

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Venue Ardoyne Community Healthcare Centre

List of Organisations with representatives participating:

Ardoyne/Shankill Health Partnership (Healthy Living Centre) – Initiator of Consultation
Community Relations Unit
N&W Belfast Investing for Health
N&W Belfast H&SST
Ardoyne Community Healthcare Centre Womens Group –
Ardoyne Association
Ardoyne Community Healthcare Carers Group
Ardoyne/Shankill Healthy Living Participants
Ardoyne Community Healthcare Centre Womens Group –
Ardoyne Association
Ardoyne Community Healthcare Centre
Senior Citizens Day Centre
Senior Citizens Day Centre
Ardoyne Youth Club
Brookfield Business School
University of Ulster
Ardoyne Focus Group

Apologies

Flax Foyer
Ardoyne Community Centre Womens Group
Survivors of Trauma

SHARED FUTURE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT RESPONSES

Introduction

A number of people from different organisations attended. There was a good representation of age and gender. A list of representation is attached. The Ardoyne/Shankill Health Partnership is a Healthy Living Centre funded by the New Opportunities Fund, who initiated and facilitated the consultation.

The response is compiled and collated from three workshops using the questions raised in the consultation document. There are also a number of conclusions forming the summary at the end of this paper.

Q 1. What is your vision for a Shared Future in Northern Ireland?

A number of points were raised within the groups concerning the vision for a Shared Future. Some of which include people from both sides getting along with one another and coming together. There is a need for equality in prosperity and government, the latter of which is not evident from a political stance. It was suggested to develop a social model whereby government focus on broader determinants e.g. housing, education, food, poverty, prosperity and income etc. It is also up to people to work together. Communities need to take responsibility and ownership in order to strike a balance between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' creating a complimentary approach gauging local solutions and accountability. Values of society need to be clearly articulated and agreed across communities and encompassing all society.

Q 2. What are the barriers/issues which may currently prevent a shared future from happening?

There was a 'fear factor' sense and a lack of trust amongst people as well as mistrust in the people that represent them in government. Politicians need to get away from their own agendas with the need to build up trust and work together for a better future for all. There is an ignorance and lack of respect of other communities and people with many not broadening their horizons. People wanting to move on are intimidated from within communities. Therefore freedom of speech and human rights are being denied within communities.

An issue is recognising that religion is not the core of communities, it is an individual choice, with it not being religion but the underlying issues within communities that actively need to be addressed. The language and lingo from government officials and between religions needs to be addressed as does the negative messages from government creating negative impacts with no elections and therefore no representation.

Inherited, parental and societal issues need to be considered, as members of today's communities are the products of the past. The need to work actively to seek positive ways of influencing these issues through communities that we have lived within for generations is essential.

Sectarianism across all sectors i.e. government, communities and statutory bodies can be a real block to a Shared Future along with the deteriorating effects on interface conflicts, marches/parades and the Holy Cross issue.

Equality in employment was also highlighted as a barrier with some scepticism over whether equal opportunity policies were really working.

Q 3. What do you think should be the main policy aims, outcomes and underlying principles that could drive the new approach to promoting good relations in society?

Good role models are needed such as Lord Mayors e.g. Alex Maskey. People with power can lead the way in non-sectarianism in government. There are underlying principles that can make people come together on common issues on both sides such as equality, prosperity, education, employment, fairness, transparency and trust. Everyone needs to be aware of what is going on with a collective and inclusive approach to education, employment, housing and health etc. enabling everyone to the right to live in an equal society. The policies across the board need to stop 'pigeon-holing' people for example there is a need for wider access to education across and out of communities, and a great need for freedom of choice for individuals in respect of the choices people have to make concerning where they are educated, work and live. The policies therefore need to work/address the implementation of fundamental human rights – speech, education, housing, food and income.

Q 4 & 6.

It was felt that questions 4 and 6 were similar in response so they have been grouped together.

What action needs to happen at government and community level to facilitate the development and improve relations between and within communities?

