, enlightenment and understanding among young people
- Looking inward and outward, backward and forward

3. Provide a space for creative act

- Providing opportunities for young people in which all young people have a safe and happy space based on sharing
- Bridging relationships across different groups of young people and including intergenerational opportunities
- Respecting and celebrating difference in both private and public arena's
- Encouraging the development of mutual understanding and acceptance among all young people and their spheres of influence
- Seizing the opportunity to make things happen with young people
- Challenging the wider network of sectarian/racist ideologies to interrupt the 'cycle of hatred' (addressing xenophobia)
- Developing and applying new skills such as negotiation and violence prevention
- Connecting young people's experience in civil society to that of political society

4. The willingness to risk

- A complementary 'Individual think' to 'group think'
- Removing the walls of politeness and polite avoidance among young people, their communities, workers and wider society
- Enabling safe mobility (moving beyond the bubble syndrome) to experience additional opportunities

- Building bridges and removing visible and less visible barriers (a physical and mental mindset)
- Linking relationships across young people from different communities - put as 5th bullet
- A reimagining rather than reimagining – thinking and acting 'outside of the box' and parameters of the 'known'
- Exploring, researching and addressing a plethora of social justice and issues including poverty, gender, intergenerational, interculturalism, rural and urban contexts etc
- Building a pool of 'champions for change' in which young leaders are role models and demonstrating active citizenship

At YouthAction Northern Ireland the peace education work with young people embeds a professional youth work approach which invests in community development approaches. The youth work investment clearly demonstrates its contribution to a co-ordinated peace-building agenda. The role of youth work is both central and crucial in promoting political education and participation of young people in relation to issues of violence, conflict and cultural diversity. The youth work approach demonstrates its distinctiveness through assets based interventions based on association, relationship, engagement and community. Below we have highlighted some lessons learned in which the approach of the youth worker is vital in achieving outcomes for young people and communities.

Below we have highlighted some of our learning in achieving outcomes for young people and communities. Key to the success has been the unique nature of the youth work pedagogy and relationships developed.



The approach of the worker:

1. Know yourself

- Identify the context in which you operate personally and how your personal values, in relation to the conflict, may impact on your attitude or approach
- Ensure you have ongoing opportunities for self exploration (provoking issues within you)
- Consider what relevant life stories and values that you may share with others
- Have an inherent quest to unpack personal values and principles to advance greater self actualisation
- Know who you are as in having a sense of your place in the world. This involves reflection on what stirs inside you, and what calls out to be heard, followed and acted upon
- Understand that learning and truth are a lifelong adventure. No matter how much you think you know or have learned, there is always more
- Know and vocalise the change that you and others seek. What would success look like? How do you believe that this change can best happen?

2. Understanding the issues

- Recognise the philosophy and practice of community relations, peace education, peace-building , reconciliation and transformation
- Know the community in which you are working through ongoing needs assessment and issues specific to that community (be still, be watchful, be patient, be imaginary and be active in developing possibilities)

- Understand the root causes of structural inequalities and injustices which are of particular relevance to the community of young people with whom you work
- Co-investigation and reflection coupled with collective community action form the basis of an ethical and democratic partnership which can enable change
- Empathy and understanding of each individual community context – while there may be ‘spoilers’ it is important to respect their perspective
- Identify the core issues impacting on young people and their development within a peace education model
- Know your 'windows' into the reality of the communities or groups with whom you work. What perceptions, assumptions and realities have you about the young people? What are your feelings or observations? How can you build a clearer picture?

