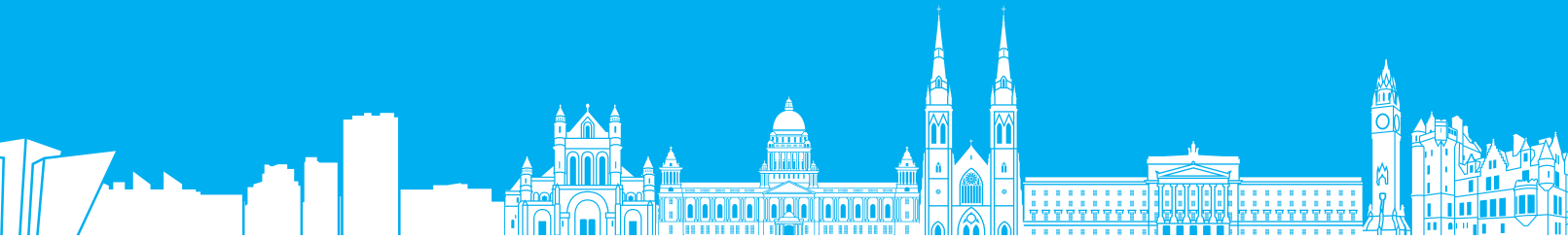


Hate Crime and Community Cohesion



TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE 2015

CONFERENCE REPORT

26 and 27 March 2015



Department of
Justice
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FOREWORD

Faced with communities riven by sectarianism or racism, the natural response of the peace-builder is to try to negotiate change which is understandable and generally necessary if politically-motivated violence and deep communal divisions are to be brought to an end. But our experience in Northern Ireland has taught us that while changes may be necessary, they are not sufficient to remove the deep-seated fear and mistrust of 'the other side'. The Centre for Democracy and Peace Building and our 'Unite against Hate' campaign were borne out of the realisation that only major changes in communal attitudes and large group culture can transform divided societies. Good relations between individuals are not enough. There need to be changes in the 'way-of-being' of whole communities. The challenge is how to bring this about.

An appreciation of the need for this kind of change is increasingly shared by many in Northern Ireland and beyond and the energy and enthusiasm in the partnership between the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building, Belfast City Council and the Belfast Policing and Community and Safety Partnership brings hope for the future. We want to also extend our thanks for the enthusiastic way a host of other committed community organisations and individuals as well as, especially the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Department of Justice and the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister have worked in partnership to address the challenge.

Our 'Towards a Better Future' conference faced up to the problems of building social cohesion and fighting hate crime within and beyond Northern Ireland. It showed that we not only had much to learn from others, but we also had the opportunity to share with others from outside Northern Ireland, the ground breaking work undertaken at a community level. This work in developing our understanding of how to build new and diverse communities from societies divided by years of hate can make real changes for individuals leading to communities united against hate. Thank you to everyone who made this possible.

The Lord Alderdice

CDPB Chairman

Councillor Matt Garrett

Chair, Belfast PCSP

BACKGROUND / STRATEGIC CONTEXT

BACKGROUND

Belfast and Northern Ireland has been the focus of much attention regionally and nationally as a result of increases in the levels of hate crime. Whilst much of the focus has been on increasing levels of racist hate crime, there remains general concern about the rise in levels of all types of hate crime. Additionally, it is widely accepted that hate crime is generally under reported.

Statutory, community and voluntary organisations across Belfast and Northern Ireland have been delivering quality services in supporting victims of hate crime, challenging prejudices and promoting social cohesion for a long time.

The work to date has primarily focussed on:

- ✓ Information-sharing at both formal and less formal levels;
- ✓ Educational and developmental programmes to promote mutual understanding, integration and cohesion;
- ✓ Quality support services for victims of hate crime;
- ✓ Partnership working;

Delivery of the encouraging message about the positive social, cultural and economic contribution of those who choose to make Belfast and Northern Ireland their home.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The work with communities across Belfast and Northern Ireland has been supported by a number of government strategies:

Community Safety Strategy 2012-2017: This strategy makes a commitment that the criminal justice system will tackle hate crime through prevention, awareness, education and support for victims and communities. Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) are integral to delivery of this by ensuring that the community can get involved in developing solutions to tackle crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Reducing Offending Strategy 2013: This strategy shows how restorative practices can help reduce the number of people becoming involved in the criminal justice system through preventative and diversionary techniques. Restorative practices are recognised as a key means of bringing about effective resolution between people, helping to improve communication and understanding and securing mutually agreed outcomes.

