



community

Hope

connections
relationships

Building Hope for Brighter Futures

Working with children and young people in Dublin's
North East Inner City to restore relationships and
bring about lasting change in their communities

Hope



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An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny T.D.

Foreword



The Brighter Futures Initiative, delivered through the Early Learning Initiative and the National College of Ireland, gives a voice to children in Dublin's North East Inner City and forms part of recent efforts to regenerate the area. I have seen firsthand the importance of every positive initiative that empowers the children and young people of this proud community. Most importantly, it gives our young people confidence and it is a community that is confident in itself which can cope with change.

What makes this initiative so useful is that it gives a voice to the young people in the area. They want to be heard and are engaging with the Brighter Futures Initiative. We know that we need to listen to this community. It is only they who can tell us what it is really like to live in their community – the things they love about it, the difficulties and challenges that they face. Ireland needs to treasure and foster the positive qualities that make for communities like this and public policy needs to support communities like this.

What is also significant about this process is that it tells young people that they have a role to play in creating and leading their communities both now and into the future. I believe that communicating and listening to the messages of our young people makes for more equal and better functioning communities which develop into a fairer and brighter society. If we are to create and sustain strong and vibrant communities, policy makers are aware now more than ever that voices across the age spectrum must be heard.

I would especially like to thank all of the children and young people who took part in the restorative practice approach. Through your valuable contribution, the issues which matter most to you and your community will be heard and can be addressed through positive action.

I commend the Early Learning Initiative and the National College of Ireland for their work on the Brighter Futures Initiative. I very much welcome this Report and I trust it will create the foundations for a hopeful future to the families and communities of Dublin's North East Inner City.

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone T.D.

Foreword



As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, I am very supportive of this initiative.

The vision of the Government and my Department is for Ireland to be a great country in which to grow up and raise a family – where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled, where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential, now and in the future.

One of our key commitments is to protect the rights of children and to listen to them, and for all children and young people to enjoy school, play, family and their local community.

Listening to young voices is vital so that we can build strong, happy communities and manage conflict or tensions in the community, by actively developing good relationships.

The North East Inner City Brighter Futures Initiative is so important as it empowers children and young people in the locality to become actively involved in the decisions that affect their lives and to be socially included.

I congratulate all the children and young people who participated in the initiative and I very much welcome this report, which will help ensure a brighter future for all children, young people and their families in the North East Inner City.

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe T.D.



Foreword

Through the Brighter Futures Initiative, we hear the voices of the children and the young people of the North East Inner City. Our younger citizens, it is very clear, are able and willing to contribute to the development of our communities. They make a unique contribution and their voices are being heard. This is the focus of the Brighter Futures Initiative, which has facilitated the children and young people of the North East Inner City in helping to shape their neighbourhoods and communities.

The developing area of restorative practice is integral to this process. As individuals or communities, in finding or expressing our voices, a collaborative approach provides a positive way forward. Collaboration amplifies voices – it strengthens the process of asking questions, proposing answers, finding solutions. Our young people have involved themselves in this process, developing and managing both their sense of self and their sense of community.

This Brighter Futures Initiative, delivered through the Early Learning Initiative, also demonstrates the positive impact of collaboration between the Government, the community and the education and corporate sectors. This collaborative approach, which I welcome and support, underpins the Brighter Futures Initiative and facilitates the positive development of our children and young people and their communities.

NCI President, Gina Quin

Foreword



National College of Ireland and the Early Learning Initiative are delighted to collaborate with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on this important and valuable report, 'Building Hope for Brighter Futures'.

We are committed to working together with the local North East Inner City community to ensure that children and young people have their voices heard and play their part in determining the future of their community.

National College of Ireland's mission is to change lives through education and we have a long-standing commitment to widening participation in higher education. This commences with our work in the community with children and their parents through the Early Learning Initiative.

It is particularly exciting to hear the voices of young people of the North East Inner City through this report 'Building Hope for Brighter Futures'. I congratulate the children, young people, and staff from the local afterschool and youth services for their achievement, hard work and dedication, in bringing this report to life.