3. Connect and create

- Connect with and enable community groups to create opportunities rather than pursuing un-cooperating avenues
- Recognise the need to be proactive, seize opportunities and redress separation, conflict and division
- Have continued dialogue and understanding between youth workers and local community based workers
- Develop partnerships and collective action to maximise the impact – a whole community approach
- As far as possible engage the wider community in peace-building and reconciliation work (whole communities engaged in the change process)



- Ultimately connect with young people and together create meaningful opportunities which support individual and societal growth
- Consider the place and space in which young people meet and connect with others
- Initiate conversations with everyday people and create connections to the environment and context
- Think about a range of intersections and spaces in which cross linking relations can be made

4. Keeping it realistic

- Not having quick fix solutions but gradually building change
- Consideration to the time investment and capacity to fulfil the agreed commitments (will a 6 month intervention suffice?)
- Know the level at which you are supporting peace-building – is this young people already engaged in some form of leadership or are the young people currently not engaged in any youth provision?
- Clarity among young people, communities, adults and parents – they should know what we are trying to do (thinking about how to pitch the work)
- Take risks and going 'beyond the bubble' / looking outwards as well as inwards / addressing proximity interfaces
- Be open to risk and embrace the unknown journey beyond a set of predefined outcomes, outputs and activities. See and move with the unexpected - relish the pleasant surprises!!

- Have peripheral vision and a willingness to move sideward and backwards in order to move forward. Consider multiple avenues

5. Your pitch / buy in from young people

- Consider nature of group (recruitment, stage of development, experience of youth work, experience of peace education etc)
- Remove the 'fuzziness' of peace-building to make it interesting and relevant to the lives of young people
- Embed a variety of learning methods which are interactive and engaging for young people
- Emphasise the role, approach and core elements of youth work as many young people (and indeed adults) may be unfamiliar or misunderstand non-formal education approaches (young people focussed; voluntary participation and relationship; committing to association; educational approach focusing on the welfare of young people etc)
- Highlight potential knowledge, attitude and skills development for the young people
- Recognise and emphasise a series of history and events, but to best engage young people focus on their lived histories in which they have experienced, seen, touched or tasted the impact and legacy of previous and current conflicts
- Supporting young people to find a voice that can sustain and make change possible

6. Leadership

- Facilitate learning through 'safe' role modelling and conversation/dialogue (asking the hard questions)



- Understand that risk and mystery are required for the journey – utilising instinct and 'make it happen'
- Self confidence and leadership among the worker/volunteer – ultimately being an inner champion, a piper, or a warrior of light
- Supporting leadership and ownership among young people
- Retain a 'horizon of hope' when things appear pessimistic - invoking a positive response to potential set backs
- Provide room and space (as well as validate) the artistic side of the work to complement the technical expertise. This is what John Paul Lederach describes as "inciting and exciting the artist within us"
- Be inspirational through continuous enquiry and curiosity rather than presenting a "know it all attitude". This should be about learning, reflecting and refining together with young people
- Support young people to build lasting friendships across former divided communities
- Apply critical reflective practices backed up with well evidenced practice to demonstrate the impact on individuals, groups, communities and society
- Participation in collective action to potentially achieve individual and social change

Some of the outcomes for young people, communities and wider society include:

- Young people having an open and 'searching' attitude (curiosity)
- Young people learning to question and to challenge others
- Young people having greater recognition of the complexity of the conflict(s) and how it impacts upon contemporary and future lives
- Supporting active citizenship: Youth action by young people (caught not taught)
- Young people having a better understanding and ability to acknowledge and deal with the past
- Young people recognised and validated as active and equal contributors
- Mutual understanding, respect and integration through meaningful encounters and sharing spaces (not avoiding interaction with each other)
- Safer mobility among young people across 'divides' (building bridges)
- Supporting community/good relations
- Supporting community dialogue
- Supporting inter-community relationships

7. Outcomes based learning

- Ensure interventions are based on learning, challenge and enjoyment
- Help young people learn about themselves, others and society (local and global)
- Help young people to challenge the habitual and subconscious 'way of doing things' / challenging "that's just the way it is"
- Consciously think about how you prick the conscience of young people
- Develop the ability of young people to think for themselves and to act for others
- Engage in a real and meaningful way to help young people to make sense of their world, society and community

- Having stronger, peaceful and more sustainable communities
- Presenting 'A vision for change' – young people inspired to influence and drive change
- Creating momentum and sustainability
- Building safer, shared and confident communities
- Rather than peace being a mirage it can become a reality
- Increased interest in behaviour and activities of an inclusive culture – reduced hatred and oppression
- Increased capacity to inspire others to jump on board the "peace train"
- Transferrable skills to other areas of life such as employment
- Recognition and accreditation for young people (through recognised awards and qualifications)