Victim and Witnesses Strategy 2013-2015: This strategy recognises the need to address not only the impact on victims but to have a better understanding of the issues that concern those victims, including their experience of the criminal justice system.

Racial Equality Strategy 2014-2024: Whilst this strategy may still be at the consultation stage it is intended to establish a framework across Government departments to tackle racial inequalities, to eradicate racism and hate crime and along with “Together: Building a United Community” (TBUC), to promote good race relations and social cohesion.

COMMUNITY PLANNING / CONFERENCE AIMS

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Increasing levels of hate crime and the negative effect hate crime has not just on the victim but on the community as a whole has led to a renewed focus on our efforts to tackle this issue with a real opportunity presenting itself with the implementation of Community Planning.

Community Planning is a new power given to local government across Northern Ireland which places a statutory duty on public services to work together with communities to deliver real improvements for local people.

CONFERENCE AIMS

Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership and the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building have been working for some time with DoJ and OFMDFM and other regional statutory, community and voluntary organisations in tackling hate crime.

As part of this work it became clear there was a need for greater connection and alignment between central/local government and the front line work being undertaken to tackle hate crime.

Taking into consideration the ongoing concern about increasing levels of hate crime, it was felt that the “Towards a Better Future Conference 2015” could provide an opportunity to:

- ✓ Share learning from regional, national and international best practice
- ✓ Showcase local good practice to a wider audience
- ✓ Develop our understanding of the issue
- ✓ Explore the potential for a strategic framework to connect the work at all levels

CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

With representatives from over 65 local, regional and national organisations, the “Towards a Better Future Conference 2015” generated two days of thought provoking, challenging and inspiring discussion. The conference format was specifically designed to connect communities with the issue of hate crime with conference sessions taking place in community venues across Belfast as well as the main conference session in Belfast City Hall.

OUTCOME 1

Outcome 1 - Share learning from regional, national and international best practice

Professor John Grieve CBE gave the conference key note address on effective strategies to tackle hate crime. Professor Grieve discussed his experience in leading the Metropolitan Police Service team responsible for responding to the findings of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry as well as his experience of being Chair of the Home Office/Ministry of Justice Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crime.

Assistant Chief Constable Stephen Martin QPM is the PSNI regional lead Officer for hate crime. ACC Martin discussed the complexity of dealing with hate crime and the importance of recognising that hate crime requires more than a police response. He further reinforced the importance of partnership working and stated that the advent of community planning should be the key driver in tackling hate crime both at a strategic and operational level.

Dr Jurriaan Omlo spoke of his experience as a Ministerial Advisor in the Netherlands on diversity, social cohesion and integration. He emphasised the significance of empowering people as part of any solution and the importance of community and individual resilience to reduce the impact of hate crime. Dr Omlo also discussed the need for strong communication between organisations and affected communities.

Professor Mike Hardy CMG (Executive Director Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations) discussed the social and political factors affecting prejudice. He explained that getting clarity around issues of hate and prejudice is often very difficult and that the issue needs to be understood in the local context. He further explained that even when we are in possession of clarity on the issue that not all knowledge is easy to digest.

Penny Woolcock (Writer/Director) discussed the importance of using creative arts as a safe way to explore difficult issues as it builds self confidence and used her own experience of working with gangs in Birmingham to produce a documentary. She underlined the importance of a high quality end product as well as a high quality process as a means of really building self confidence.

Mick Fealty (Blogger and communications consultant) is the founding editor of the Northern Ireland based blog “Sluggie O’Toole”. Mr Fealty highlighted the need to recognise that online engagement can sometimes over amplify extreme views, but that it can also be a very powerful, positive tool in offering a means whereby positive campaigns and movements can be quickly mobilised.