Executive Summary

This report presents the key findings from three different perspectives of a unique child and young people-centred initiative – aimed at empowering children and young people living in Dublin’s North East Inner City, using a restorative practice approach. This initiative has been funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and delivered through the Early Learning Initiative, at the National College of Ireland. Adopting children’s rights perspectives, with particular emphasis on children and young people’s right to have a voice in decision-making in their community, the Brighter Futures Initiative aims to encourage the children and young people in the North East Inner City, to voice their opinions about their community, to devise effective policies relating to the future of their community, and to become active and responsible citizens (*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People*, 2014, p. 31).

The report, ‘Building Hope for Brighter Futures’, is divided into three sections. The first segment contains a report written by the participating children and young people. It contains their views on what is working well for them in their communities, some of the real difficulties and problems they face, and what their hopes are for the future, in order to make the North East Inner City not only a safe place to live, but one of the best places to grow up in. The second segment contains an independent evaluation report undertaken by Dr. Derick Wilson, Emeritus Reader in Education (Community Relations & Restorative Practices) at the University of Ulster. Dr. Wilson has experience in both restorative practice and community relations research, and has developed action research programmes promoting public policy and learning organisation cultures supportive of a more shared society.

The third segment contains the Early Learning Initiative’s (ELI) own findings. This portion is evaluated by means of assessing programme implementation and through a study of the programme’s impact on participants’ lives – in terms of emotional literacy, self-efficacy, self-esteem, sense of community and conflict resolution capacity development.

In respect of the children and young people, this report clearly demonstrates that they want their voices to be heard by adults, both locally and at policy level, in particular they want the ‘important people’ to hear their story. Their story contains their unique perspectives, expertise and knowledge related to their community. Highlighted within are the positives in the community, especially the community spirit and mutual respect among community members. Also mentioned are their concerns about drug problems, homelessness and recent violent incidences in the area. Young people also acknowledged the impact of restorative practices and restorative approaches on their lives. Furthermore, young people have articulated that through restorative practice education and training they are acquiring the skills and aptitude to manage and resolve conflicts, alongside improving their self-efficacy, self-esteem and sense of community.

Within his section, Dr. Derick Wilson acknowledges the potential of the methodology (restorative practice) adopted by the Brighter Futures Initiative in establishing restorative working principles in wider organisational and societal culture. In his opinion, the fundamental objective of this project i.e. to create opportunities for the voices of children and young people in the North East Inner City to be heard, has been clearly embedded in the project design and delivery mechanism developed by ELI.

He has raised concerns about the tight deadline of the project, and how it might impact on the embedding of a restorative culture within the community. He stresses the importance and impact of Government, community, third level colleges and corporate convergence in this project. His recommendations include enhancing the impact of this short-term initiative by incorporating a phased, long-term approach and extending the project beyond its original remit to ensure that restorative practices becomes embedded in the wider community.

Throughout the implementation of this participatory action research project, ELI has gathered evidence concerning the impact of the Brighter Futures Initiative through pre- and post-questionnaire surveys, event surveys, communities of practice, group discussions and observations. One of the main themes arising – through child, youth and adult engagement – was the feeling of empowerment as a result of their involvement in restorative practice workshops, training and interactive group discussions. Children and young people expressed that involvement in the programme and interactive group consultations have increased their emotional literacy, conflict resolution capacity, self-efficacy and self-esteem. Similarly, participating adults saw improvements in their own interpersonal, problem-solving and communication skills. Interestingly, one of the significant barriers highlighted by children and young people were adults themselves, with some stating that they still weren't being listened to, honestly or effectively. Another shortcoming mentioned by children, young people and adults, was the short time span of the project.

In many communities and for many restorative practitioners, a restorative practice approach is considered a sign of hope and a direction for the future. It is the intention of this initiative that this hope is realised.

A young girl with her arms outstretched is jumping joyfully in the air. The background is a vibrant, abstract, painterly composition of soft colors like pinks, purples, blues, and greens, with some darker, textured brushstrokes. The overall mood is one of hope and freedom.

restorative practice
a sign of hope

The following organisations are involved in the programme:

- After School Educational Support Programme (ASESP)
- Ballybough Youth Service
- Ballybough Under 10s
- Belvedere Youth Service
- Community After School Project (CASPr)
- Community Policing Forum (CPF)
- Cooperative Childcare Afterschool - Island Key
- Foundations Project - Afterschool
- An Garda Síochána (Store Street)
- NYP 1
- NYP 2
- Ozanam House Resource Centre - Afterschool
- Ozanam House Resource Centre - Youth Service
- SWAN Youth Services
- Sherrard Street Youthreach
- Young People at Risk (YPAR)