Practice based examples of peace education/ peace building work with young people within YouthAction Northern Ireland

1. Community Leadership Programme (C.L.P.) Apprenticeship in Youth Work - Peace Building in Action: tools and techniques

Over the past 22 years, YouthAction Northern Ireland has been in the unique position of being able to use C.L.P. to design and deliver new intervention models within local communities that contribute to peace building. This approach has served as a research and development function; a test lab, where young people are the developers, evaluators and users of the products. The significant advantage is that this developmental process becomes a fundamental part of the C.L.P. experience.

With the emphasis on reflective learning, the tools, techniques and models are used as the basis for learning and the approaches are amended or adapted as a result.

Community Leadership Programme Apprenticeship in Youth Work Level 3

The Community Leadership Programme is the first and only recognised Apprenticeship in Youth Work in Northern Ireland. The programme provides employment and training for young leaders aged 18-24 years wanting to undertake an Apprenticeship in Youth Work. Apprentices are employed for a period of 18 months during which they undertake training alongside employment in a community youth work setting. The Youth Work Apprenticeship programme focuses on developing the skills and knowledge to work effectively with young people. Apprentices undertake a various training leading to a range of qualifications. As well as young leaders undertaking training in Community safety, Community Relations and Community Development, the underpinning principles of the training and subsequent practice development focuses on peace-building work with young people. A recent example of collaborative working across communities was the "Transport Matters - Young people's experiences, attitudes and ideas for improving public transport."

This innovative action research project was undertaken to:

- *promote the voices of young people on a key issue;*
- *provide practical experience of action research;*
- *feature a high level of partnership working;*
- *facilitate cross community working on a matter of shared interest and relevance.*



Youth Action Northern Ireland and the Consumer Council joined forces in recognising that there had been a limited focus on the needs of young people in terms of transport provision generally, and public transport in particular. As a result the 'Transport Matters' action research project was developed.

The research was carried out by the Community Leadership Apprentices in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Fermanagh. The Youth Work Apprentices developed and designed the questionnaires which were completed by young people in the local community placements. The hallmark of the research was an understanding that young people are more likely to engage with initiatives in which they feel real ownership and in which they can make real decisions and have their voice heard, about factors impacting on their lives. 22 community based youth organisations and 220 young people were actively involved across Northern Ireland throughout all stages of the research, from the design and piloting of the questionnaires, focus groups and collection of data, to the completion of the report and presentation of its findings to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

This action research project involved all sections of the community. The subject united young people in a common cause. There was an opportunity to make a presentation to the Northern Ireland Assembly Regional Development Committee where the use of drama techniques reinforced the findings of the research and made the voices and opinions of young people heard in the Assembly.

The Community Leadership programme explicitly contributes to peace building in the following ways:

- employing and mentoring 2 young adults aged 18-24 years to gain skills in

civic action, interface youth engagement and community connections.

- building leadership skills amongst young adults who lack traditional qualifications from communities that experience low levels of social and economic activity and high levels of inter-community violence or high levels of separation.
- increasing community cohesion and build foundations for youth led opportunities and active decision making amongst local placement organisations and partners.
- enskilling 15 apprentices to activate 600 young people across a geographical area to engage in programmes 1) supporting alternatives to community based violence; 2) increasing connections (dialogue & action) between young people within their communities; 3) increasing interaction between young people across communities; 4) supporting an ethos of active volunteering; and 5) improving relationships with significant policy shapers (locally and regionally).

2. OCN Accredited Training Community Relations and Equity, Diversity and Interdependence Work (16-25yr olds)

The OCNNI suite of Community Relations training (levels 1 – 3) is designed to provide young leaders, youth workers and volunteers in communities the opportunity to meet new people and to explore attitudes, values and identity as a result of living in a divided society. It also works on an intercultural model and examines not only the dominant cultures that exist in Northern Ireland but other cultures that enhance our society. Participants explore this through group-work, visits, creative arts based projects and have this work formally recognised and accredited by OCNNI. For those who progress to Levels 2 and 3, they



have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge required to deliver Community Relations work with young people in communities.