OUTCOME 2

Outcome 2 – Showcase local good practice to a wider audience

The conference format provided an opportunity for representatives from over 65 organisations to attend community based workshops across Belfast. The purpose of these workshops was to explore the issue of hate crime and social cohesion in more detail and to showcase 12 examples of good practice from Belfast and across Northern Ireland to the wider audience

Workshop 1 (Crumlin Road Gaol) – Sharing Successful Strategies in Promoting Social Cohesion

Good Practice Examples

Amanda Mulholland (Banbridge PCSP) – Disability Advocacy Scheme
Kevin McGarry (Ardoyne Association) – Tension Monitoring
Ian McLaughlin (Lower Shankill Community Association) – Tension Monitoring
Philip Gyle (Belfast Education and Library Board) – Welcome to My World

Workshop Feedback

- ✓ The importance of positive leadership
- ✓ Leaders need to inspire confidence among citizens that change is possible
- ✓ Affected communities need to be empowered
- ✓ Research needs to include views of all affected communities
- ✓ The drip feed of negativity adversely damages minority communities
- ✓ Cultural difference needs to be recognised and embraced
- ✓ Importance of shared vision, outcomes and opportunities that embrace diversity

Workshop 2 (Chinese Welfare Association) – Social and Political Factors Shaping Prejudice

Good Practice Examples

Israel Hontavilla (Belfast City Council) – Supporting Travellers
Stephanie Mitchell (South Belfast Round Table) – Small Worlds Project
Hanna Stewart (Victim Support) – Hate Crime Advocacy Scheme
Ruth McCarthy – Outburst Arts Festival

Workshop Feedback

- ✓ No shared understanding of what hate crime is
- ✓ A lot of talking about it, but never getting to strategy and implementation
- ✓ Important to talk about hate crime and consider needs and feelings
- ✓ People don't articulate what they really need
- ✓ Develop a "No Hate Crime" campaign with street signs "Hate Crime banned in this area"
- ✓ Create a culture of reporting of Hate Crime
- ✓ Aspiration should be that Belfast has lowest hate crime rates in Europe

OUTCOME 2

Workshop 3 (Skainos Centre) - Media and Social Cohesion/Arts and Culture as Measures to Promote Tolerance

Good Practice Examples

Rev Mervyn Gibson - East Belfast Community Response to Racism

Jeremy Adams - Unite Against Hate

Stephen Mackessy/ Paula McIlwaine (Integrated Education Fund) - Human Eyes Project

Angela Askin (Derry City Council) - Good Relations work

Workshop Feedback

- ✓ The importance of working with children and young people in tackling prejudice
- ✓ Need to change the narrative around this issue from a negative to a positive
- ✓ Use art as a safe way to explore difficult issues
- ✓ Embracing social media and online engagement as a means of having new conversations
- ✓ Respecting and embracing difference and diversity is the key
- ✓ Using media and social media to capture public mood in a positive way

OUTCOME 3

Outcome 3 - Develop our understanding of the issue

The final conference session brought together the feedback from each of the workshops and provided a platform for general discussion on the issue.

- ✓ This issue needs leadership at all levels including political, statutory, community and voluntary
- ✓ An agreed vision with agreed outcomes and accountability needs to be developed
- ✓ Policy cannot be developed in isolation and it should be informed by real experience
- ✓ Strong and accountable partnerships need to take this work forward
- ✓ Work still needs to be undertaken to improve communication and develop capacity in ethnic minority communities
- ✓ The education environment must play its part in breaking down barriers and promoting diversity
- ✓ Investment is needed to build resilience within communities to deal with difference
- ✓ There should be more formal opportunities for integration of communities to encourage social cohesion and exchange, shared spaces are vital for this to happen
- ✓ People should be encouraged to stay and not just visit
- ✓ How do we transform negativity and anger around this issue into something positive
- ✓ A longer term and strategic approach to funding work around this issue is needed

OUTCOME 4

Outcome 4 - Explore the potential for a strategic framework to connect the work at all levels

Feedback from all conference sessions suggests a clear demand from the attendees for the development and implementation of a more strategic approach in managing hate crime. This should include the following:

- ✓ Leadership and commitment to this issue at all levels (political, statutory, community and voluntary)
- ✓ A shared vision that clearly shows what everyone should be working towards
- ✓ Accountability of action on this issue at all levels
- ✓ Community Planning should be the means of consolidating and aligning work
- ✓ Work on this issue should directly reflect the needs of affected communities

NEXT STEPS

Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) and the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building will now engage with OFMDFM and DoJ on the conference outcomes and will discuss the need for this work to be driven by government regionally.

In addition to this, Belfast PCSP will facilitate discussion with those working in the sector with a view to leading the community planning process to develop a long-term plan for tackling hate crime in Belfast and beyond.

Belfast PCSP will engage PCSPs and Councils across Northern Ireland in this process as well as a range of relevant statutory, business, higher education, community and voluntary organisations.

The work will focus on providing a clear and accountable framework that brings together the work across the sector which demonstrates impact and improvement in the quality of life of affected communities.

CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

As part of the PCSP funded Hate Crime Conference 'Towards a Better Future', various statutory, community and voluntary organisations were invited to attend discussions, question and answer sessions, local thematic workshops and a plenary session on the final day.

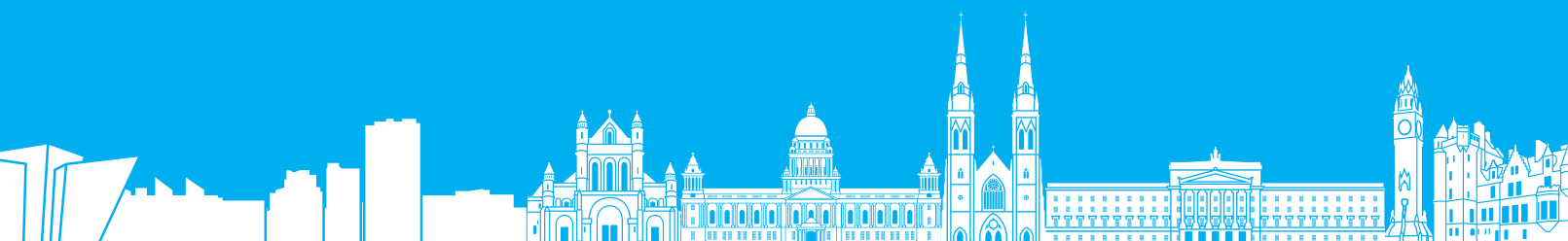
The speakers, facilitators, groups and organisations who attended are listed below.

- 174 Trust Belfast
- Annadale and Haywood Residents Association
- Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum
- Banbridge Policing and Community Safety Partnership
- Belfast City Council
- Belfast Education and Library Board
- Belfast Migrant Centre
- Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership
- Business in the Community
- Centre for Democracy and Peace Building
- Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations (University of Coventry)
- Chinese Welfare Association
- Community Cohesion Unit, NIHE
- Community Relations Council
- Community Restorative Justice Ireland
- Community Safety Unit, Department of Justice
- Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland
- Craic NI
- Department of Justice (NI)
- Derry City Council
- Embrace
- Equality Commission
- FASA
- Fitzroy Presbyterian Church
- Good Relations Dept, Belfast City Council
- Good Relations Dept, North Down Borough Council
- Greater Ardoyne Tension Monitoring Group
- Greater Village Regeneration Trust
- Healing through Remembering
- Health and Social Care Trust
- Human Eyes
- Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security, Birmingham University
- Integrated Education Fund
- Jurriaan Omlo (Independent Researcher)
- Leonard Cheshire Disability
- London Metropolitan University
- Lower Shankill Community Association
- MCE PR
- Ministry of Justice (London)
- Newtownabbey Policing and Community Safety Partnership
- NI Council for Ethnic Minorities
- NI Policing Board
- North Down Borough Council
- North Down Policing and Community Safety Partnership
- Northern Ireland Alternatives
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- OFMDFM
- Orange Order
- Outburst Arts
- Penny Woolcock (Writer/Director)
- Probation Board NI
- Public Achievement
- Public Prosecution Service
- PSNI
- Queens University
- Researchers, Independent and from various Universities
- Royal National Institute of Blind People
- Slugger O'Toole (Blog)
- South Belfast Round Table
- Unite Against Hate
- Victim Support NI
- View Digital
- Youth Council NI
- Youth Justice Agency

ABBREVIATIONS

- **CDPB** - Centre for Democracy and Peace Building
- **DoJ** - Department of Justice
- **OFMDFM** - Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
- **PCSP** - Policing and Community Safety Partnership
- **TBUC** - Together Building a United Community

“Individually we are one drop, but together we are an ocean.”



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