

Department for Communities

**Programme for Women Involved in Community
Transformation**

Stakeholder Engagement Report

19 June 2017

1. **Background**

A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan was published in November 2015. It outlines the NI Executive and the UK and Irish governments' actions to secure the full implementation of the Stormont House Agreement and to deal with the impact of continued paramilitary activity.

In December 2015 the Executive appointed an independent *Three Person Panel* to report to the Executive with recommendations for a strategy for disbanding paramilitary groups. The Panel's Report was published in June 2016. It contains 43 recommendations across four areas: Promoting Lawfulness, Tackling Criminal Activity, Support for Transition and Addressing Systemic Issues. The Panel recommended that:

The Executive's programme for women in community development should be designed not only to enable women's organisations to continue to carry out transformative community development work in our communities but also to ensure that women are equipped to take on more leadership roles in public decision-making. (B5)

An Executive Action Plan on *Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality, and Organised Crime* was subsequently published in July 2016. This set out a response to each of these recommendations. In particular:

The Department for Communities will organise a series of co-design workshops to determine the shape and content of the programme. These will include TEO and DOJ participation and other Executive Departments where appropriate, alongside experts in the community and women's organisations who will be taking forward the delivery of the programme.

The Department for Communities (DfC) Women's Programme falls within the 'Support for Transition' theme.

2. Co-Design Team

To take forward this recommendation a co-design team was established in June 2016 with representatives from government, women's groups and peace building organisations. To date the co-design group has focused on;

- Designing a Women's Early Intervention Programme (WEIP) for 250 women (run in February – March 2017 in 24 locations to identify, equip and encourage women to participate in DfC's 'main' Programme for Women Involved in Community Transformation; and
- The objectives, outcomes and outline Learning Framework for DfC's Programme for Women Involved in Community Transformation.

3. Stakeholder Engagement Events

Stakeholder Engagement events were held to gather views on the Co-Design team's draft proposals in respect of the Programme for Women Involved in Community Transformation.

Sixteen events took place between 22 May 2017 – 5 June 2017 in the following 12 locations; Coleraine, Derry-Londonderry, Belfast, Craigavon, Newry, Dungannon, Larne, Carrickfergus, Bangor, Lisburn, Enniskillen and Omagh. A list of the location venues is included at **Appendix 1**.

Invitations were sent by email to the following stakeholder groups:

- Community Investment Fund Recipients
- Council Community Development Officers
- Libraries NI
- Co-Design Team and Early Intervention Programme Supporting Delivery Organisations
- Stakeholder Engagement Venues
- Department of Justice (DoJ)

- DfC colleagues in Neighbourhood Renewal, Development Offices; and Strategic Planning & Resources.

The Co-Design team was also asked to circulate and promote the events through their networks and women's groups.

Details were also posted on NICVA's website and its CommunityNI platform and uploaded to the DfC Fresh Start web page. DfC Communications Branch staff also 'Tweeted' on each of the event days.

197 people attended the 16 events. The attendance figures for each session are included at Appendix 2.

4. Structure of Event

Attendees were provided with a copy of the following;

- Background information paper which provided context to the DfC Women's Programme and the key aim and objective of the session (**Appendix 3**);
- The Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality & Organised Crime Executive Action Plan (**Appendix 4**); and
- A draft Learning Framework for the Women's Programme developed by the co-design team (**Appendix 5**).

DfC's Fresh Start Team delivered a Power Point presentation which lasted approximately 45 minutes (**Appendix 6**).

The presentation highlighted the programme's key benefits and emphasis was placed on the outcome that women will present an **alternative** to paramilitary influence to resolve difficulties within their communities. The discussion then focused on the learning themes and opportunities to apply the practical knowledge and skills gained through the modular learning component. Attendees were asked to consider the following 6 learning themes and decide whether these were sufficient and addressed the key objectives of the Women's Programme;

- Personal Development

- Health and Well Bring
- Women in the Justice System
- Women and Peace Building
- Leadership and Mentoring
- Citizenship

Attendees were then encouraged to consider the 'next steps' and asked to identify what other learning and development opportunities could follow on from the modular learning.

5. KEY FINDINGS

5.1 Modules / Themes

Overall there was a general agreement on the 6 themes although there was recognition that some modules are cross-cutting, such as 'Personal Development' and 'Health & Wellbeing'. Some attendees queried whether these needed to be delivered as separate elements.