The project builds trust between young people as it brings young people from different communities together into a neutral space. They lay the boundaries themselves and agree a way of interacting so that safety of individuals and the group is upheld. From the outset people are encouraged to share only what they are comfortable sharing. After some teambuilding exercises the young leaders feel more at ease with each other. They start to see that they have things in common. Exercises such as a community relations diaries and community life maps are often methods that can be used to build trust between the group. As everyone shares a piece of themselves the group members can see that whilst there are things that group members have in common with each other, there are also areas of difference, and that this is acceptable and should be respected.

The training supports young people's curiosity and endeavours to learn more about others and difference, as young people are encouraged to meet people from communities of interest to them and to ask the questions that they may never have had the opportunity or courage to ask before. Where possible we try to facilitate face to face interaction between young people and people from various communities including Travellers, Chinese community, LGBT community and those who are or at risk of being homeless to name but a few.

The project supports mobility beyond young people's limited horizons as it changes young people's mindsets. They are more open to new thoughts, opinions, ideas and opportunities. Once they open their minds

new possibilities arise - some young people start to see life through a different lens than before. They experience new opportunities, go to new places and have friends that they wouldn't have had before. It must be noted that, due to the nature of our society, it is still an issue that some young people don't feel safe travelling into "other" areas because of their background, and hence relationships are often supported through social networking and mobile phone connections. Young people also may start to meet on neutral ground in the city centre for example.

The project supports integration or intercommunity engagement, as for most young people it is the first time that they have met with and conversed in a real way with people from different backgrounds. They can explore issues which arise from segregation and discuss ways of addressing this which usually advocates integration in all structures of society. Again the model of integration is not restricted to the two dominant traditions that exist in the North of Ireland, but also includes minority ethnic communities and people with other identities, such as the deaf community, for example.

All of the programmes within our Community Relations suite of training actively promote citizenship, participative democracy and political development. Through the course material participants are encouraged to see how we all have a part to play in creating social change in our personal lives, as members of families, communities and a local national and global context. Participants look at what they can do to make a difference and influence the structures of society that mean real change can happen. As part of all the training we examine how political politics works on a local and global network and by interacting with community workers, politicians they can



discuss how they can contribute to this. By meeting people in minority communities they can begin to empathise and advocate for people whose rights may have been infringed. They also develop politically on a personal level. If they believe that everything they do in their lives is political, then they can consider why they live their everyday lives the way they do and how this impacts on other people around them, and on people in other parts of the world.

3. Young Men; Violence & Peace Building

YouthAction Northern Ireland's Young Men & Violence Projects enable young men, aged 14 -25 years, to contribute to community life and the wider peace process by exploring masculinity; their experiences of violence; challenging stereotypical attitudes to violence, and develop skills in reconciliation, mutual understanding and peace building within communities. At YouthAction we recognise violence as an integral part of young men's culture, often linked to sectarianism, tribalism and identity. Our current initiatives are delivered within targeted marginalised, socially disadvantaged communities in Greater Belfast and rural border villages and market towns on both side of the border in South Armagh, Co. Louth and Co. Monaghan.

Young Men & Violence Projects (Funded by the European Union's Regional Development Fund through the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation managed by the Special EU Programmes Body through YESIP; OFMDFM Victims Unit; Department of Education NI & Youth Council for Northern Ireland)

Young men have been engaged in communities and through schools. The young men from the different communities have had the opportunity to meet with other young men outside their own local communities and cultural background. A variety of methods have been used to

engage young men in cross cultural dialogue such as a 'Songs on the School Bus' – addressing the perceptions of cultural signs and symbols; political tours of South Armagh and a mural tour of Belfast. In addition to a range of meaningful interactions between young men from different religious backgrounds and from differing sides of the border, 10 young men have also been engaged in the project as Young Male Volunteers promoting peace building practices with young men across their communities.