Improving self-efficacy, self-esteem and sense of community in children and young adults

Listening to and involving children

Restorative Practices in North East Inner City, Dublin

Enabling children and young adults to be reflective, critical citizens and actively contribute to decision-making

Providing positive high quality play-based active learning environments

Enabling the views of children and young people to be taken in to account by policy makers

285

young children (aged 4-12) from six local afterschool services participated in restorative practice play-based activities



14

community practitioners received a three-day intensive **upskilling programme in restorative practices**

110

young people (aged 12+) from six local youth services engaged in restorative practice education and skills development



200+

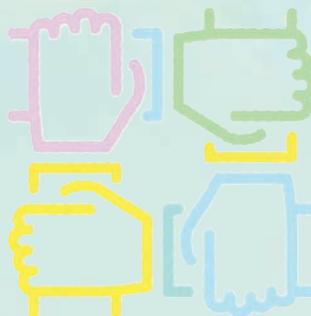
local community practitioners have received introductory restorative practices training, in addition to continuous professional development opportunities and sharing experiences through restorative communities of practice.

Beyond the original services taking part in the Brighter Future Initiative, a further **six local services** have also come on board



A restorative community is starting to take shape through the implementation of communities of practice. Through **knowledge-sharing and storytelling**, the impact and benefits of restorative approaches on practice and in services is being referenced by different organisations in different manners

Restorative Practice posters and prompts have been delivered to all participating services providing staff and children with a distinctive language to use when resolving conflict and restoring relationships



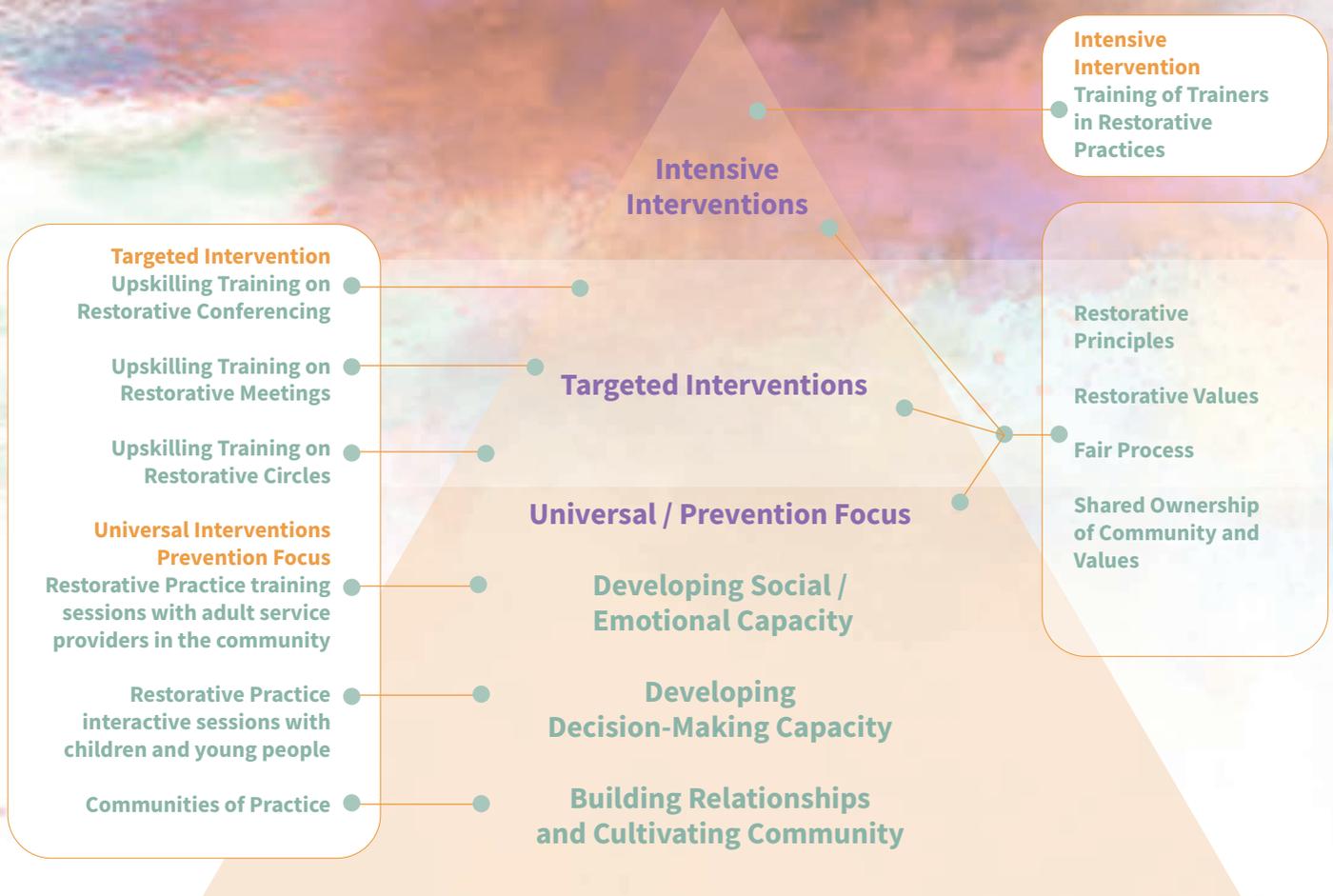
Children and young people are using restorative language to promote communication, resolve conflicts and restore relationships

