

## Introduction

As part of the ongoing evaluation of the pilot year (2015) of the Summer Camps programme delivered as part of the 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy a series of Shared Learning Forums were facilitated by OFMdfM (supported by the evaluator from SIB) as follows:-

- Enniskillen – 1st October
- Belfast – 6<sup>th</sup> October
- Derry/Londonderry – 5<sup>th</sup> November
- Newry – 10<sup>th</sup> November

The events were attended by representatives of organisations that had secured funding for and delivered a camp; those who had applied but were not successful in the 2015 round; and regional partners and stakeholders (e.g. Education Authority and Council personnel). All in all 133 delegates attended the four Shared Learning Forums across the above constituencies and as such the constructive input received at the same represents a valuable evidence base in informing the evaluation of the 2015 Summer Camps programme and in planning for 2016/17.

At each of the events input was facilitated across five thematic areas and the key points of feedback summarised below under each theme.

## Theme 1: Application Stage (including awareness raising workshops; application forms and support for groups to connect to make an application)

- Awareness raising workshops needed to be promoted more widely (to bring in more groups outside EA network). All too rushed because of timing pressures in 2015 year. Also the Belfast workshop was over- subscribed, should have been limited to pre-registered attendees only and/or host two workshops in Belfast next year.
- Awareness raising workshops in future need to be less focused on explaining the scheme (fine for the pilot year) and allow more space for group networking and partnership development.
- The timing of application phase needs to be pre-Easter, with funding awards announced post Easter (to enable sufficient time for recruitment).
- Eligible fee rates were too rigid to enable specialists (that could add to the quality of the experience) to be involved in the delivery of camps.
- There is no provision within any of the eligible cost categories within the application form for preparation time (detailed design of camp, development of materials etc) or monitoring/ evaluation and these could perhaps be considered for 2016/17.
- Importance of sharing planned dates of camps with applicants to avoid diary clashes in the same region that this year meant that camps were competing for young people.
- Allied to the above OFMdfM should share details of 2015 funded camps to enable partnership development with less experienced groups in future to facilitate joint applications.

- The application form needs to be simplified (less jargon) and to focus mainly on those questions that directly link to the scoring/ assessment process.
- Overall the application form was viewed to be too long, too detailed and too repetitive, relative to funding award (£6k in most cases).
- The outcome table in particular was difficult for smaller groups not experienced in the field. Perhaps more help could be provided for inexperienced groups.
- There was no material difference between Strand 1 and Strand 2 application forms and some technical issues with formatting/ completion of the form.
- An on-line submission process rather than emailing the completed application form might be more appropriate.
- More flexibility to host camps during the year, rather than a focus on the summer. There were c40 camps in the Belfast region all competing for young people within the same time window.

**Theme 2: Young People (ensuring attractiveness to young people; achieving the cross-community split: targeting young people who have little opportunity to interact with other communities.**

- Importance of having relationships with gatekeepers at community level to assist with recruitment.
- Getting the message into schools early, is key to attracting young people and was largely missed due to timing constraints in 2015.
- Part of reaching and attracting young people, is communication/ messaging with parents of young people, and different channels are needed over and above promotion with schools, youth clubs, uniformed groups etc. Parental buy-in is vital and was reported as a barrier in the experience of a few of the camps.
- Tangible involvement of young people at the application and planning stage will assist with attracting young people to participate.
- A wide range of activities are needed i.e. not just sport, but also arts and creative pursuits to ensure attractiveness to a wide range of young people.
- More time is needed and more resource cover to target and attract hard to reach young people (difficult with time constraints in 2015 year) who are not easily reached through youth club, statutory and uniformed groups etc.
- The reputation will build organically over time from successes of 2015 that will positively influence attractiveness to young people. To further develop this peer educators and participants should be pro-actively used as advocates via video testimonials, involvement in awareness raising workshops etc in 2016/17 year.
- More proactive use of social media to support promotion and recruitment is also important in attracting young people in future.
- Transport costs were a barrier for some young people to attend camp, and assistance/ cover for this in future may help to with attracting young people to camps/ securing buy-in from parents.

- Achieving the 20% variance was difficult in some geographies / localities. It may require groups, representing different communities, to partner on a joint application. A regional contacts database at the level of each EA region could help facilitate this. This needs time and mechanisms for partnership development that was not feasible in 2015. It was easier to achieve the split if groups were already engaged in a natural partnership on a cross-community basis.
- It can often be easier to partner with a group outside the locality than at the immediate 'other side' of an interface, and this again may require help / contacts etc to facilitate linkages and partnership development.
- In the North West being able to include young people from across the Border would have helped with recruitment to achieve the 20% variance split.
- The rules around 20% variance was not always fully understood by groups i.e. a need for greater clarity in future.