Through creating 'male safe' and comfortable environments, young men share their experiences of growing up on the island of Ireland. Young men are challenged to look at what triggers certain thinking, emotions and actions and how they can accept others opinions.

"The sessions around peace-building and diversity have helped me be more open-minded and less nervous about meeting people who are different to me. Meeting new people is what a good community should be all about." (young man)

Examples have included young men from a sectarian interface in Glengormley coming together to look at the fighting that they have been involved in at the interface, and also the Cliftonville 'Football in the Community Project' supported young men to address the role that violence plays in their lives.

"As a result of this group I don't feel intimidated walking past a group of Protestants now because I know these lads now and I have talked to them about getting to know me. We can now walk further up Glengormley and the same can be said for them the other way, so Glengormley is more shared for us as young men." (young man)



European Dimension: Young Men Talking: Experiences of Conflict

The Young Men Talking: Experience of Conflict Project is a partnership between YouthAction Northern Ireland, CARE International North West Balkans and Youth Work Ireland. Through this strategic partnership "we aim to enhance understanding and training around issues dealing with masculinity, violence and gender equality in working with boys and young men." This focuses on opportunities, learning and sharing models of practice between countries affected by conflict and war and who are now in a period of conflict transformation.

The collaboration contributes to peace-building across the regions by:

- *Enabling exchanges between boys/ young men (and youth workers)*
- *Supporting Youth Worker/Volunteer Training on the theme of gender equality, masculinity, violence, health and identities*
- *Providing study visits, short term placements and volunteer opportunities for young men aged 18 to 25 years*
- *Identifying opportunities through dialogue days and workshops for local workers/volunteers in all countries to make comparisons and contacts with one another's countries and the role of young men within this*
- *Co-ordinating joint campaign and policy development work*
- *Developing publications and resources to assist work with young men*

The initiative was launched by the Deputy First Minister for Northern Ireland and the Minister of Education, Northern Ireland and endorsed by the Prime Minister of Croatia at an event held at YouthAction Northern Ireland in Belfast.

"This time last year I was throwing stones and bricks at Mark.... I thought I hated him because he was from the other side. Now I'm here in Bosnia with him.... We are mates now because of YouthAction and coming over here helps put things into perspective."
(young man)

"I didn't realize how conflict affected other countries and it helps to understand what happened over here." (young man)

"The conflict had affected me because both my parents are now dead. However I am not the only one, and with friends I've been able to move on." (young man)

4: Area Based Youth Work and Cross Border (Newry, Mourne & Louth and South Tyrone & Monaghan)

Our "peace dividends for young people" initiative and "champions for change – reconciling communities" work with young people and communities on an area based youth work approach, and through thematic gender based interventions with both young women and young men. Since 2003 this work has been located across the Newry, Mourne and Armagh areas of Northern Ireland (and Louth in the Republic of Ireland), and since 2008 the work has been embedded across South Tyrone (and Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland). The full approach is enhanced by gender specific interventions with young women and young men across the Belfast areas. Altogether the initiatives work with young people and adults to support improved understanding, and opportunities to engage in discussion to promote reconciliation and identify benefits from and for a shared future. The projects proactively engage young people in explorations about issues pertinent to their local community and in which they can begin to widen their understanding of the reconciliation process and the outcomes within a peaceful society. We



believe that exploration and reflection provides an element of change in young people's attitudes and understanding, as well as a desire to engage with others. As such young people become young activists as champions for change.