Children and young people's voices are being listened to, and being heard



Community members are coming together through a 'family' of practices

Tiered System of Supports for Restorative Practices in the Community



Hope

We do things about feelings. We write all the feelings we could think of...sad, happy, nice, never lonely, you always have loads of friends around ye. To make things better...you could, make everybody happy, don't rob cars, or selling drugs and all that. When I'm playing out I can see it. I just ignore it.

Child – Rutland Street

Hope

Section 1: Children and Young People's Report

Hope



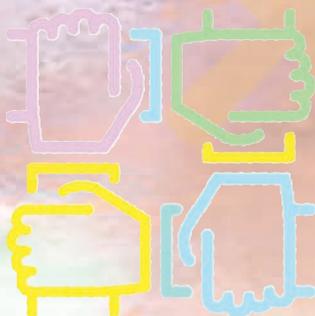
This section of the report has been written by the children and young people living and growing up in the North East Inner City.

We have come together to write this report so that our voices will be heard, by everybody in the community, everybody in Dublin, and in Ireland. Each afterschool and youth service has worked really hard by working together to come up with the things we like in our community, the things we would like to change, and our top recommendations for the future.

Even though we all come from different services and different places in the North East Inner City, and we are all different ages and have different backgrounds, we all want the same things to make our community the best place to live in and grow up in.

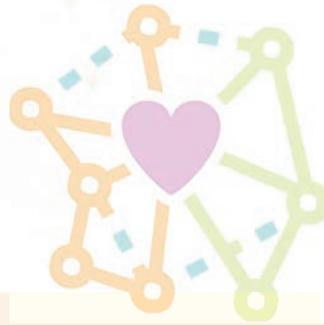
We would like to thank all of our family and friends, everyone in the afterschools and youth services, and everyone who helped us to put our feelings and voices into this report.

We really enjoyed doing this, and we hope that you will listen to what we have to say.



Hope

Summary of the themes



Five things we like about our community

- Community Spirit
- The love and respect community members have for each other
- People in the community take care of each other
- Our afterschool and youth services
- Everyone knows each other and appreciate the friendships they share

Five things we would like to change in our community

- Get rid of the drug problems
- Reduce the crime rate
- Eliminate Homelessness
- Clean Up the community
- Fix and replace broken facilities and materials in the community



Our top recommendations for the future

Government	Build more houses to tackle homelessness, more funding for youth services, more support for kids at school, more effective drug rehabilitation programmes, and listen to us more.
Dublin City Council	Clean the community, build sports facilities and playgrounds and fix broken things
Services	Keep up all the great work!
Gardaí	Increase Garda presence in the community to deal with drug dealers, crime and vandalism
Emergency Services	More doctors, more nurses, more ambulances and fire engines, bigger hospitals, more beds.
Schools	Classes on drug awareness and problems related to alcohol consumption. Support us to go on to third level education.
Adults living and working in the area	Have faith in the children and young people that are growing up in the area
Parents	Encourage us!
Young People	Get involved in your community.
Children	Be kind!