There was also a suggestion that additional modules could include Social Enterprise (to encourage sustainability) and Literacy (as a basis for effective engagement).

With regard to the 'Citizenship' module, attendees were receptive to the thinking that this should include community development aspects to create alliances and build networks. At the NICVA session in Belfast attendees suggested the programme should establish a network of organisations and cluster groups to facilitate networking opportunities and to enable cross fertilisation of ideas and initiatives.

Lack of support for the reintegration of ex-offenders into their families and with their children was highlighted as a particular concern at the Omagh event. It was suggested that this could be added as course content within the 'Women in the Justice System' module.

In Bangor it was noted that young women in schools do not have an understanding of the educational system and their rights within it. There was a suggestion that

these needs should be addressed within the 'Women in the Justice System' component.

In Dungannon it was noted that the Restorative Justice Programme provides an effective alternative to paramilitary influence and this approach should also be covered within the 'Women in the Justice System' module.

In the majority of sessions the benefits of 'Life Coaching' were stressed. It was suggested that this would perhaps fit best within the Health & Wellbeing Module. Similarly it was felt there was a need to build the resilience of the participants to enable them to deal with any anxiety and stresses experienced as a result of participation on the programme.

A discussion on 'domestic violence and sexual abuse' in the Newry session led to agreement that the words 'prevention training' should be removed from the hand-out as they implied that these offences are somehow preventable by the victim.

A participant in Larne requested that the 'suicide awareness & prevention' wording be changed to 'emotional health & wellbeing' as this is considered to be an 'umbrella' term.

At one of the Belfast sessions there was a suggestion to incorporate and address interfaces / contested spaces within the 'Women & Peacebuilding' module.

5.2 Learning and Development Opportunities

There was an overwhelming recognition that a Training Needs Analysis will identify individual progression paths and guide participants after the themed learning on the best options available to them.

In a number of sessions the feedback received suggested education in relation to parenting skills could be useful. However, it was accepted there is already a plethora of parenting courses and that the DfC Women's Programme should act as a vehicle to signpost rather than duplicate existing provision. The same can be said for the provision of trauma services / support and whilst there is a clear need to help women deal with the effects of the past, this service provision already exists.

In Dungannon it was proposed that the programme should adopt a 'reflective practice' approach to learning and that participants should be given the opportunity to reflect what they know or what they have learned. Additional opportunities should demonstrate the women's learning and practical activities.

A copy of the feedback from the 16 sessions is included at **Appendix 7**.

Overall the most common suggestions were;

- Inclusion of inter-generational activities (no pre-specified ages / groups of participants).
- Include an understanding and education around good governance.
- Education and awareness around creating and maintaining digital platforms. Also social media behaviours, as it was felt an increasing number of unwise Facebook posts can easily escalate into community disputes.
- Best practice visits, networking, volunteering and shadowing/placement opportunities
- 1-2-1 support / participant training plans / Life Coaching
- Financial capability skills
- Incorporation of training for trainer skills to provide opportunities for progression and sustainability
- Inclusion of social action / economy initiatives
- Provision of Advice support
- Inclusion of cross community / Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) initiatives
- Support for women in business and inclusion of business workshops
- Opportunities for distance learning / Open University
- Peer mentoring and buddying
- Use of 'street by street' type initiatives
- Public speaking opportunities
- Enhance tender response abilities
- Utilise an intimidation tool-kit model to troubleshoot issues

- Use of creative expression to promote emotional health and well being

5.3 Other Feedback

In Dungannon the discussion included a conversation about the differing levels of engagement, the type of woman that would benefit and who should participate.

Throughout many of the sessions there was a consistent message that the programme should be flexible and offer a multi tiered approach to enable women of differing levels of engagement and capacity to participate. There was also the thinking that if the Women's Programme is to succeed, opportunities needed to be 'within reach' for any disengaged participants and delivery targeted at a 'grass roots' level.

In many areas there was support for accredited training to add value to the learning and provide a tangible outcome for those taking part. Although some noted that the thought of 'accreditation' might create a barrier for some disengaged women.

There was also a view to promote inclusiveness there is a need to break down participation barriers for marginalised and S75 groups.

The Department's guidance on reimbursement of childcare costs was seen as an obstacle for some Women's Early Intervention Programme participants as only costs linked to registered childcare minders could be claimed. It was suggested that a nominal 'Recognition Payment' could be made available for family carers to ensure they are not exploited for their childcare services. In Dungannon attendees reported that this is the practice operated in the Southern Trust as there is a lack of registered childcare in that area. Officials have agreed to consider this further.

The need for a parallel process was identified as crucial to ensure, as women become empowered and communities transform, paramilitary structures simultaneously disband or 'wither on the vine' with the passage of time. Alongside this it was also felt that safety mechanisms need to be paramount and built into the programme to support and safe guard the women when they feel confident enough to 'find their voice'.

Throughout there was a clear demonstration of support for the work of the women's centres and the importance of utilising these hubs as familiar and safe spaces for women.

In Dungannon the focus turned to the Programme tender process and it was stressed that there should be a mandatory requirement for tenderers to provide evidence of engagement with local organisations, as in the past organisation details have been used illicitly. Officials took this opportunity to clarify the current position with regard to the procurement exercise and confirmed that as the tender exercise had not yet commenced, a Delivery Partner had still to be appointed.

In Enniskillen attendees were disappointed that this location had been excluded from the Women's Early Intervention Programme. It was mentioned that there is evidence to confirm unreported paramilitary influence within this area. In the Omagh session DfC colleagues indicated that feedback from Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships suggest that drug activity and low level crime appear more prevalent in the West of the province. There was however recognition that the scale and nature of paramilitary activity has altered significantly and over recent years has evolved into criminality and organised crime. Omagh attendees recommended Enniskillen as another potential location for the Women's Programme.

6. Conclusion

The Department sees merit in the majority of the suggestions received during these events and will seek to modify the draft Learning Framework accordingly. This will form the basis of the tender specification document and future discussions with the successful Delivery Partner.

To ensure a grass roots approach some of the organisations that attended the stakeholder sessions expressed an interest in working with the lead organisation to assist with the delivery of the Programme. As a result officials have agreed to develop an 'Expression of Interest template' and upload to the DfC Fresh Start webpage to capture this detail. This will be shared with the Delivery Partner when appointed.

In summary officials have agreed to take forward the following:

- Revisit the draft Learning Framework and incorporate the stakeholder feedback
- Investigate issues around childcare provision
- Publish an 'Expression of Interest' template

7. Next Steps

The Department is planning to commence an open tender procurement exercise in early July 2017 to identify a preferred partner(s) to deliver DfC's Programme for Women Involved in Community Transformation.

It is envisaged that the DfC Women's Programme will commence late September/early October 2017 and involve the participation of 500 women.

Location Venues

Dates	Location	Venue / Address
22 May	Coleraine	Causeway Rural & Urban Network Hub, 1 Brook St.
23 May	Derry-Londonderry	Holywell Trust, 10-14 Bishop St.
24 May	Belfast	Spectrum Centre, 331 Shankill Rd.
24 May	Craigavon	Mount Zion House, Edward St, Lurgan
25 May	Dungannon	The Junction, 12 Beechvalley Way
25 May	Newry	Ballybot House, 28 Cornmarket
26 May	Belfast	Training for Women Network, 11-13 Bloomfield Av.
30 May	Belfast	Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich, 216 Falls Rd.
30 May	Belfast	Weavers Court Business Park, Linfield Rd.
30 May	Larne	Larne Town Hall, 1-9 Upper Cross St.
31 May	Carrickfergus	Carrickfergus Town Hall, 2B Joymount
31 May	Belfast	NICVA, 61 Duncairn Gardens
1 June	Enniskillen	Fermanagh House, Broadmeadow Place
1 June	Bangor	Bangor Carnegie Library, Hamilton Rd.
2 June	Lisburn	Bridge Community Centre, 50 Railway St.
5 June	Omagh	Tara Centre, 11 Holmview Avenue

Stakeholder Engagement Attendees per session

Location	Attendance Numbers
Coleraine	11
Derry-Londonderry	22
Belfast (Spectrum Centre)	18
Belfast (Cultúrlann)	13
Belfast (TWN)	31
Belfast (Weavers Court)	7
Belfast (NICVA)	13
Craigavon	4
Dungannon	12
Newry	4
Larne	5
Carrickfergus	6
Enniskillen	10
Bangor	28
Lisburn	8
Omagh	5
Total	197

Appendix 3

Stakeholder Engagement - Background Handout

Appendix 4

Stakeholder Engagement - Executive Action Plan

Appendix 5

Stakeholder Engagement - Draft Learning Framework

Appendix 6

Stakeholder Engagement - Presentation

Appendix 7

Stakeholder Engagement - Feedback