The following project outcomes reflect how the proposal reinforces progress towards a peaceful and stable society:

1. Young people are better able to recognise prejudices and identify ways of challenging these
2. Increased approaches for integration with others, which promote dialogue, alongside practical reconciliation activities and projects which explicitly address prejudice, discrimination, active citizenship etc
3. Young people have improved knowledge, confidence and abilities/skills to enable them to contribute to the building of a peaceful, different and stable society
4. Young people have improved confidence and skills to work with local community or others who can help them to identify and progress peace-building activities such as 'symbols' in each community that signify their vision for peace and celebration of difference

The youth workers across the project have sought out collaborations with a range of like-minded peace education organisations to enhance interventions with young people and to build capacity across the sector. Some examples include: working with the Prison to Peace Initiative to enhance dialogue and understanding between community and youth workers. Through a range of seminars and workshops, workers and volunteers have identified realities within their communities and identified actions to

minimise or demystify the glorification associated with prison and militant activity; working with Relatives for Justice to support young people, directly affected by the conflict in which hurt, pain and forgiveness form part of individual one to one work; working with the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Education Service to support the development of a youth panel/youth assembly in presenting young people's needs across local government and its relevant departments. In addition to the practice collaborations each individual project within the initiative is supported by an overarching Area Based Youth Work Strategy Partnership which guides and advises the project implementation. In addition to effective implementation the partnerships map out needs, create collaborative opportunities, and proactively link with local strategy and policy developments.

"...young women in the projects have been identifying their own experiences of the 'troubles', and how existing paramilitary influences impact on them. Before this phase the young women were acknowledging that the 'troubles' were there in the background, but now they are struck by how many different ways that they can be impacted e.g. wearing your uniforms, changing your name to suit where you are, being at a riot without understanding why etc. Previously the young women thought the troubles did not concern them, therefore they had no motivation to get involved in peace-building. Now, however, they are showing feelings of disgust or unfairness about the existing and past conflict, violence, hatred and stereotyping. These feelings are driving them onwards to thinking differently about the future and, for the first time, creating aspirations about the future and creating a future (rather than just having something playing out in front of them).."
(youth worker)



"The work with Relatives for Justice is working along with young women who have had relatives killed, injured or imprisoned as part of the conflict. This group have an understanding of how their communities have been affected by the conflict and through the youth work initiative have unpacked the many influences that have been brought to bear on them throughout the troubles. More recently the discussion with this group are about moving them out of the past and thinking about their peace symbol, but this is the most challenging and difficult ground for this group. They can identify what the future should look like, but there is an apathy which assumes that their aspirations are un-achievable and will never happen because 'we are too small to have an impact' or 'too weak'. This group will develop individual peace-symbols which will focus not on what they hope for the future, but what is achievable or what actions they can do that will improve their situation at the moment."(youth worker)

Our challenge within youth work in Northern Ireland is to purposefully create and support dialogue and reflection among young people. This dialogue should help young people to explore, deal with, and to some degree, settle 'the past', without poisoning their attitudes in the drive for a shared, different, stable, fair and peaceful future.



"The patience of peace in a runaway world"



This paper and model has been developed by the YouthAction Northern Ireland peace team:

- Martin Mc Mullan
- Louise Malone
- Pete Wray
- Brenda Mc Elroy
- Ciaran Connolly
- Catherine Morgan

Printed December 2011,
YouthAction Northern Ireland



Youth Action Northern Ireland Contact Information:

Belfast
14 College Square North
Belfast
BT1 6AS

Tel: 028 9024 0551

Enniskillen Office
Lakeland Youth Centre
Wellington Road
Enniskillen
BT74 7HL

Tel: 028 6632 9209

Newry Office
c/o Magnet Young Adult Centre
81A Hill Street
Newry
BT34 1DG

Tel: 028 3025 6040

North West Office
Ebrington Centre
Waterside
Derry
BT47 6BG

Tel: 028 7131 8854

Armagh Office
St. Patrick's Trian
38A English Street
Armagh
BT61 7BA

Tel: 028 3751 1624

www.youthaction.org

 www.facebook.com/YouthActionNI

 [twitter@YouthActionNI](https://twitter.com/YouthActionNI)



Northern Ireland
Training Awards
2005



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund
Investing in your future



investing in youth work
Strategic Funding
(wider life choices for young adults)



An Implementing Body under the
EU Programme for Peace & Reconciliation

A project supported by the European Union's Peace III Programme, managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by the Community Relations Council/Pobal Consortium and YESIP and also supported by the Youth Council for Northern Ireland CRYSSS and Wider Life Chances Initiatives.