Hope

After School Educational Support Programme (ASESP)

(afterschool children aged 4-11 years)

Five things we like about our community

- *That the fire people and ambulance help people in danger. They save babies. We need people helping us.*
- *Everyone is kind to each other.*
- *People take care of each other and respect each other.*
- *They share with each other.*
- *We do lots of fun things.*



Five things we would like to change in our community

- *I don't like the dirt in the area.*
- *No drug dealers.*
- *I don't like seeing fires burning. Always burning, burning, burning.*
- *I don't want to live in a flat beside a lot of garbage.*
- *Sometimes people are a little bit angry and grouchy.*



Our top recommendations for the future

Government

We need everyone to help each other.

Dublin City Council

Less messy playgrounds, they need to tidy up.

Services

That we're allowed to play with toys every day.

Gardaí

I think robbers should go to jail.

Emergency Services

We need more fire engines.

Schools

Schools should fix the old places, the place is all messy.

Adults Living and Working in the Area

Put nappies on dogs.

Parents

Bring us to the park, and the cinema.

Young People

I wish they weren't here...they smoke all day.
Teenagers are bad guys to everyone.

Children

I would change that children stop getting ill and don't die.

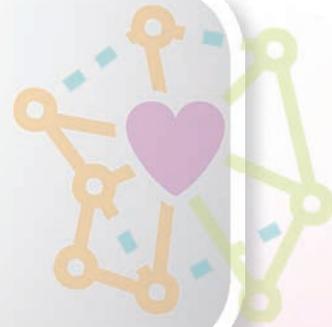


Hope

Ballybough Youth Service (young people aged 13 years and above)

Five things we like about our community

- People looking after each other
- Close-knit community
- Family
- Community spirit
- Friendship



Five things we would like to change in our community

- Drug problems
- Bullying
- Cleaner community
- Lack of green space
- Constant fires and burning things



Our top recommendations for the future

Government	Support for youth services, more homes, effective drug-rehabilitation programmes
Dublin City Council	More clean, green spaces.
Services	More funding for youth services in the area.
Gardaí	Get rid of drug dealers.
Emergency Services	Be faster, have more ambulances.
Schools	More strict on people attending school and use of mobile phones. Encourage 3rd level education and to sit Leaving Cert
Adults living and working in the area	More employment for local people.
Parents	More belief in children and young people, they are amazing!
Young People	Young people should be nicer to everyone.
Children	More toys for children!



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Belvedere Youth Service

(children and young people aged 10 years and above)

Five things we like about our community

- Youth projects, Youthreach and FAS centres
- Friends and family
- Dancing, book clubs, GAA and football
- Everybody gets along and supports each other, it has great community spirit
- Colleges, there are loads of opportunities



Five things we would like to change in our community

- People selling drugs, people fighting, people drinking on every corner
- More football clubs, youth clubs, more gyms, more local employment, less police, less homelessness.
- Bullying
- Robbed cars and bikes
- Homelessness



Our top recommendations for the future

Government	To help the homeless.
Dublin City Council	Lack of football pitches, we need more.
Services	More youth leaders and youth clubs.
Gardaí	It's not very safe at night, but police hanging around 24/7.
Emergency Services	More ambulances, better service.
Schools	We don't like bullying, so make sure that doesn't happen in school.
Adults Living and Working in the Area	No work for locals, high unemployment, this needs to change.
Parents	Keep looking out for each other, you can call into next door and ask for tea bags, milk and sugar
Young People	Stop people burning tires on my street.
Children	You have loads of opportunities.



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Community After School Project (CASPr)

(afterschool children aged 4-10 years)

Five things we like about our community

- People in the community are very close.
- The clubs keep people off the street.
- People in the community talk with each other.
- The sense of community and the love they have for each other.
- Everyone knows each other.



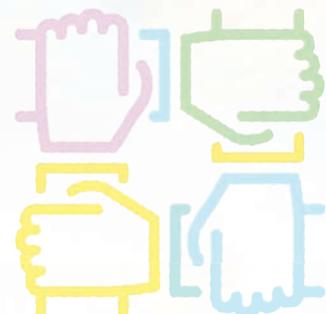
Five things we would like to change in our community

- Homelessness
- Littering
- Drug problems and junkies
- Broken facilities
- Lack of playground and football pitches



Our top recommendations for the future

Government	More homes and shelter for homeless
Dublin City Council	Sports pitches, Play areas for children and youth services, clean the community
Services	We love CASPr every day and at weekends!
Gardaí	No drug dealers in the community.
Emergency Services	More doctors, more nurses, more equipment.
Schools	Classes on drug awareness and alcohol related problems
Adults Living and Working in the Area	Give the business people more money.
Parents	Nothing, they are great!
Young People	Ask the big people to stop lighting fires.
Children	Love everyone in the community.



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Cooperative Childcare Afterschools - Island Key

(afterschool children aged 4-9 years)

Five things we like about our community

- We do a lot of fun things and paint.
- We share with each other.
- People take care of each other and respect each other.
- Everyone is kind to each other.
- We cook together sometimes and go out when we finish our homework.



Five things we would like to change in our community

- No drug dealers in the community.
- Broken instruments in the playgrounds need to be fixed.
- Rowdy people shouldn't be kicking doors of the apartments.
- People should stop burning cars.
- We don't like seeing homeless people sleeping on street.



Our top recommendations for the future

Government	We could ask the government to help clean the area.
Dublin City Council	We need to protect the animals and throw rubbish in the bin. And all the rubbish. Some days the dogs and cats think they have food, but it's rubbish and they die.
Services	When adults play bingo in hall we don't get to play or exercise.
Gardaí	The police cars keep us safe we need more. If someone stole your purse the Garda get in the car and get it back.
Schools	Have all green schools!
Adults living and working in the area	That all the young people get jobs.
Parents	To be kind.
Young People	To tell bold boys to give up smoking, give up saying curses, give up setting cars on fires.
Children	That children are good every day.



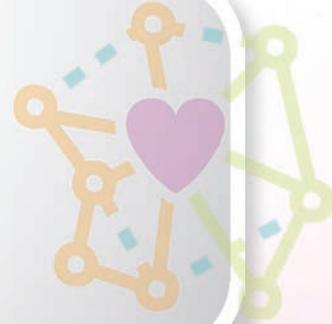
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NYP 1

(afterschool children aged 4-11 years)

Five things we like about our community

- Opportunities to work together.
- Really nice place, you walk out of my flat and there's a park.
- We have really lovely teachers and have really good friends.
- Going out to play.
- Love everyone in community.



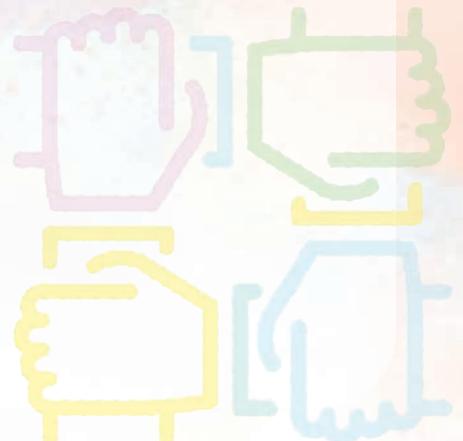
Five things we would like to change in our community

- Garda in park.
- Drug problems.
- Broken facilities at the playground.
- Park when there's not nice people in it.
- Tracks are going everywhere and blocking roads.



Our top recommendations for the future

Government	More homes and shelter for homeless, Shelter for dogs.
Dublin City Council	Clean our community. Fix broken things. More playgrounds.
Services	More trips.
Gardaí	Stop robbers.
Emergency services	We need more fire trucks.
Schools	More Irish language.
Adults Living and Working in the Area	Make a community garden.
Parents	Not to give out.
Young People	Play with your parents.
Children	Be kind.



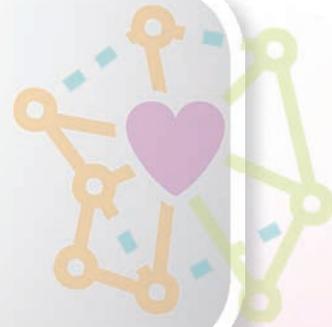
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NYP 2

(young people aged 15 years and above)

Five things we like about our community

- People who live in the community
- Young people's talents
- Respect for each other
- Community spirit
- When something bad happens, people come together



Five things we would like to change in our community

- No drug dealers in the community
- Everybody should feel safe all the time
- The negative image of the community needs to change
- Homelessness
- Crime rate



Our top recommendations for the future

Government	More youth centres and facilities, and more homes.
Dublin City Council	Fix up abandoned buildings so they can be used.
Services	More trips and more groups.
Gardaí	More police to tackle the drug problem and crime.
Emergency Services	Ambulances need to be quicker, no discrimination in A+E
Schools	Less homework, need time to relax and make new friends after school.
Adults living and working in the area	Our voices should be heard.
Parents	Be more encouraging!
Young People	Hard to reach young people should try to get more involved in the community by being in a youth club
Children	Get involved in clubs and sports, something to keep them off the streets.



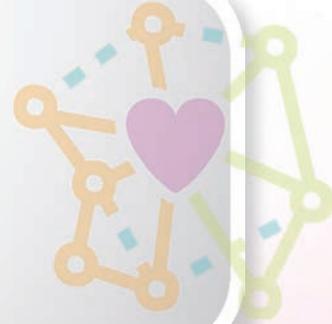
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Ozanam House Resource Centre – Afterschool

(afterschool children aged 4-9 years)

Five things we like about our community

- School.
- Playgrounds.
- We get to run around.
- It looks like where I've been born (born in Tipperary) .
- Respect.



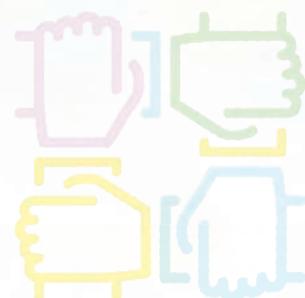
Five things we would like to change in our community

- Don't like bossy people.
- Very little break-time in school.
- Start respecting the kids!
- More homework as I get higher in school, heavier bags and longer days it's not really fair.
- Most of the things in the playground are broken.



Our top recommendations for the future

Government	Tell them about relationships.
Dublin City Council	Fix broken things and clean the community. Build new playgrounds.
Services	No smoking and drink driving.
Gardaí	More police.
Emergency Services	More ambulances, they need to come quicker.
Schools	Allowing to bring treats to school.
Adults Living and Working in the Area	More cleaning up.
Parents	Give you everything you want.
Young People	Do more sports.
Children	Go to school and learn things.



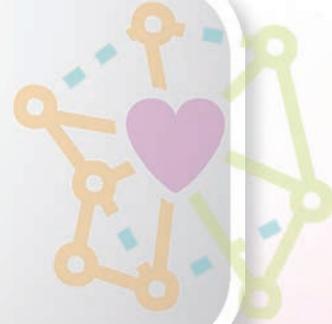
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Ozanam House Resource Centre - Youth Service

(children and young people aged 8 years to 12 years)

Five things we like about our community

- Everything!
- Ozanam.
- Friends.
- Family.
- Playing games..



Five things we would like to change in our community

- Too much noise, people scream.
- All basements.
- Sports.
- School.
- Garbage place.



Our top recommendations for the future

Government

Give homeless people houses for free.

Dublin City Council

More games and we want more parks.

Services

More Ozanam House – every day.

Emergency Services

More women in the fire brigade and ambulances.

Gardaí

To stop people killing other people.

Schools

Mark sure everyone has food.

Adults living and working in the area

Help people.

Parents

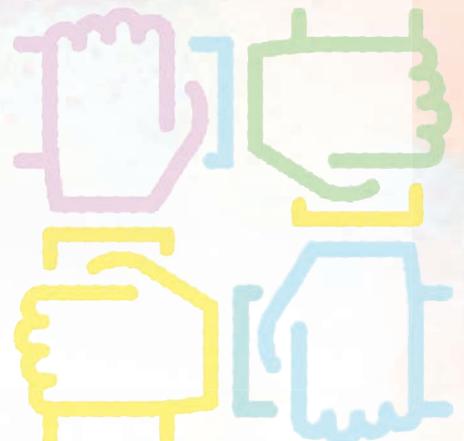
Give us hugs and kisses.

Young People

Be good for your parents.

Children

Listen to everybody.



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SWAN Youth Services – Junior Group

(children and young people aged 10 years and above)

Five things we like about our community

- Friends.
- Family.
- The canal.
- