

'It Didn't End in 1998'

Examining The Impacts Of Conflict Legacy Across Generations

SUMMARY



Siobhán McAlister,
Mary-Louise Corr,
Clare Dwyer and
Orla Drummond

Queen's University Belfast
October 2021

A project supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme,
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Foreword

This report is one in a suite of four considering the needs of victims and survivors undertaken over a three-year period during which responses to Covid-19 greatly affected the way in which fieldwork could be conducted. This research was commissioned by the Commission for Victims and Survivors (The Commission). The researchers engaged with key stakeholders in policy and service provision, community workers and parents, and with over 100 children and young people aged 14-24. Within the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), the study illustrates the on-going transgenerational impacts of the Troubles/Conflict on the lives of children, young people and parents throughout Northern Ireland and the border regions. The Commission is grateful to all those who have contributed to the research process not least because of the sensitivities and reflections these considerations require.

This study builds upon and develops previous research on transgenerational legacy. The 'two-generation approach' (O'Neill et al., 2015) was adopted as a core principle to ensure that the focus is not only on the needs of specific generations, but also on the relationships between them. A key focus of the research, grounded in a Child Rights Based Approach (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012), was to embed young people's participation in all facets of the project, including in the design of data collection instruments, use of participatory research methods, analysis of research findings, and forming research recommendations. Based on the findings from the extensive qualitative research programme undertaken across multiple sites, the report presents a series of findings and recommendations that require serious consideration by service commissioners and providers, practitioners and policy makers.

Recommendations from the research include revising the school curriculum, in consultation with parents/guardians and young people, to consider the delivery of teaching related to the Troubles/Conflict; consulting young people about the ways in which they would like to express culture and identity; safe spaces for young people in which to learn about the Troubles/Conflict and their culture; community-based programmes to be developed in consultation with communities most impacted by the Troubles/Conflict; addressing the range of push and pull factors that combine to draw some young people into paramilitary-style groups; and addressing gaps in the available research literature, including specific research to address the absence of girls' and young women's narratives and experiences.

In treating victims' needs as societal needs we build on a solid foundation towards a future that offers peace, prosperity, and growth for all who live here.

The Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the 195 participants who took part in interviews and focus groups. Many shared personal and painful stories generously, opening their family lives to examination in the hope that there could be learning or change for future generations.

We would specifically like to thank the two Young People's Advisory Groups (YPAG) who have been part of the project for over two-years. Despite the demands on their time and some of the strains individuals were under, they engaged enthusiastically even when exploring difficult topics. While some individuals dropped-out and others dropped-in, all contributed to the shaping of this research. A list of YPAG members is noted below (with their consent).

It would not have been possible to engage with the YPAGs over this time period, and during a global pandemic, without the support of their youth work organisations – Youth Initiatives, Lifford/Clonleigh Resource Centre, Include Youth. A special thank you to Leanne Harte and Johnny Ewan who facilitated the young people's engagement with a strong understanding of their rights to both protection and participation.

We also acknowledge the contribution of both of our adult advisory groups, particularly in the early stages of shaping the research, and for their reflections on a draft version of this report.

Finally, thanks to our PhD students at the Centre for Children's Rights QUB – Emilia Symington and Evie Heard – for notetaking and proof-reading, and our colleagues in the wider Centre. In the spirit of the Centre, the (emotional) labour of research is always a shared endeavour.

Young People's Advisory Group Members (who consented to be named)

Youth Initiatives, Derry/Londonderry: Conal, Kasey, Keelan, Matthew, Niamh, Olivia, Owen, Roisin, Shane, Thomas.

Lifford/Clonleigh Resource Centre, Include Youth: Aaron, Darragh, Katie, Kirsty, Jessica, Jessica, Shakira, Shania, Tammy, Zara-Lee.

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‘ ... to address the consequences of the Troubles. Obviously, that means everyone, from cradle to the grave, and clearly the Troubles and the Conflict hasn't entirely ended in any case. So, you have young people who are still being affected today, but it's also the case that young people who aren't being directly affected today have grown up in households where parents or grandparents were affected.’ (KSI7)

‘It's simple to know what I would want [for the future], but it's probably never happening. The likes of religions and stuff, or bomb scares and all this crap, should just be forgot about, but I think ... if that ever is going to happen it will take a good lot more generations ... (CYPFG9)

Background to the Project

The 30-year-old period of ethno-political conflict and civil unrest in Northern Ireland, colloquially known as ‘the Troubles’¹, has had a lasting impact on economic, social and cultural life. Children and young people have experienced directly or indirectly decades of conflict, violence and sectarian divisions, and many continue to deal with legacy issues from the region's ‘troubled’ past. A number of research studies undertaken in recent years have highlighted how the legacy of the Troubles/Conflict continues to affect the lives of children and young people growing up across Northern Ireland, and to a lesser extent, cross-border areas. This study, focusing on the transgenerational² impacts of Conflict legacy on the lives of children and young people and their parents, builds on previous research on transgenerational legacy which, to date, has mainly focused on the transmission of trauma and mental health difficulties (Austin, 2019; Hanna et al., 2012; Merrilees et al., 2011; O'Neill et al., 2015; Shevlin & McGuigan, 2003). Transgenerational legacy, however, extends beyond psychological trauma. Some research, for instance, has examined how social and cultural identities, as well as sectarian prejudice, myths and beliefs, have been transmitted to younger generations (Halliday & Ferguson, 2020). It can also be argued that there are socio-economic and structural transgenerational legacies, in that children growing up in some communities (i.e. interface areas, and other socio-economically deprived areas where violence has been frequent and widespread) are negatively affected by residual sectarianism, continued segregation and chronic under-investment in their communities (Horgan, 2005; McAlister et al., 2009). In Northern Ireland's research

¹ The ‘Troubles’ is a euphemism that has been historically used to describe the periods of conflict in Northern Ireland. The terms the ‘Troubles’ and the ‘Conflict’ are used interchangeably throughout the report.

² While transgenerational refers to transmission to subsequent generations, i.e. children and grandchildren; intergenerational transmission is from parents to children. Both are often used interchangeably.

literature, transgenerational trauma has been mainly the domain of psychology and, to a lesser extent, social psychology (in particular, social identity theory). However, additional research has evidenced how the legacies of the Troubles/Conflict have been transmitted to younger generations, and how some continue to feel the impacts of Conflict first hand.

In 2015, the Towards a Better Future study (O'Neill et al., 2015) concluded that the legacy of the Troubles cannot be effectively addressed in isolation, but require a longer-term strategic plan which includes comprehensively recognising and tackling outstanding legacy issues, including their continued impact on children and young people. The report recommended the adoption of a coherent strategy which focuses on supporting interventions with a view to the task of rebuilding a post-conflict community. Central to this strategy is the adoption of a two-generation approach as a core principle where the focus is not only on the needs of specific generations but also on the relationships between them. This also involves the task of lessening the potential transmission of prejudice and parental Conflict-related traumatic experiences allied to working collaboratively to tackle social, economic and political environmental issues including segregation, sectarianism and paramilitarism³.

The impacts and legacies of the Troubles/Conflict on children's rights to, for example, protection from violence (Art. 19), freedom of expression (Art. 13), freedom of association (Art. 15), access to adequate health care (Art. 24) have been identified and reiterated by the NI Commissioner for Children's Rights (Kilkelly et al., 2004; NICCY, 2009, 2018, 2020), and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Children (2016b). Recognition and involvement of children and young people in conflict transformation, and in tackling transgenerational legacy, has been noted in international literature. Research has highlighted that failing to include the participation and experiences of children and young people in transitional justice processes not only neglects Article 12 of the UNCRC, but can also have a significant impact in the long term transition to peace. Aptel and Ladisch (2011: 1) note that: 'failure to address the concerns of children and youth can undermine the long-term recovery of transitional or post-conflict societies. Children and youth need to understand the past to play a constructive role in building the future.'

The central aim of the current project was to investigate the continuing transgenerational impacts of the Troubles/Conflict on the lives of children and young people (aged 14-24) and parents throughout Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The project adopted a 'two-generation approach' exploring and identifying the experiences and needs of current generations of children and young people affected by the Conflict's legacy and their relationships with older generations, many of whom have lived experience of the worst years of the Troubles/Conflict. The analysis examines the ways in which young people learn about the past and their identity and culture, and the impact of their experiences of this learning. It continues to explore the impacts of Conflict legacy across four themes: (1) Divided Space; (2) Health and Well-being; (3) Family Life and Parenting; (4) Paramilitarism and Policing.

³ While mindful of debates regarding the validity of concepts such as 'paramilitaries' and 'paramilitarism', we utilise these throughout the report as they were frequently employed by research participants in discussing the ongoing violence, and threat of violence, perpetrated by powerful individuals and groups across the island of Ireland.

Methodology

The project was grounded in a Child Rights Based Approach (CRBA) (Lundy and McEvoy, 2012) which embeds young people's participation in all stages of the project, and incorporates the four elements of Lundy's (2007) model of effective participation: providing a safe 'space' for children to express their views; methods that facilitate their 'voice'/views to be expressed; an 'audience' to hear children's views; and a means through which their views can have an 'influence'. As such, children and young people were involved throughout the study including in the: design of data collection instruments, use of participatory methods to capture the views and experiences of children and young people, analysis of research findings, and forming of research recommendations. Key to the implementation of the approach was engagement with two Young People's Advisory Groups (YPAGs), who assisted the research team throughout the research process.

In consultation with the Commission for Victims and Survivors NI (CVSNI), the Research Advisory Committee (RAC), the Transgenerational Research Advisory Group (TRAG) and the two youth advisory groups, seven research sites and core research themes were identified and agreed upon. A preliminary review of existing literature was also carried out to inform data collection. The study collected views and experiences from 195 individuals who could speak to the research aims. This included 28 key stakeholders representing relevant sectors and government departments and 45 community workers across the seven research sites. Parents of children and young people aged 14-24 were difficult to access and recruit despite considerable time invested in exploring many recruitment opportunities. Thirteen parents across four research sites participated, although a number of community representatives also spoke in their capacity as parents of children this age. Interviews explored Conflict-related issues affecting themselves, their community and their families while growing up, as well as the impacts on the community today and young people of their children's generation. A two-generational approach allowed for an analysis of change and continuity between two generations and focus groups were conducted with 104 children and young people aged 14-24 across the seven research sites.

Using a range of participative tasks designed with the YPAGs, focus groups explored: young people's knowledge and learning about the past, identity and culture; the ways in which the Conflict still affects communities, young people and their parents (the present); and their hopes for the future. Finally, narrative interviews were conducted with two child-parent dyads to enhance understanding of the transgenerational nature of the impact of the Conflict and to explore this within the context of individual families. Thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyse and report patterns/themes within the data with specific attention to change and continuity across two generations. Discussion of the themes are supported in the full report by excerpts from the data, across all cohorts, with a commitment to presenting the data as told by participants. This ensures we give voice to all participants and that the audience hears this in the way participants chose to recount their views and experiences. In accordance with the rights-based approach to research with children and young people adopted in the study, the YPAG assisted in the explanation and interpretation of the study's findings as well as connecting data to recommendations.

Learning the Past:

Summary Findings

Young people's knowledge of the Troubles/Conflict was learned through a range of sources, most notably in the context of school and family accounts. Although their level of understanding was questioned by some adult participants, by virtue of not having lived through the Conflict, young people had considerable knowledge and demonstrated capacity to talk about sensitive and challenging issues. Accounts of learning in the family context varied from families who did not talk about the past, to young people who overheard accounts in adult conversations, to those whose parents, grandparents and other family members recounted detailed stories of the Conflict and its impact on family and communities. Adult participants' perceived family accounts as the principal source of learning through the recounting of lived experiences across generations. In this way, much of what young people know and think about the Troubles/Conflict is established prior to any formal learning.

Whilst learning in school could fill gaps in detail from other accounts of the Conflict, more typically what was learned, and the way in which it was learned depended on school, subject choices, teachers' views and the capacity or willingness to engage young people in sensitive and potentially emotive discussions. Such discussion could, of course, be challenging for teachers who have not received adequate training or for whom discussions of the past could act as a trigger, particularly if they have not dealt with their own related issues. Nevertheless, learning in school could be selective, partial, lacking in depth or absent. The analysis demonstrates that despite long standing concerns related to avoidance of teaching of the Conflict, the neglect to address political history in primary schools and a focus on historic societies elsewhere (Barton, 2001a; Barton & McCully, 2010; Bell et al., 2010; NICCY, 2018), children's opportunities to discuss and make sense of 'the Troubles' are limited (NICCY, 2020).

Participants in all groups in the study were aware of the limitations of accounts shared with young people with concerns related to partiality or 'bias' linked most strongly to family accounts, but also to social media and accounts within the community. The potential to glorify or romanticise the past was a key concern where children were not included in discussions about the impact of the Troubles/Conflict in communities and families. Additionally, participants noted that selective or partial accounts may perpetuate sectarian views that can reinforce a divisive mind-set between communities across the generations. This raises questions related to the accounts and source material young people have access to in order to inform their views and perceptions of the past, and suggests that their freedom of expression is compromised which includes: 'freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice' (UNCRC, Art. 13). This points to a need for young people to have access to a range of perspectives and stories of the past in a variety of formats in order to achieve a shared narrative about the Conflict (NICCY, 2018; 2020). There is potential within this for resources such as the Oral History Archive - 'a central place for people from all backgrounds

... to share experiences and narratives related to the Troubles' (Stormont House Agreement, 2014: para. 22) – to inform young people, if supported to engage with the resource in a way which is age appropriate.

It is important to recognise that there were varied views among young people and adults, about whether young people should learn about the past. Some were keen to highlight that the Troubles/Conflict should remain in the past as speaking of the Conflict could have a negative impact on young people's mental health, or influence their attitudes with the potential of intergenerational transmission of sectarian beliefs. These are perhaps not reasons for the avoidance of learning but rather arguments for a different way of learning. Others articulated strong views that learning about the past was important to know about the country's history, to acknowledge the impact on communities and families, to understand how the past shapes the present and to learn from the past to inform the future. It is important that a focus on learning does not result in an additional divide between those who want to 'move on' and those who feel such an approach silences them, ignores a key part of their identity and fails to acknowledge the past. Attention should perhaps turn to how we can create safe spaces for children and young people to learn about the Conflict, have these sensitive discussions and feel able and safe to acknowledge and/or challenge narratives of the past.

An effective mode of learning which provides a safe space to express different views within two contested political narratives was not evident in participants' accounts. Formal learning focused on exam success does not encourage debate, discussion and the depth of understanding adult participants suggested young people lacked. Learning needs to utilise methods young people find engaging – interactive methods, hearing from those from different perspectives who have lived through Troubles/Conflict and visual media were all noted by young people as particularly memorable and meaningful. Indeed, States are required to ensure children have access to information and material from a diversity of cultural resources (UNCRC, Art. 17). Consideration needs to be given to the age at which formal learning may start and that age appropriate activities are developed. Given the learning evident across the generations as a result of the passing of stories through the community and family, learning should facilitate dialogue between the generations and build young people's capacity to interrogate stories in a safe space. Consultation with children and young people in the development of learning resources and methods is crucial to ensure that they are relevant and appropriate to children's interests and to ensure that their views are taken into account (UNCRC, Art. 12).

Learning the Past: Recommendations

- The school curriculum should be revised to consider the delivery of teaching on the Conflict. Consideration should be given to the age at which to introduce learning to ensure this begins before any negative attitudes can be entrenched. It should also be embedded in a subject where there is space for discussion and debate and less focus on rote learning for examination purposes.
- Consultation should take place with parents/guardians and young people in the revision of the curriculum to ensure that learning at home is considered in conjunction with school learning.
- The current training for teachers on the Troubles/Conflict and cross-community issues needs to be expanded to develop their capacity and confidence to facilitate challenging

and sensitive topics and to respond to emotion in the classroom. Teachers require additional support in the teaching of the Conflict, particularly where they are dealing with their own related issues.

- A two generation approach to learning is required, either in school or community settings. Safe spaces need to be created where discussions can be held within and across generations. Parents who want to talk about the Troubles/Conflict with children require support and access to information. Children and young people's capacity should be developed so they can engage in discussion with the older generations and challenge views as they make sense of the past.
- Children and young people should be supported to access a range of accessible sources and information to develop their knowledge and understanding – e.g. the Oral History Archive – but also be involved in the development of child-informed and child friendly sources related to the Conflict.

Learning Culture and Identity:

Summary Findings

Young people's views and understanding of identity and cultural expression were explored. Whilst they varied in their willingness to assume a particular identity or label within the focus group setting, young people recognised the importance of identity within their communities, particularly in Northern Ireland but also reflected in the accounts of young people in the Border Region of Ireland. Some drew a generational distinction that claiming an identity was of more significance for older individuals in the community. Concerns were raised by young people and community representatives where identity or community membership was imposed on young people through assumptions made, in their wearing of a school uniform, participation in a cross-community group or imposed as a result of pressure from groups to demonstrate affiliation to the community. This is contrary to their right to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, belief and religion as articulated in UNCRC Arts. 13 and 14.

Most accounts suggested that visible expressions of identity were not a constant but rather intensified at certain times of the year. Association with visual symbols and participation in cultural events did indicate some level of community membership among young people (reinforced in adult accounts) and for them, symbols of identity could indicate a place of belonging and safety. Perhaps the limited elaboration in their accounts of their own identity or culture reflects a struggle to articulate what these terms mean (NIYF, 2019a), as culture becomes associated with the Conflict and the past with 'an absence of new words and phrases more in tune with a post-conflict environment' (NIYF, 2019b: 21).

Participation in events such as parades and marches can be important ways to express culture and identity as well as to establish connectedness across generations through the sharing and imparting of tradition. However, ways in which the passing of tradition may be threatened or questioned raises concerns in relation to children's rights to: freedom of expression (UNCRC, Art.13); freedom of thought, belief and religion (UNCRC, Art. 14); freedom of association (UNCRC, Art.15); and, leisure, play and culture (UNCRC, Art. 31).

Much of the discussion in focus groups was directed towards the expressions of identity connected to the 'other' community which was often interpreted as exclusionary, antagonistic and precipitating fear. Such interpretation can heighten a sense of division and difference and can intensify sectarian attitudes. Such attitudes, according to participants' accounts, were likely to originate in the views and narratives passed down through generations within the family.

Whilst young people spoke of a range of sources through which they learnt about the Troubles/Conflict, in relation to identity and culture, the family was the key source of learning, supportive of earlier findings suggesting that, the most important influence on 16 year-olds' views regarding the 'other' main religious community was their family (ARK, 2007). This raises questions regarding the extent to which the State is fulfilling its obligation to direct education

to the development of respect for human rights and cultural identity, and the preparation of the child for life in the spirit of peace, tolerance and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religion groups (UNCRC, Art. 29).

The views and attitudes held by parents, grandparents and other older family members were strongly embedded in past experiences of the Conflict. There was the potential for young people to adopt and act upon such narratives through voting practices, identifying difference, feeling fear, and perhaps hatred, towards the 'other' community. Such views could be entrenched at a young age, presenting as a challenge when young people come to engage in cross-community programmes. The transmission of views, without creating a safe space for young people to challenge them or express alternative viewpoints is in contradiction to their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, belief and religion (UNCRC, Arts. 13 & 14).

There were positive accounts, however, of young people inheriting inclusive attitudes across the generations and evidence that some young people were able to resist negative or sectarian attitudes when exposed to them. This does suggest the possibility of breaking the transmission of negative attitudes across generations, particularly when children and young people are provided the safe space to voice their views and have their opinions heard (UNCRC, Art. 12).

Learning Culture and Identity: Recommendations

- In line with UNCRC Art. 29, education should play a role in developing children's understanding of their own and other cultures and ethno-national identities, to enhance understanding, integration, respect and tolerance. This should be incorporated into a whole school curriculum, rather than focused on particular subjects. Whilst current education policy, to some extent, provides for such learning (e.g. Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy), evidence of its impact on children's attitudes has been questioned (NICCY, 2020). This calls for a revision of the content and delivery of education – both formal and informal – and an evaluation of its impact on young people's attitudes.
- These findings demonstrate the continued importance of the family in the transmission of attitudes of the 'other' community. Therefore, there is a need for increasing dialogue across the generations to encourage open and collective discussions on interpretations of identity and difference.
- Young people require a safe space to explore their meaning of their own culture and identity and to learn about those of others. They should be provided training to communicate this to others and attain a language to articulate what their culture represents (NIYF, 2019a). This space may differ for children and young people, particularly depending on the impact of the Troubles/Conflict in their lives and those of their family members. Consultation should be conducted with children and young people to gather their views on: how education on culture and identity should be delivered; who they should learn alongside; and, when and how this should be delivered.
- Young people should be consulted about the ways in which they would like to express their culture and identity safely. They should also be equipped with the skills to organise and develop their own events (perhaps alternatives to those traditionally held) to express their culture and identity (NIYF, 2019b).

Divided Space:

Summary Findings

The findings demonstrate that young people's lives in Northern Ireland and their communities remain highly segregated in relation to residential segregation, segregated education and engagement in 'single identity' activities, all of which limited the potential to interact with young people from the 'other' community. Young people from communities in the Border Region of Ireland noted that segregated communities were a feature of communities in Northern Ireland, despite their identification of some communities in the Republic of Ireland as clearly 'Republican'. For some young people and adults, segregation in the community can offer a sense of safety, often linked to the impact of hearing about family members' experiences of the past. As a result, some participants (both young and older) reflected concerns about the removal of peace walls, suggesting integration of communities could lead to violence.

More typically, however, participants (particularly young people and community representatives) identified the negative impact of segregation in the community. Their accounts raised implications for a child's right to leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities (UNCRC, Art. 31) and their rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (UNCRC, Art. 15). Noting restrictions on their movements, feeling unable to access play/leisure facilities in certain areas and/or feeling unsafe as they meet peers in public spaces, the analysis illustrates a lack of optimum environment for children to realise their Article 31 rights. As noted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, this should be an environment free from stress, secure from social harm and violence and free from prejudice or discrimination (UN, 2013: para. 6).

Visible signs of segregation such as peace walls had the potential, participants suggested, to increase division by sending a message that communities should not interact. Visible demarcation, along with warnings from older generations, can restrict young people's mobility and interactions with others beyond their own community. These could also contribute to a heightened sense of difference which could intensify feelings of fear and sectarianism. There was a concern, therefore, that by the stage that young people do get to meet and have the potential to integrate, the sense of difference could be too engrained for meaningful interaction to occur.

Whilst there is much continuity across generations, in terms of attitudes towards the 'other' community and restrictions on young people's movement, young people also spoke of navigating the 'other' community as part of their social lives. As a sense of independence developed, and despite warnings from older generations, young people spoke of a willingness to interact with young people from the 'other' community, accessing 'neutral' spaces together but also to socialise in each other's neighbourhoods with some safeguards in place: attention to the way they dressed, the way they spoke and who they were with. Their movement, therefore, was not entirely 'free' nor without reservation. Increased interaction can come with shifts in young people's lives as they gather independence and are able to extend the geographical scope of their social lives, no longer dependent on parents to bring them places, access employment and navigate social lives online which can circumvent physical barriers in the community. In their

messages to decision makers, a key request was for more shared spaces (as opposed to 'co-used' places) (Roulston et al., 2017), which can facilitate meaningful interaction between young people across the communities.

Sectarian views and violence do persist, however, linked to fears that had been generated about the 'other' community. Young people's perception, based on what they had been told about the past, however, was that sectarian violence was less pervasive in their communities (views supported by adult participants), and was concentrated at certain flashpoints in the calendar triggered by cultural or sporting events. Despite its concentration, concerns remained about the perceived normalisation of sectarian violence at these times in the year. During such times, restrictions on movement can be intensified when young people feel more fearful about navigating spaces outside of their community. Additionally, newcomer families who have been placed in social housing in certain communities could also find themselves isolated at these times, with limited understanding of the context and safety concerns.

The majority of young people in research sites in Northern Ireland were, or had been, in segregated education. Young people in the Border Region of Ireland did not describe their schooling as segregated, nevertheless discussions illustrated that their schools were identified along religious lines. A small number of young people noted that segregated education could limit the potential for conflict in school and allowed learning of religion easier. Other participants (both young people and adults) were quicker to note the limitations of the system: that young people did not learn about other religions and respect them; the challenges when young people finally did come together through Shared Education programmes or in Further Education; that it creates and reinforces barriers between young people of different communities; and, it fosters a sense of difference and sectarian attitudes. Adult participants noted that segregated education was one of a number of mechanisms, alongside residential segregation, that could reinforce barriers between young people of different communities – a point reiterated by young people who had been challenged about making friends of a different religion through their experiences of integrated or shared education.

Accounts of engagement in Shared Education did raise the potential for addressing negative or sectarian attitudes but young people did not speak at length about their experiences. Some did reflect on the challenges of meaningful engagement in this context, given the limited interaction with young people across communities outside of such programmes. Whilst the Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 represented a step forward in increasing mixing within the Northern Ireland education system, there remains a number of concerns about the quality of some shared education programmes (UK Children's Commissioners, 2015), especially in regards to the opportunity for all pupils to take part (Haydon, 2020). Ultimately, the programme 'does not address the core issue of a segregated education system' (Haydon, 2020: 77). Thus, in their 2016 Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that the State Party,

actively promote a fully integrated education system and carefully monitor the provision of shared education, with the participation of children, in order to ensure that it facilitates social integration. (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016b: para. 72(e))

Few young people in the study spoke of their experiences of integrated education or personal preferences, although they did note the limitations of the segregated system. Evidence elsewhere, however, would suggest that the support for integration is increasing with 56% of 16

year olds noting they would prefer to send their children to a mixed-religion school (ARK, 2019), yet many are oversubscribed (Haydon, 2020).

Young people had much more to say in relation to their participation in cross-community programmes which, they noted, showed the potential to create safe spaces encouraging discussion, hear 'neutral' accounts, challenge narratives, have their voice heard and, in some cases, foster new relationships across communities. Whilst not all young people remained in contact after programmes, some did describe the potential for lasting friendships, sometimes facilitated by social media interaction. However, there is also limitation to the potential of such programmes whilst young people continue to live in divided contexts as they may struggle to maintain new relationships alongside prejudices within their community. Community representatives noted that the attitudes of parents and grandparents could work against the aims of cross-community programmes and inhibit recruitment of young people. An additional challenge faced by youth workers was a requirement to recruit along religious lines when young people did not identify with a religion. There was also consideration of the focus of programmes given other identities and cultures beyond the 'two communities' and the challenges faced by newcomer families. Short-term funding was often targeted at flashpoints in the calendar and restricted the extent of work that could be achieved with young people whilst geographical provision was unequal with limited programmes in rural communities. Overall, while the young people in this research appeared to have more opportunities and perceive less risk to meeting with the 'other' community than the parent and grandparent generation, their choices and freedom of movement were not without limitation. Elements of integration were often within a wider context of division and young people were reminded of the 'dangers' of integration at particular points in the year.

Divided Space: Recommendations

- The analysis highlights the potential of cross-community programmes to provide a safe space for learning. Further investment in these programmes is required to avoid short-term funding cycles which can impact on recruitment and prolonged engagement with young people. Provision should also be revised geographically to ensure sufficient access to programmes in rural communities. The findings throughout this report also speak strongly to the need to maintain cross-community and good relations at the forefront of youth programmes.
- Whilst Shared Education has been an important step towards increased mixing within the school environment, the findings in this report support more fundamental changes to the structuring of the community in Northern Ireland. Increasing the provision (and funding) of integrated education, particularly given the increasing demand and oversubscription, is key and thus attention should be given to the UNCRC Concluding Observations in 2016 that a 'fully integrated education system' is actively promoted.
- Issues of division and integration should be explored with parents/guardians with a view to impacting on messages they pass on to their children from an early age. Such support could be delivered in inter-community programmes for children in early years and Key Stage 1 education (Morrow, 2019).
- The findings support an increased need for shared spaces for young people to come together safely without being subject to negative attitudes and to develop greater understanding of the 'other' community and their culture.

Health and Well-Being:

Summary Findings

The research reflects some of the experiences and impacts of the Troubles/Conflict on individuals, families and communities across three generations. It demonstrates how, for many of the parent generation, childhood memories lie just below the surface ready to be exposed, often with little prompting. For some, childhood experiences were being made sense of as adults, with memories and pains only recently realised or (re)surfaced as a result of Conflict-related news stories, historical enquiries or more openness in families. The research suggests, therefore, that the outworkings and manifestations of Conflict-related harm can be delayed (see also: CVSNI, 2011), despite impacting negatively on the well-being of individuals and families. As such, it may take considerable time before individuals seek or require help and support. The lasting effects on their well-being of growing up with fear, insecurity, experiencing and/or witnessing violence or loss, were well-recognised by others. The past can impinge upon the present in persistent ways whereby pain, anxiety or hypervigilance are ever present. Many had, like their parents, avoided, buried or minimalised their experiences. Having emotionally regulated, 'locked away' feelings and/or dealt with pain or loss over many years, this generation had taken a burden some felt was not recognised in public or political discourse, or in service responses. While similar themes of Conflict-related harms being 'sectioned off' are reflected in other research, this study clearly illuminates the transgenerational nature of these strategies, as the parent generation talk about their own parents, and reflect upon themselves.

The medicalisation of pain during the Troubles/Conflict has also left its mark. Not only are patterns of self-medicating evident among some older people (Jarman and Russam, 2011), but this research would suggest, also among subsequent generations. That is, those at the sharp end of the personal, social and structural legacies of the Conflict. Patterns of silence, internalisation and soothing pain, stress or anxiety through substance use were reiterated across generations, suggesting culturally transmitted coping strategies. While young people spoke at length about high levels of mental ill-health among their peers, they often did not relate this to Conflict legacy. Many of the issues they raised, however - lack of opportunities, lack of appropriate services, the medicalisation of poor mental health, lack of willingness to talk about mental health - are related to Conflict legacy (see also NICCY, 2020). There were suggestions of similar methods of dealing with personal stress and poor mental health among the current generation as was identified in the parent and grandparent generation (e.g. silence, avoidance and self-medicating). The enduring relationship between poverty, the Conflict and poor health is, therefore, impacting the current generation of young people. This is linked to the unresolved nature of Conflict legacy issues, including: ongoing paramilitarism; historical enquiries; ongoing, delayed or undiagnosed trauma among parents; lack of opportunities in some areas; and historical and contemporary under-investment in (mental) health services. The impacts may be exacerbated in rural and cross-border areas where access to services are particularly limited.

Over ten years ago, McMahon and Keenan (2008: 13) pointed to a series of gaps in service provision, including 'the inadequacy of mental health services for children and young people, and the continued under-resourcing in this area of provision'. Recently, NICCY (2018b) updated their analysis of mental health services and supports for children and young people in Northern Ireland. They found that mental health services were not fit for purpose, and that the system was under significant pressure, partly because of chronic under-investment, and historical patterns of funding allocation that do not respond to mental health needs. The findings from this study support NICCY's analysis, reinforcing that these issues make it difficult to respond to children and young people's mental health needs and compromise their rights to effective health care (UNCRC, Art. 24). Poor mental health, combined with lack of access to effective services, can enhance susceptibility to problematic drug and alcohol use. This was identified as a major area of concern among children and young people in this research, and by some adults as a transgenerational coping mechanism in the face of restricted services. Thus, when the right to effective health care is compromised so too can be the right to protection from illicit substances (UNCRC, Art. 33). Responses, therefore, need to be co-ordinated and integrated (see also NICCY, 2018b). More broadly, mental ill-health related to Conflict legacy impacts children's right to survival and development (Art. 6, UNCRC), and it is well understood that when one right is not fulfilled, this impacts on the realisation of other rights. For those who are victims of trauma – either transgenerational or as a result of ongoing Conflict-related violence – they have a right to responses that promote their physical and psychological recovery (Art. 39). If children are not diagnosed as experiencing transgenerational trauma, or if their interactions with paramilitary-style groups are not defined and recognised as abuse, exploitation or victimisation, they are unlikely to have access to services.

While many of the stories shared in this research were those of individuals and families, the Conflict's lasting impact on deprivation, opportunities and investment, under-resourcing of communities and essential services was widely discussed. As such, the need for responses beyond medical interventions framed around individuals was called for. The danger of a narrow focus on Conflict-related trauma and psychopathology has been outlined by Gallagher et al. (2012) who note that this can divert attention from the need for social, economic, political and cultural change. Mental health responses in isolation will not attend to the impacts of Conflict legacy on the health and well-being of the current or future generations of young people. Economic, as well as social and political responses are required to respond to injustices and unresolved issues of the Troubles/Conflict including segregation, ongoing paramilitarism and historical under-investment.

Health and Well-Being: Recommendations

- Given the delayed impacts and understanding of Conflict-related experiences, there is a need for long-term funding of victims services.
- Safe spaces are required to discuss and share Conflict-related experiences. Community-based programmes should be developed (in consultation with communities), and Community workers trained and supported in delivering programmes exploring the Conflict and its impacts. These could be integrated into already existing community-based programmes (e.g. Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) - funded community programmes, the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme).

- To ensure that mental health services are sensitive and responsive to legacy issues, screening tools should be enhanced and training in trauma informed practices a priority. Regional Trauma Network⁴-led research and service delivery provides an opportunity to disseminate learning and best practice across the health and victims sectors.
- There is a need to develop psychological, social, political and economic responses to address the social determinants of health related to conflict.
- CAMHS and DAMHS are not responding to the needs of children and young people, compromising their rights to effective health care and, for some, to survival and development. The recommendations from NICCY's (2018) review of mental health services and supports for children and young people in NI should be implemented.
- The relationship between substance misuse and Conflict legacy is becoming clear. This requires recognition in substance use strategies and responses. There is an urgent requirement to enhance social and educational measures to protect children from substance misuse.
- There is need for future research into the impacts of Conflict-related trauma and poor mental health on physical health.

⁴ The Regional Trauma Network (RTN) is a collaborative initiative between HSC Trusts and Community based health and well-being providers delivering psychological trauma support. See http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/download/Consultations/regional_trauma_network_and_eqia/Regional-Trauma-Network-FAQs.pdf

Parenting, Family Life and Relationships:

Summary Findings

Exploring the transgenerational experiences and impacts of the Conflict within families is complex. Many affected in the past continue to live in communities experiencing the coercive control of paramilitary-style groups. Disentangling the impacts of past and present Conflict-related experiences on family life and parenting is, therefore, complicated. Equally, reflecting on the nature of family life growing up as well as considering the parenting of one's own children, is highly personal and emotive. As this research attests, there are few opportunities for such reflection by parents across the generations, and recognition of transgenerational effects is most likely to emerge at crisis points. Realisation of generational impact can be painful given the lengths many go to, to protect their children from the hurts they themselves carry. Feelings of self-blame were poignant, and may explain why silence and numbing have become established coping mechanisms. There was a sense, however, that many 'quietly carry their trauma', 'suffer in silence', or that transgenerational impacts are not yet known by those affected, or not recognised by others.

This research adds to a body of evidence identifying silence as a means of coping, and a strategy employed by parents to avoid passing traumatic experiences to children (e.g. Hanna et al., 2012; Downes et al., 2013; McNally, 2014). The cross generational approach applied demonstrates that strongly linked to 'silence' is 'sensing'. Members of both the parent generation and current generation, reflecting on their family lives, talked of 'sensing' something being wrong. 'Silence' and 'sensing' had led to confusion, half-truths, heightened anxiety and feelings of insecurity among children, some of whom noted that this remained with them into adulthood. Silence, therefore, acted in opposition to its intent and could be a means through which trauma, or the impacts of Conflict legacy, could be passed on generationally (see also Gilligan, 1997; McEvoy-Levy, 2011). Traditions of silence mean that recognising its existence and impact is difficult. Yet some parents knew, like those in Downes et al.'s (2013) research, that despite efforts to shield their children through silence, they were still affected.

Silence could also impact the nature of relationships between children and parents. Some of the parent generation spoke of a lack of emotionality within their families growing up. Silence through avoidance and denial numbed the pain, but it numbed other feelings also. Additionally, some of the current generation did not want their parent/s to 'sense' that they knew something was wrong with them, as they did not want them to hurt further. Silence, therefore, reproduced silence, with some parents identifying that it had filtered into their own parenting, and some young people noting that their generation were reticent to talk of their problems.

The transgenerational impacts of Conflict legacy were also discussed in terms of children growing up in homes where parents were physically or emotionally unavailable, angry or aggressive and/or overly-protective. Some parents spoke of how their experiences of over-protective parenting as children now caused them to be anxious as parents. This had impacted on their children's mental health, and their freedoms and opportunities. While emanating from a place of care, this could reproduce mistrust of the 'the other' community and fear and insecurity among young people (see also Smyth and McKnight, 2013). There was also evidence that family disruption, aggressive parenting and domestic violence linked to Conflict legacy, could impact the long-term well-being of children, as well as their future relationships with peers, partners and children. Damaging also was the emotional unavailability of some parents who were 'stuck in time', overwhelmed at particular points in their 'grief journey' or who 'numbed' feelings through substance use. As historical enquiries (re)surface pain young people may be faced with parental grief, anger and hurt for the first time.

Supporting research by O'Neill et al. (2015), many in the current study spoke of the impacts of Conflict-related trauma on the ability to parent effectively, and thus on children's well-being. As a result of Conflict-related trauma parental supervision and attachment were difficult for some, manifesting in substance misuse and destructive behaviours among children. Examples were also provided by parents to suggest the reproduction of parental behaviours/experiences among children- poor mental well-being; reduced coping mechanisms; substance misuse; potential relationship difficulties in adulthood. Some parents reflected on their home life while growing up, and the impacts on how they now parented, and some young people reflected on how their parents' poor mental health impacted their well-being. These provide further evidence of transgenerational Conflict legacy. Stories shared suggest that some young people presenting to CAMHS today, are experiencing poor mental well-being that might in part be attributed to their parents' Conflict-related experiences/ legacies. This may be the case for others, but the connection has not yet been traced.

Despite some of the transgenerational impacts evident within families, such experiences are by no means pre-determined. It is instructive, for example, that parents often identified one child within the family as being most adversely affected. This raises crucial questions about additional stressors that lead to the manifestation of problems, or factors that may make particular children vulnerable (e.g. the first child). Added to this, it is difficult to isolate family effects from those of the community and other factors impacting children's lives.

That said, this research does add to a body of research demonstrating ways in which Conflict legacy can impact families across generations. The consequences for the current generation can be far reaching as parental trauma/ the impacts of conflict on family life can impact family relations, children's development, their feelings of safety and security, their freedom and opportunities, and their sense of well-being. There are of course implications for children's right to family life if their parent/s is not able to care for them or keep them safe, and this research certainly points to the need for further exploration of the relationship between Conflict legacy and children in care. Parents should, however, be provided with the resources and supports to fulfil their responsibilities to children (UNCRC, preamble). While specific reference is made to facilities and services for children, facilities and services for parents (impacted by Conflict legacy) could also support their child-rearing and enhance parental ability to protect and promote children's rights. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016b) in their analysis

of compliance with the UNCRC in Great Britain and N. Ireland reiterated the importance of assistance to parents, as provided in Art. 18, recommending that the State Party 'intensify its efforts to render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians, including informal kinship carers, in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities' (para. 52a).

While supporting parents to meet their responsibilities to care for children is important, so too is children's rights to access health care services (Art. 24). The mental well-being of some children is negatively impacted as a consequence of their parents' Conflict-related experiences, yet there are significant delays to accessing CAMHS within N. Ireland. Thus, a range of supports are necessary – those focused on young people, those focused on parents and those focused on the family unit.

Parenting, Family Life and Relationships: Recommendations

- The gendered experience of the Conflict, and its legacy, is still relatively unexamined. Little is known about parenting during the Troubles/Conflict. Further research is needed to enhance knowledge and direct service provision.
- The various manifestations of transgenerational Conflict legacy within families, and the potential impacts on children, should be shared widely with health professionals. This could enhance recognition of symptoms in children and signposting to relevant services.
- That many do not identify as 'victims' or recognise the issues they experience as Conflict-related is further evidence of the need for long-term population-wide mental health initiatives like the Regional Trauma Network.
- Some of the current generation are exposed to parental pain, anger, numbness for the first time, or in more obvious ways. This may mean that increasing numbers of young people require support:
 - VSS-funded transgenerational and youth services will require additional funding to enhance programmes to support children and young people in recognition of the transgenerational impacts of trauma and Conflict legacy.
 - There is potential within the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme initiatives (e.g. Communities in Transition; Women's Involved in Community Transformation; youth programmes) to explore some of the issues identified in this research: understanding and breaking cycles of silence; recognising transgenerational trauma and its impacts on family life and parenting; recognising negative coping mechanisms and identifying alternatives. A trauma-informed approach is necessary for work of this nature, as is support for the staff involved in programme delivery.
 - The findings of this research should be widely disseminated as a form of awareness raising, and information provided to the youth and community, and children and families sectors, regarding support services (e.g. how to refer to the RTN and relevant VSS-funded services).
 - Timely and holistic family therapeutic interventions are required.
- There is a need to encourage recognition and help-seeking behaviour, particularly among those living with the consequences of trauma and adversity experienced as young people. This might be done through increased public and political discourse which both destigmatises and 'denormalises' Conflict-related trauma.

- Given the persistence of silence as a harmful (transgenerational) coping mechanism we endorse Hanna et al's (2012:10) recommendation that services support survivors '...in communicating their trauma experiences in appropriate and adaptive ways, in therapy and within their families.'
- Learning from existing parent support programmes and resources developed from similar programmes (e.g. Parenting in a Divided Society/ 'We'll never be the same' – see Burrows and Keenan, 2004) should be collated to inform future community-based parenting programmes.
- The potential relationship between Conflict legacy and children entering the care system in Northern Ireland requires further investigation.

'Paramilitarism' and Policing:

Summary Findings

While this research demonstrates that many are still impacted by the legacies of violence, it also points to Conflict-related violence as a feature of many communities today. Some families are dealing with the pains of past violence (experienced during the Conflict) in combination with the fear, threat and/or experience of current violence. In this context, the concepts of 'Conflict legacy' and 'post conflict society' were felt to overshadow the reality that victims are still being created.

Knowledge of the existence and actions of so-called paramilitary-style groups was pervasive, and 'paramilitary talk' among young people within some communities was commonplace. The presence of paramilitaries meant the potential for violence was ever present. Recent events – the shooting of Lyra McKee, the implications of Brexit, the charging of Solider F - demonstrated to young people that violence could erupt at any time, and threats to perceived culture and identity were still used to politicise and recruit. The sense of insecurity and undercurrent of suspicion expressed by some young people was reminiscent of reflections of parents growing up in Conflict-affected communities 30-40 years ago.

Since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, consistent concerns have been raised about continued paramilitary-style violence and its impacts on the child's right to freedom from all forms of violence (Art. 19, UNCRC) and protection from 'torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' (Art. 37a, UNCRC). In their Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016b) reported concern that:

In Northern Ireland, children face violence, including shootings, carried out by non-State actors involved in paramilitary-style attacks, and recruitment by such non-State actors (para. 48).

Five years on, and over twenty years after the ceasefires and peace agreements, this research demonstrates that the intimidation, abuse and exploitation of children by paramilitary-style groups remains a reality. Vivid accounts of abuses against children, young people, and their families were shared. The volume and scope of these demonstrates the myriad of ways in which children, young people, families and communities continue to experience coercive control. Reflective of the relative invisibility of the impacts of violence on women and girls during the Troubles/Conflict, little is known today about how young women experience violence related to Conflict legacy. Research by McAlister et al. (2021) confirms this, identifying the processes by which young women's experiences of paramilitary-style violence are 'silently silenced'.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recognise that 'securing children's rights to survival, dignity, well-being, health, development, participation and non-discrimination ... are threatened by violence' (UNCRC General Comment No. 13, para. 13), and that 'preventing

violence in one generation reduces its likelihood in the next' (ibid., para. 14). Conflict-related violence has far-reaching effects on individuals, families and communities, and its impacts can be felt by future generations. Experiences within some of the communities involved in this research (and others not included), suggest that a new generation of victims is being created. Abuses on individuals, be it children, parents or siblings, rarely have isolated effects, and this research demonstrates the need for whole-family and whole-community responses. While some young people alluded to the impact of paramilitary presence and violence on their mental health, more often this manifested in fear, insecurity, paranoia and coping mechanisms employed to preserve psychological and physical well-being (e.g. mental and physical avoidance). Parents, youth and community workers could identify more vividly the impacts – bed-wetting; anxiety; evidence of trauma; substance use as a coping mechanism; destructive behaviours.

Concern was also expressed that living in violent environments created a culture of violence. There was clear evidence from young people's accounts that violence was normalised, but not that it was an accepted cultural norm. Normalising enables coping, managing and surviving in the context of conflict (see Cairns, 1987). Violence continues because it serves a purpose. It maintains power for some and is reproductive in the context of limited opportunities. The pathways and drivers into these groups for young people attest to this – it is not the pull of violence but the search for identity, belonging, status or safety that is significant (see also McAlister et al., 2018). That these groups provide one of the only means through which some young people feel they can achieve this, is an indictment of the post-conflict narrative. Indeed it is in recognition of the link between paramilitarism and social deprivation that the Tackling Paramilitarism Action Plan (2015) emphasises the need to address systemic issues - material deprivation, social and economic stability, education and employment opportunities. Yet in the first review of implementation of the Action Plan, it was some of these systemic issues that were highlighted as requiring further action (IRC, 2018). The Independent Reporting Commission (2019: 9) have since reiterated the importance of tackling '...systemic, socio-economic issues facing the communities where the paramilitaries operate ...', and enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes for young people (Rec. D1), which in their view 'is one of the most critical elements of the entire Executive Action Plan aimed at ending paramilitarism' (ibid: 105).

Despite recent public awareness campaigns and evolving programmes of work to tackle paramilitarism (since 2017), the political silence post-Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, failure to define acts against children as child abuse, and invest in and support communities in the transition from conflict, has caused what Smyth (2017) refers to as a 'societal shrug'. Ignoring the issue, rationalising it or locating responsibility for dealing with it elsewhere. It is unsurprising, therefore, that within families and communities silence is deeply embedded. Paramilitary violence is silenced through fear and coercion, cultures that stigmatise 'touting', and lack of police legitimacy but also through normalisation, denial or avoidance (McAlister et al., 2021). Normalisation and avoidance appeared ways of coping with and managing a threat that while ever present, would 'not come for you' if you kept your head down. It was employed by parents in the current context as well as young people, again implying learned behaviours. These techniques are similar to those identified as coping strategies among adults and children during the Conflict (Cairns, 1987). This would point to transgenerational patterns, and a learned cultural response among this generation, and within the 'new Northern Ireland'.

As demonstrated consistently, silence and avoidance have negative implications personally, and within families (e.g. McNally, 2014; Smyth et al., 2004). This extends to communities and wider society. Lack of reporting of paramilitary abuse within communities, the media, by political representatives, and downplaying or sidelining the effects on individuals, communities and society, can impact attitudes and responses. If the extent of the issue and its impact is unknown, the case for community resources and specialised services is weakened. One of the consequences, as identified in this research, is that the burden to respond falls on individuals and services within the very communities most affected. Meanwhile, it is not perceived as a societal issue, but one of certain individuals in certain areas – a problem of and for 'these communities'.

'Paramilitarism' and Policing: Recommendations

- The State must uphold their duty to action the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016b) and the UN Committee Against Torture (2019):
 - The Committee recommends that the State party: Take immediate and effective measures to protect children from violence by non-State actors involved in paramilitary-style attacks as well as from recruitment by such actors into violent activities, including through measures relating to transitional and criminal justice (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016b, para. 48c).
 - The State party should: (a) Strengthen its efforts to promptly and effectively investigate cases of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland, including against children, ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with appropriate sanctions, and ensure that victims have access to effective protection and can obtain redress; (b) Intensify its efforts to prevent the recruitment of children by paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland (UN Committee Against Torture, 2019, para. 43).
- While there are positive moves to re-define paramilitarism as criminal activity, the historical and political disputes that feed into such activity should not be ignored. It is these that destabilise peace and energise support for these groups at particular times. Addressing paramilitarism requires addressing legacy issues.
- Attending to the push and pull factors that combine to draw some young people into paramilitary-style groups will require targeted work with children in 'at risk' families, community programmes and supports, and addressing underinvestment and lack of opportunities in the communities most affected.
- There is a need for sustained efforts to inform public debate and discourse, and for those in positions of influence to use the language of child abuse and child exploitation when referring to the experiences of children.
- Greater resourcing, extension and sustainability of neighbourhood policing is required in communities most impacted by paramilitarism. Paramilitary threats and violence against children must be treated by the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) as child abuse.
- Young women should be more visible in the actions, implementation and analysis of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme.
- Family support initiatives should feature more prominently in the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme of work. Programmes directed towards young people alone will be limited in their potential.
- Paramilitarism is more visible in some areas than others. There is a particular need for supports in rural communities, and communities in the Border Region of Ireland.

The Communities in Transitions project (Action B4) should extend beyond the eight geographic areas in which it is currently targeted.

- There should be increased focus on processes of grooming and exploitation (within this context), in schools and youth programmes. The value of 'real-life' examples was reiterated by young people.
- There is a need for specific research into how young women experience this type of violence.
- While some of the physical impacts of paramilitary violence are known, less is known about the psychological effects. Further research to examine the long-term psycho-social impacts of paramilitary abuse is required.
- There appears some connection between families victimised by paramilitary-style groups today, and those who experienced violence, disruption or trauma within their families during the Conflict. Further research is needed to examine the family backgrounds of young people targeted by paramilitary-style groups.

Giving Voice to Future Hopes: Children and Young People's Key Messages to Government

Article 12 of the UNCRC states that children have the right to an opinion and to have that opinion heard. Many young people understood that their voice should be heard and that decision makers need to take their viewpoints and experiences into account. Their key messages to Government are summarised below:

- Give young people the opportunity to engage in a meaningful way with decision makers. Decision makers must explain the purpose, aim and potential outcomes of policy decisions, particularly those which will impact on the lives of young people.
- Invest in a more holistic approach to the development of child and adolescent mental health services, including building awareness of the reach of mental ill-health, its causes and impact, as well as creating visible and well-supported provisions.
- Increase investment in youth provisions and youth centres/youth groups, particularly in rural areas.
- Invest in better transport links and increase opportunities to access appropriate accommodation/housing
- Develop integration across a range of areas including education, family and local communities.
- Build a more cohesive society and protect children and young people from the violent legacy of the Conflict.

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