

Developing Inclusive YOUTH WORK PRACTICE



How to create a welcome and inclusive space for all young people regardless of difference



What is Inclusion?

It's asking who is not here ■ It's about diversity ■ It's about being open ■ It requires a safe space and a culture of acceptance ■ You're 'label' shouldn't matter ■ It's about challenging prejudice and discrimination ■ It requires us to understand individual needs, interests and desires ■ We need to bring communities and families on board ■ It should be young people driven ■ It's about being accessible and welcoming ■ It's about open dialogue ■ It's reaching difficult to reach ■ Challenging conformity and pushing outside of established boundaries ■ It involves taking risk, opening yourself up and recognising your own weakness ■ It involves trust ■ We all have a responsibility to create an inclusive environment ■ It requires us to be prepared ■ It asks of us – hope, compassion, imagination and change ■ There is discomfort coupled with excitement ■ It causes us to examine our values and the core principles that underpin youth work – fairness, justness, equity, diversity and interdependence ■ It requires us to be proactive ■ It is about learning from others ■ It is possible



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'DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE YOUTH WORK PRACTICES'

Keynote address, Dr Derick Wilson

'The other' is the limit beyond which our ambitions must not run and the boundary beyond which our life must not expand.' Neibuhr in Shriver 2005

I wish to speak to the greatest gifts in this room:

- to the breadth of your imagination;
- to the compassion you (hopefully) have to use for the wellbeing of so many young people who permit you to get alongside them and work with them as informal educators;
- to your energy and commitment

I wish to speak to a profession of paid and voluntary people, whom wider society does not often appreciate and yet whose experience and insights wider society will increasingly need to examine. I issue the following challenge:

How do people from very homogenous traditions or places (where we are all the same), as so many of us brought up in this island have been, meet different others and be at ease?

To be sectarian (and this is not only a possession of some people from the Protestant tradition on this island), to be racist, to be homophobic, to be sexist is to deny others different to me; **such actions are no basis on which to build equality because they fail to acknowledge different others.**

In the modern world many wish to remain separate and apart; in a changing economic context there will be partisan drivers working to mobilise that dynamic however:

Remaining separate, whether acknowledged or not, is to root relationships with others in open or hidden rivalry and hostility.

Separateness is never benign - but always conceals hostility, violence and threat. Look at the experience of the US African American community in separate but equal education; look at the position of the South African black community under apartheid; look at the dynamics of first and second-class citizenship that fuelled the Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland.

Separateness is the enemy of good relations between different citizens from diverse backgrounds

Good relations between citizens depends on practical experiences of being justly treated, acknowledged as being equal and different and embraced in an interdependent manner.

Your work is important on this island; it is central to challenging attitudes and institutional silences that, unnamed and unaddressed, will only allow hostility to fester; without your work of lifting up the stones of separation and prejudice old, often silent, patterns of discriminatory behaviour to people such as minority ethnic communities, travellers, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered, women, those living with a disability, those from poor, backgrounds, young parents, those with mental health needs, young offenders are reinforced.

Your work is to shine a searchlight into corners where people made vulnerable often make do; your work is to:

Create more **events** that include, **build patterns** of new ways of being together; that eventually promote **new structures** and ways of living with difference and eventually embed **new assumptions** at the core of societal life;

Assumptions such as:

Equality and inclusion cannot ever be embedded if hostility to different others is not dissolved

Offences against others, because of their perceived or stated difference to 'us', are crimes against our common humanity and offends the democratic values of being equal citizens that we so readily espouse.

Such actions prevent more open societies develop North and South - **AND HERE COMES THE HEALTH WARNING** - they are also behaviours and attitudes we see more readily in others than in ourselves.

This work can only develop if we are deeply reflective and self critical of our own behaviours and actions-because we also-I speak for myself-I **also sometimes act in a prejudicial manner.**

(Sometimes my adult sons /daughters really wonder whether I am seriously allowed to be involved in peace work or prejudice reduction programmes!)

The challenges facing youth work practitioners in this work is the extent to which these inclusion themes become normalised, central to our practice, and the extent to which they continue to remain as projects, add-ons, peripheral to the core daily work of agencies and institutions.

Youth workers need to concentrate on the quality of their practice yet remain focused on what many are poor at:

To take the learning from their work into wider advocacy in terms of their organisation, wider public policy and civic engagement and into engagement with all political parties.

Look self critically at your efforts in the past year against these measures of advocacy?

- 1. How have you used your advocacy time?**
- 2. How clear have you been?**



Inclusive youth work demands high quality relationships

- The building block of being accepted unconditionally
- Relationships of being accepted and included
- The experience of others securing our place and they having their place secured by us
- Relationships where others look out for us and we for them

Inclusive youth work demands inclusive organisational cultures and structures

- The experience of structures where we have a secure place and are welcome
- Structures where our place is secured with no demeaning or diminishment

Often, even if these experiences are within very small networks, they become a starting point for people who have been isolated, victimised or scapegoated to gain some dignity and begin to regain a place as equals among others.

Inclusive youth work needs organisations with such a vision in their aims, values and governance structures

R.S.V.P.

R for Responsibility

Undertake responsible personal work:

- to acknowledge the elements in our life to date that prepared you and I to be at ease with different other people;
- to acknowledge the limits of our comfort zone 'with difference' or at least those people we are less comfortable with
- and
- to acknowledge our prejudgements and prejudices
- to responsibly do the work on our own areas of unease
- to grow our own confidence or to seek others who can assist us become more at ease with difference

S for Serve

The wonderful opportunity that being in voluntary youth organisations is that they belong to wider civil society; they have a voluntary ethos and so much volunteer time is still often associated with them. To serve the needs of young people in so much of their free time is an honour that needs respected. Young people are assets not problems.

S for Support

To serve alongside them and support them grow and develop, moving beyond hurtful relationships; moving beyond their own sense of what they were capable of; to assist them show compassion, imagination, hope and experience change-that is inclusive youth work practice. They experience belonging and inclusion with others, including you.

S for Sustain

- to sustain and support young people as they take new steps; as they experience diversity with all its discomfort, excitement and uncertainty is to grow an inter generational culture of people who are more at ease with different others
- to sustain such a culture grow in the centres of our societies, North and South, is to nurture and sustain something new. The more it happens and in the more unexpected places and spaces and groups, the richer and stronger civil society will become

Remember in many societies the new knowledge needed is the experience of being with different others and being at ease. This knowledge has to be experienced, in the main, and it is experienced in relationships where lines are cross and even transgressed. In such meetings and involvements new knowledge is created and new experiences of otherness grow.

V for Values

For me, to treat one another fairly and justly; to recognise and value difference and to build a more joined up and inter dependent community are values worth working for.

To repair harm between us, to restore broken relationships, address historical injustices or differences of view-to be restorative in the ways we value one another is one of the deepest values that modern society here needs.

V for Vision

- of a community that is not so much fixed and immutable as many of the traditions and groups people who have lived in Ireland a long time belong to-and sometimes travel half way round the world to escape-until you reach the Irish pub in Lagos, Sarajevo, Tallin, Atlanta, Buenos Aires or wherever!
- of a forward looking community in the future where different people are welcomed and valued
- of a new form of community where different gifts and experiences are highly valued
- of a community that treats one another justly and with dignity

This elastic community-this expansive community-this more open community where dissenters are welcomed as well as inveterate belongers and where differences of view are expressed and heard and where people are not readily ejected but live in new more open ways.

Where community development practices are re-envisaged on a wider civic platform to ensure that the poor participate more; the most vulnerable have a say in their future; a quality of life, relationships and structure returns to poor communities; and access to education, health and employment remains the wider goal

P for Principles around being fair and just; around being open to difference; around promoting a societal and global vision that differences are a reality; a right to be so;

P for Practice that offers relational ways of being safe and open with different others;

Forms of group work that promote fairness; ensure different voices and experiences are heard and acknowledged; and experiences together with different others where we and they learn to risk and inter-depend

P for Purpose

- To know deeply that racism, sectarianism, homophobia, sexism and all other discriminating actions are denials of the fullness of people
- To be fully present with the young people and to give them all of your interest and attention
- To be inclusive with young people is to assist them become subjects and agents of change not the objects of others actions

Inclusion practice is a field where rhetoric too readily can dominate; it is often a place where the righteous speak strongly.

However the real need is to experience belonging, acceptance and value. To be justly treated, acknowledged as being equal and different and embraced in an interdependent manner.

Levinas speaks of seeing the face of the other.

Niebuhr says: 'The other is the limit beyond which our ambitions must not run and the boundary beyond which our life must not expand'

Keynote Address, Dr Derick Wilson, Oct 2010

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Following the keynote address participants took part in a series of roundtable facilitated discussions.

Discussion 1

How have you responded to implementing inclusion?

Training

Delegates identified training of volunteers, staff and young leaders as core to inclusion. They felt that training helped to build skills to address prejudice and increase understanding of diversity issues. Training encompassed accredited, non-accredited and awareness raising sessions as part of the ongoing development of staff, volunteers and young people.

Engaging young people in the process

Delegates identified the need for more opportunities for young people to explore one another's cultures and identities; to encourage them to ask questions in a way that fostered mutual understanding and respect.

A number of examples were provided by delegates of initiatives that supported children and young people to build positive relationships across diverse backgrounds:

- Youth exchanges and residentials, intercultural camps
- Intergenerational projects
- Supporting young people to develop their own inclusion project
- Raising issues for discussion during sessions
- Supporting young people to develop an inclusion policy
- Using modern technology to keep contact beyond exchanges and residential programmes

Engaging parents and the wider community

Delegates recognised the importance of educating parents, teachers and local leaders on the work that they do. They highlighted the need to be able to demonstrate, in particular, how the youth service embraces difference and supports the development of relationships with young people from diverse backgrounds.

It was noted that involving parents in youth work was a crucial element to ensuring that children and young people from a diverse range of backgrounds were engaged in youth programmes. This did, however, bring its own set of challenges and was not always deemed appropriate (e.g. working within the sensitivities of LGBT).

There was a call for some good practice examples of intergenerational work to support trust building with parents.

Discussion 2

What challenges has your organisation faced to date in developing inclusive youth work?

Attitudes of Staff, Volunteers and young people

Some delegates worked with volunteers who were reluctant to engage young people with difficult behaviour, often seeing them as a problem. This created a tension for staff and volunteers who were seeking to include certain groups of young people from the community. Maintaining a certain code of conduct for behaviour was indirectly excluding these young people from taking part. The ability of staff and volunteers to manage this was often down to their skill base and confidence working with children and young people from diverse backgrounds.

It was identified that sometimes young people who were given responsibility to design a project were resistant to adapting these programmes to include different cultural backgrounds. Supporting the participation of young people as a key youth work value alongside the principle of testing values and beliefs was identified as a unique skill required for staff and volunteers to develop an inclusive environment.

Management committees were highlighted by some delegates as posing a significant challenge, particularly when members did not sign up to promoting inclusion. Other delegates noted that where management committee members encouraged inclusion they didn't always appreciate the challenges faced by youth workers and the hard work that went into being more inclusive.

General misconceptions and negative attitudes were described as commonplace and for many delegates these posed a significant challenge to the success of inclusion in their setting.

Capacity and constraints

A lack of time, resources energy and the capacity of staff/ volunteers were also cited as key challenges for developing inclusive youth work practice.

Some highlighted the difficulty in sustaining positive momentum and relationships developed through youth exchanges and other cross-cultural/ cross community programmes. Lack of sustainability and success was often due to funding and time constraints.

Physical access was identified as a barrier to inclusion of disabled young people for some delegates.

Lack of awareness of volunteers, staff and young people in the area of disability, culture and ethnicity had proved a challenge for delegates in promoting inclusion.

The level of bureaucracy associated with youth work and in particular with measuring success of engaging target groups was identified as another challenge. Form filling and measuring targets were seen by some as a distraction to working with young people.

Managing the expectations of committees, funders and parents was identified as a potential barrier to inclusive practice.

Discomfort of Intercultural Work

Delegates discussed that sometimes it was easier *'to do nothing'*. While contact with young people from various backgrounds and cultures was seen by delegates as a crucial element to breaking down cultural barriers, making contact with other young people was often difficult.

To engage with young people from a variety of backgrounds required delegates to meet young people where they were at (e.g. traveller site, detached work in particular communities etc.) which further stretched the limited resources available.

Dealing with contentious issues was identified as a unique part of cross-community work, (particularly in the Northern Ireland), and delegates felt there was much that could be learned and translated into general inclusion work.

Societal, community and organisational culture

Different approaches taken by organisations were cited by delegates as a sometimes being a barrier to inclusive practice rather than a support. For example, when core values included a level of discipline and order that conflicted with a young person's cultural background and experience it was a barrier to their engagement.

Wider community and societal views were identified as key challenges to promoting inclusive youth work. Delegates thought it was difficult to create an alternative culture in their youth setting to the one in the surrounding community.

Environment of youth setting

The lack of control over the environment within which a youth club/ programme takes place was cited as a potential barrier to promoting inclusion in order to provide a safe space for young people.

NEXT STEPS

Participants were invited to identify what further steps they could take to develop inclusive practice. Suggested actions are summarised below under the headings of Participation, Public Image, Policies and Procedures, Professional Development and Programme planning.

PARTICIPATION

Making sure we include the voice of young people at all levels of our youth service

- Be explicit about inclusion
- Use different methods to introduce inclusive practice for example:
 - Multi-media resources
 - Peer education approach
 - Dance – as a tool for engaging young people (across cultural backgrounds)
 - Award schemes for participation in activities, leadership, decision making, diversity and inclusion
- Support young people to convey a message of celebrating diversity
- Have advocates to challenge adult perceptions of young people to overcome a perception of young people as problems
- Create spaces to give minority groups a voice to influence policies and policy
- Allow young people to represent and identify themselves as they wish
- Communicate with young people when involving them in planning processes and not make assumptions about their needs and ability
- Include young people in decision making at every level including management structures and support them to engage
- Support the development of young volunteers
- Set up a focus group to identify issues/ concerns and set actions to address them
- Undertake regular evaluation – reflecting on practice – obtaining feedback
- Empower young people to make changes and advocate to wider society including politicians



PUBLIC IMAGE

How we present our service to the community – to young people, their parents and other community services

- Be familiar with your organisational ethos
- Inform people about your work
- Build trust with families and develop positive relationships with members of the local community
- Get young people to speak for themselves e.g. Young people speaking to young people and representing their organisations
- Ask young people what they think of the service that is being offered to them
- Ask young people and others externally how they view your organisation
- Develop relationships and collaborate with other organisations to build on shared resources and experiences
- Involve young people in writing advertising material and newsletters etc.
- Create vox pops, use local radio and media
- Gather positive stories to present to local community and others.
- Back up the image you wish to portray with evidence – facts, figures, comments, case studies
- Be aware of how your public image may be viewed by others

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This is a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

- Regularly review your policies and procedures to ensure that they do not exclude particular groups, include everyone involved in your organisation in reviews
- Develop feed back mechanisms to gather evidence to feed into review processes
- Consider how participation of young people is included in your policies and procedures
- Make your policies 'live' and communicate throughout the organisation including induction of staff and volunteers
- Once policies have been developed be proactive in implementing them e.g. reaching out to include others



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This is about staff and volunteers being trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

- Identify training needs
- Access relevant training including resource materials to meet identified needs
- Ensure staff, volunteers and young people have opportunities to participate in training and awareness raising on diversity issues
- Develop the capacity of young people to deliver training and awareness raising on diversity issues
- Keep up to date on training developments, conferences, seminars to inform practice
- Ensure there are opportunities for those involved in your organisation to reflect on practice and learn from others

PROGRAMME PLANNING AND DELIVERY

Making sure our programmes are designed and delivered to consciously include the needs and identities of all young people in the community

- Consult with young people to identify their needs e.g. cultural, religious, disability
- Include young people in the design of programmes
- Develop mechanisms for feedback on programmes delivered
- Continually review programmes to ensure they are meeting identified need
- Support young people to deliver programmes
- Be aware of potential hidden barriers to engaging in programmes that aren't communicated directly by young people (e.g. family/ cultural values, sexuality, religious observance, socio-economic background, hidden disability)
- Inform parents/ guardian of programmes in advance and provide opportunities to talk with you about them

SUPPORT

What support do we need to develop inclusive practice and engage in cross-border working?

- Cross-border links are essential; we need access to information on potential partners
- More seminars, conferences to network and share practice
- Opportunities for young people to engage with policy makers
- Database (website) of service providers with expertise in specific areas and training providers
- Recognition from funders that to be inclusive can be resource intensive



TIPS

Participants offered 'TIPS' for developing Inclusive Youth Work Practice. These 'TIPS' varied from advice on how to run a programme to highlighting training that is available for the sector. The 'TIPS' have been collected by theme below.

REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE		
Be fully aware of your own prejudices before embarking on addressing prejudice of others	Be aware of your own attitude Be careful of assuming anything	Be honest to yourself and your organisation when trying to address inclusive practice
TIPS - PARTICIPATION		
Let young people lead on a project	Make participation real and honest, let young people guide from funding to evaluation	Involve young people in the recruitment and selection of staff
TIPS - PARTNERSHIP WORK		
NETWORK	Partner with organisation who 'get what inclusion is'	Listen to and learn from others
"Guinness is good for you!" – Informal social networking crucial to making cross-border links	Use schools to connect with children and young people from Black Minority Ethnic Communities	Become familiar with training methodologies/ ethos/ leadership style of your partner organisation/ group
Collaborate – don't try to be an expert at everything. Working/ partnering with other organisations is a way of living out inclusive values	Don't be afraid of working in partnership with other groups who may have expertise working with marginalised groups	Run projects or programs that are not just North/ South but really diverse, it will be less challenging and more rewarding...
TIPS - PROGRAMME PLANNING		
Not one size fits all. Different methods work with different groups	Don't bring it all down to 'common' denominators – allow room for individualism	You don't always focus on the issue - mix people and give them the chance to be busy and have fun together



Use focus groups and speak in the young peoples language	Encourage honest dialogue – don't make do with polite avoidance	Watch for hidden literary problems
Create an online magazine featuring young peoples stories	Set up a forum/ blog page for young people to discuss events/ ideas – some may not like every week meetings etc.	Offer an incentive where possible... e.g. food, accredited training, location
Use the arts as a vehicle for community cohesion and inclusion e.g. mosaic, film, drama, dance	Practice that works: Peer mentoring – but it must be tweaked each time it is used	Let young people experience each other in a natural environment Have fun!
Help young people to understand how 'others' feel by putting them in 'their' shoes	Challenge the opinion not the person	
TIPS - POLICIES & PRACTICE		
An 'open door' policy is not enough - sometimes (especially marginalised young people) need to be asked to get involved	Take the steps to have skills, facilities, resources and staff in place to meet the needs of young people before working with them	Important that you try to reflect diversity in your staff/ volunteers/ management committees etc.
Be ready and adaptable to the needs of young people	Set up an interagency committee which can help you work with more 'diverse' and at 'risk' young people	Train and equip young people and adults to be open and inclusive to those who are different from them
Identify and use existing resources	Regular reviews	It takes time!
More outreach work needed	Facilitation – it won't happen on its own	Communicate any desired outcome at the outset
TIPS - PUBLIC IMAGE		
Don't assume all young people will know what you do –	Look how other people see your Youth Club/ Project – is that how you would like it to be seen?	Create a suitable environment/ seating/ lighting/ music etc.



TIPS – RESOURCES AND TRAINING		
Gillian Presho (Youth Officer) Cedar Foundation g.presho@cedar-foundation.org (02890387040) Disability Awareness Training – Inclusive Projects	Website of Home Education Network (H.E.N.) all Ireland support network for home educating families, with active Teen Programme www.henireland.org	Causeway and Leargas – opportunities to meet different groups and to get funding for cross-border projects www.causewayyouth.org/partners
Audioboo – a very simple way to make podcasts http://audioboo.fm	www.osalt.com great website for open sources alternative software	Get some visual awareness training from RNIB www.eyematter.co.uk (sbrowne@rnib.org.uk)
To find resources to include young people with physical disability go to www.iwa.ie/youth	Replay Theatre are holding series of free workshops, seminars, training events for artists, theatre practitioners, educators or youth workers (Tues 23 – Sat 27 Nov)	National Children’s Bureau www.ncb.org.uk has resources that can be downloaded (e.g. attitude to difference report) and current research to inform policy and practice in N.I.
Information on working with young people with disabilities from ‘Cedar Foundation’ www.cedar-foundation.org (P.Henderson@cedar-foundation.org Youth Officer)	Start a youth initiative programme: through sports, media, etc. Funding available from Youth in Action E.U. (Leargas) www.leargas.ie	Inclusion HUB Tanya Kirk (<i>Youth Inclusion Hub Project Coordinator</i>) tanya.kirk@mencap.org.uk
LGBT Awareness Raising training ‘Outstanding Youth Work’ www.youthnetni.org.uk	Access All Areas training pack and helpful info for orgs within the pack http://www.intercultural.ie/	Playboard’s diversity in play training and resource – looks at our own prejudice, inclusion and understanding of the different communities in Ireland
www.youthlink.org.uk	The Art of Hosting www.artofhosting.org	Democracy and leadership www.youthdevel.ie
www.Donegalwest.org	Embedded E.D.I. principles as a central element of our programme http://www.jedini.com/	Training activities www.salto-youth.net www.training-youth.net
www.intercultural.ie	The compass Human Rights manual from Council of Europe	Appreciative Inquiry – just google for info



Induction training by e-learning www.ycni.org	bbc community bus recording studio on wheels	Open space technology
www.enyan.co.uk (English, National Youth Arts Network)	All different all equal (resource booklet) http://www.iwtc.org/ideas/24/equal.pdf	www.CYEC.com Lergas British Council Funding
www.headstrong.ie (mental health)	open your mind (peer mentoring) www.nistudents.org	itunes U – Great resource http://www.apple.com/education/itunes-u/
www.salto-youth.net	Equality and Diversity Training (WEA) http://www.wea.org.uk/education/equality.htm	Lulu Sinott Home Education Network Teen project Lul@wicklowtoday.com
Make use of online networks which provide access to free training (or heavily subsidised) and free advertising e.g. http://www.caf.ie http://www.vaireland.org/ http://www.culturenorthernireland.org/		Diversity in Action NI (DIANI) Free network to share practice www.ncb.org.uk/diani



LIST OF DELEGATES

Name	Organisation	Email
Ann Mc Hugh	Apple Tree Foundation	ann.mchugh59@gmail.com
Ann Ward	Rural Enablers Programme	ann@ruralcommunitynetwork.org
Carie Crawford	Public Achievement	carie@publicachievement.com
Conor Byrne	Extern Ireland	siobhan.malone@extern.org
Cormac Doran	Swords Youth Service	outdoored@cyc.ie
Daragh Kennedy	Irish Wheelchair Association	daragh.kennedy@iwa.ie
David Guilfoyle	Youth Council of Northern Ireland	SRader@ycni.org
Dominic Mc Glinchey	Donegal Youth Service	dominicmcglinchey@hotmail.co.uk
Eimear Flannery	Irish Heart Foundation	eflannery@irishheart.ie
Emmet Byrne	Youth Action NI/ Donegal Youth Service	emmetbyrne_youthaction@hotmail.com
Eugene Donnelly	Magnet Centre	eugedon@gmail.com
Gemma Morrison	PlayBoard NI	gemma.morrison@playboard.co.uk
Gill Hassard	NCB NI	ghassard@ncb.org.uk
Gillian McClay	PlayBoard NI	Gillian.mcclay@playboard.co.uk
Janice Kernaghan	Replay Theatre Company	projects@replaytheatreco.org
Jen Goddard	Replay Theatre Company	info@replaytheatre.org
Joanne Stainsby	Youth Council for Northern Ireland	jstainsby@ycni.org
Joe Marken	Scouting Ireland	jmarken@scouts.ie
John Meikleham	Scouting Ireland	john_sfni@btconnect.com
John Peacock	Youth Link: NI	john@youthlink.org.uk
Jolene Bell	Girls' Brigade NI	wendy@gbni.co.uk
Jonathan Gracey	The Boys' Brigade [NI]	jonathan.gracey@boys-brigade.org.uk
Karin McKinty	Harmony Community Trust	info@glebehouseni.com
kieran shields	selb	kieran.shields@selb.org
Leonie Baldwin	Home Education Network	leonie.baldwin@gmail.com
Lulu Sinnott	HEN teen programme	lulu@wicklowtoday.com
Maedhbh Ní Dhónaill	Ógras	maedhbh@ogras.ie
Mark Hand	Lisburn Road Methodist Church	markushandus@gmail.com
miriam farrell	youth work ireland louth	mirifar@eircom.net
Monica Murphy	Youth Work Ireland Louth	monicanocor@hotmail.com
Natasha Cassidy	Face Off Youth project	natashacassidy@cavanvec.ie
Niav Cahill	Carlow Youth Training	niav@carlowyouthtraining.org
Oliver McKearney	Dept of Education	oliver.mckearney@deni.gov.uk
Paddy Mooney	Include Youth	paddy@includeyouth.org
Patrice Henderson	Cedar Foundation	P.Henderson@cedar-foundation.org
Patricia Fennelly	Carlow Youth Training	patricia.fennelly@carlowyouthtraining.org
Paul McCarroll	The Boys' Brigade (Belfast)	paul.mccarroll@belfast.boys-brigade.org.uk



	Battalion)	
Paula Meenan	RNIB	PMeenan@rnib.org.uk
Peter Baxter	Songschool	peter@songschool.ie
Rachel Long	NIACRO	rachel@niacro.co.uk
Rainer Pagel	Rural Community Network	rainer@ruralcommunitynetwork.org
Ríonach Ní Scolaí	Ógras	uladh@ogras.ie
Robert Mulhall	Lucca Leadership	robert.mulhall@luccaleadership.org
Roisin Keenan	Youth Work Ireland (Louth)	roisin_keenan1969@hotmail.com
Caroline Flanagan	Youth Work Ireland (Louth)	cflanagan22@yahoo.co.uk
Sinead McCauley	Swan Youth Service	sinead@swanyouthservice.org
Seán Céitinn	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	sceitinn@comhairle.org
Sinclair Trotter	Scout Foundation NI	is.sinc@btopenworld.com
Susan Browne	RNIB	susanbrowne@btinternet.com
Susan King	Phoenix FM (Community Radio station)	king.susan@gmail.com
Tim Parr	Positive Futures	Tim.Parr@positive-futures.net
Wendy Campbell	Girls' Brigade NI	wendy@gbni.co.uk
Sean Oroideain	Carlingford Community Development	
Gareth Mullen	Show Racism the Red Card	garrettmullan@gmail.com
Paddy McNally	Youth Work Ireland	
Gillian Presho	Cedar Foundation	g.presho@cedar-foundation.org
Derick Wilson	University of Ulster	
Adam Reid	WIMPS	
Nora Zirek	WIMPS	
Denis Palmer	Youthnet	
Mary Cunningham	NYCI	
Desy Clayton	Youthnet	
Ben Ewan	Youthnet	bewan@youthnet.co.uk
Anne Walsh	NYCI	Anne@nyci.ie
Louise Malone	Youth Action NI	Louise@youthaction.org
Matt Milliken	SEELB	Matt.Milliken@seelb.org.uk
Amanda Stephens	Youthnet	astephens@youthnet.co.uk
Alan Hayes	NYCI	Alan@nyci.ie
Mary McGrath	SEELB	Mary.McGrath@seelb.org.uk
Ivan Cross	Corrymeela	ivancross@corrymeela.org