### Theme 3: Good Relations Content

- Importance of not being prescriptive in terms of GR content, i.e. young people should not feel that they have to say '*what they think adults might want them to say*'.
- Links to a range of sources of material could be provided – importance of age appropriate GR content (11-13; 14-16; 17-19 etc) and practical in nature, rather than academic. There is a wealth of existing materials and thus no need to develop any new material. The CRED materials within the EA are a useful source and not readily available to VCS organisations outside the EA network.
- Practitioner training and linking with more experienced groups would be more valuable in developing GR content than providing a toolkit. Groups should be asked to indicate on the application form if they may need this.
- Linking into sources of expertise in the GRO team in local Councils is also relevant in this context and in sustaining GR outcomes post-camp. In effect this should ensure that the camp activity can be mainstreamed into the GR work of groups all year round.
- More visits by politicians to the camps could have helped raise the profile of the GR focus/ T:BUC imperatives. In one camp a Peace Walk led by the Lord Mayor helped to raise profile of the GR focus/ T:BUC imperatives. Visits by external speakers (e.g. PSNI) to camps also helped to develop GR focus.
- Importance of the residential camps in creating shared space and depth of engagement to achieve GR outcomes. Shared accommodation, chores and activity groups are all part of building shared space. Structured 'downtime' for reflection on GR issues worked well within residential camps as well as interactive methods, including drama, creative role play and simulation. In addition planned use of social media can help to bring GR outcomes from camp into home and wider community environment.

- GR issues for young people can be wider than CNR/ PUL context – importance of placing them in a wider equality context in designing GR content for camp.
- Camps should be reflective of the community mix in their local area, and encouraging participation from BME community is part of this where relevant to local community mix.
- Some camps included the opportunity to for peer educators, to access accredited qualifications in good relations recognised by OCR/OCN, which offers an opportunity to have a structured framework around GR content and to ensure legacy of learning, post camp to complete the qualification.
- The restrictions in terms of travel outside of NI should be relaxed, reflections/ perspectives on conflict elsewhere could add to the quality of GR experience. Even Dublin/ Republic of Ireland could provide a valuable perspective on conflict in NI and border region.
- The application form needs to more robustly test intended GR content, not evident to all that it was mandatory and required at each of the 3 stages. Allied to this groups reported being unclear about ‘how much’ GR focus within a camp was sufficient and greater clarity for 16/17 was suggested.
- There are constraints on the extent to which GR content can be explored in depth, if the camp is held in the summer period, when local community tensions might be evident. An all year round programme of camps might help alleviate this constraint.

#### **Theme 4: Format of the Camp (Pre/ Camp/ Post Phases)**

- The three tier camp format, is the right model. There were timing pressures on the pre-camp stage in 2015 that put all the onus on the camp stage to deliver, which should not be as relevant in future. Need to ensure that the pre-camp is more than an induction and the post-camp is more than a celebration. Both need more time/ sessions and GR content needs to be integral to both.
- At pre-camp stage there could be an opportunity for young people to spend time in the ‘other community’ – over and above briefings at a central venue - this could also be picked up again at the post camp stage. The concept of ‘Peace Walks’ at post camp stage has also worked well in helping to sustain contact and friendships.
- The concept of Strand 2 failed to fully materialise. Some strong Strand 1 camps reached critical mass of intended participation for Strand 2 camps (and offered very good VFM as a result). Too big a leap between £6k and £20k from Strand 1 to Strand 2. In addition there are a limited number of venues in NI that can cater for 60+ in a residential setting and arguably 60+ young people is perhaps too many to be able to manage facilitated debate on GR issues in any depth. More scope for tiered participation and funding levels in future could be considered.
- Minimum length of residential camp should be 3 nights. On a 5 night camp there should be flexibility to split into two camps of 2 and 3 nights respectively.

**Theme 5: Other Aspects (including procurement/ booking; branding; parental involvement and involvement of young people in mentoring, design and delivery).**

- Procurement and booking of venues all very difficult with timing constraints in 2014/15. Limited number of residential venues in NI that can cater for 60+. Also EA groups can often access preferential residential rates that are not available to non EA/ VCS groups.
- Hoodies worked well and navy a non-contentious colour, but perhaps could be more imaginative/ less dull. A more personalised logo for the camp alongside T:BUC branding could help with this. An arm band/ bracelet might also work well.
- Brand awareness of the camps could be further developed if there was a proactive and managed social media strategy around them.
- £10 contribution/ fund-raising target per young person was fine and should be retained.
- Parental involvement at some camps very good, more than briefing about practicalities of the camp, and actually encouraged parents to visit communities outside of their neighbourhood etc. Models of good practice should be promoted, as issues with parental buy-in was a reported difficulty in a few camps.
- Involvement of young people, as mentors/ peer educators – there is an opportunity to leverage from other schemes like DCAL Cross Community Sports Programme and United Youth.