Government need to listen to people on the ground, working equally for people with equality of power at government level, Section 75 must also apply to government. More resources need to be made available to assist work at community levels and forums/task forces developed to deal with cross community issues. Young people should be more actively involved in government. The government need to show more accountability of their agendas, leadership, agreeing to disagree with a democracy and differing opinions with people who have experience of the issue. There is the need to both respect and share cultures (both religiously and racially) and instead of building barriers, knock them down both personally and at a community level.

Communities need to start off on common issues/ground with more liaisons at community level e.g. common problems and solutions with the need to develop more trust. Overall there is a need to admit that mistakes have been made and move on from this. The government needs to promote neutrality to the both the outside world and ourselves with a positive aspect of community relations needing to be promoted through the media. Communities need to develop a stronger voice in respect of their political agenda. There is a dependency culture in many communities, which needs reorientation towards a collective community responsibility of empowerment and work to achieve fundamental human rights. Processes enabling communities to

feedback to government need to be developed for better understanding, better education and more employment.

It was also felt that a lot of funding goes towards improving relations but good relations should be integrated into everything.

Q 5. What functions do you think should be carried out at regional level? Should these functions be delivered within government or by an independent body such as the Community Relations Council or a new statutory authority?

Some confusion arose in what the 'functions' and 'regional level' actually meant. Of the responses it was felt that local responses are required with the need to integrate into all practices and is specific funding working? If not more needs undertaken at a local level. There is the need to give people increased self worth in jobs, housing etc, this in turn will lead to increased health benefits. Schools could be considered to become involved in the processes of self worth. There are questions as to whether the system goes against people who work. Aspirations are needed beyond social security.

Q 7. How do you think that a new strategy for improving relations ought to be monitored and evaluated?

Some thought that the communities themselves should be included in the monitoring and evaluation process with feedback implemented regularly. Others thought an internationally reputed body from outside Northern Ireland is required. The document itself should also be in clear language.

Q 8. Is there any other data or information, which might be drawn upon to assess equality impact of the proposals in this report?

It was suggested that the use of media/newspapers and the Internet could be used to assess impact. The costs of things such as security at interface areas and parades could be assessed, to ascertain where the now surplus money for the troubles has gone. Statistics are also needed from upper/middle class areas to assess the difference between them and working class/deprived areas.

Q 9. Do you think that the proposals have any positive or negative impacts on any of the groups included within Section 75 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and if so how?

Something positive for someone may result in something negative for another. This is not always wrong. There was a feeling that Irish people were discriminated against in the wider community. Everyone has economic right, therefore no employment discrimination.

Q 10. Do you think that, taking account of existing legislation, are there alternative approaches to the promotion of equality of opportunity in this policy area? If so, what are they, or do you have any other comments on the equality impact of these proposals?

It was felt that the current system does not support the equality statement, citing pay differences, opportunities for the disabled and lack of employment as major issues. The saved money from less security should be made accountable.

CONCLUSIONS

There was a query regarding whether the decisions have already been made before consultation.

Communities are very good at knowing what they want. A framework could be developed to enable communities to let government know what their needs are for collective priorities within them to be addressed. This might develop a strong infrastructure to enable community voices to be heard.

In terms of Belfast it is recommended there should be the development of the Greater Belfast Metropolitan Plan to eradicate the North, South, East and West stigmatisation in order to make Belfast work as a whole.

The structure of government and administration should be considered to bring together the separate departments, education, housing, environment and health etc. to enable the policies to be developed on issues such as schools, hospital services, transport etc. rather than the politics. Examples of countries in which this works include Finland and Canada, with reference to the following websites <http://www.eduskunta.fi/efakta/index01.htm> and <http://www.turku.fi/english/homepage/>

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HIGHER FORCE CHALLENGE PROGRAMME SHARED FUTURE CONSULATION

Introduction

Young people whose ages ranged from 18-24 participated in the consultation, directed by the Ardoyne/Shankill Health Partnership in conjunction with the Higher Force Challenge Programme. The Programme is a personal development, cross-community programme with participants from the Ardoyne and Shankill areas.

The response is compiled and collated from two workshops using most of the questions raised in the young peoples consultation document.

Q1. What does a Shared Future mean for you?

A Shared Future for the young people consisted of both sides of the community living together as one. This has to be a society where young people can live and work in peace and not feel afraid. A respect of each others cultures is a must, which can be initiated through more education and learning about cultures. This can be undertaken through children in order to offer guidance as they grow up. There is still sectarian hatred warping society and this is conveyed through the interface areas, in sport through Rangers, Celtic and Northern Ireland football contexts. There needs to be more work done in putting an end to sectarianism. Another large aspect was that Paramilitarism needs to be abolished on both sides as they have a demoralising impact on communities with drug dealing, protection money, fear, control and generally running a mafia style culture. There needs to be channels of communication for the young so that they are listened to and also the communities themselves. People in power need to get their act together as they cannot even sit with on another. If they cannot do this, how can they expect others to do this. It was suggested that a campaign be launched to provide opportunities to mixed young people from the ages of 16-25 involved at government level. More money needs to be invested into cross-community work to enable people to get out of their own environments. Looking at other countries such as Israel and South Africa would be beneficial in order to gauge lessons learned and ways to progress from our present situation.

Q2. From your experience of living in Northern Ireland, what is shared, and what is not? You may want to think of things like schools, youth clubs, housing and bus routes.

Things that we share included the city centre, hospitals, currency and also myths and misconceptions such as catholics having ginger hair, protestants wearing baseball caps, generally making assumptions from images. It was realised that a lot of time, energy and resources are strained and misspent by having to live in separate communities and using different amenities and facilities, if any of the facilities are available to start with. For example, what one area may have, another might not have such as the case with leisure facilities. Many of the participants identified segregation in many areas in terms of housing (not broadening horizons and venturing out of areas), education (such as increasing the integrated system and reducing the number

of sole protestant/catholic schools). It is important to build a Shared Future a young age in this context. Working class communities are also not shared, with clusters of segregated communities particularly in North Belfast. Socially people from different religions rarely mix. Other things not shared included football teams, parks, shopping facilities, leisure centres, bus routes, ideals and churches. There needs to be more investment from businesses, to create more employment and hopefully bring people together.

Q3. Not everyone wants to live in a 'shared' society. How do you feel about this? What fears might people have about a shared society?

Recommendations proposed included having increased integrated schools and more respect/trust. Parents and politicians need to lead the way by showing good examples to children and young people.

There is the need to get rid of fear. There are fears surrounding people having their identity taken away. People also feel that they are victims of war. There is mistrust in society and some concern over who is actually in power. Paramilitaries have a lot of influence in some communities, but politicians must be made more accountable. The working class or socially deprived areas suffer more. People may also find out that the last 30 years were a waste of time. Cross community programmes can work as they are built upon trust. It is not just the hatred at an inter-community level but also an intra-community level that needs to be addressed. Drugs are being made easily available and accessible, with the paramilitaries making money from this. Many issues, if not all, are the same on both sides, with health being an issue that can bring both sides together creating better opportunities.

Q4. What type of society would you like to live in? How could this be achieved? You may want to consider the role of schools, churches, politicians, voluntary and community groups.

Everyone deserves to live in a society that is not based on fear and mistrust. A shared society should incorporate shared schools, health, community events, sport, leisure, youth clubs and mixed housing and schools. Young people also need to have their voices heard at government level and be empowered to take more responsibility. Communities need to take more responsibilities, as they presently do not take enough responsibility and point the finger all too often. Churches tend not to be involved in politics. Flags and emblems are out of date and are just an excuse to promote sectarianism. Instead there should be more neutrality.

Q5. Do you think that young people should continue to be involved in a Shared Future as it is developed? How could this happen?

Yes. Young people and the community need to take a more active role in the running of their own needs. They need to speak openly and freely to those in power. Young people also need to be encouraged and continually informed of decisions and have a voice at government level. There should be more structured opportunities to visit the city hall to provide more information and promote civic rights. It was suggested that politicians should take part in the cross community groups, such as higher force to gain an insight into the work that is undertaken.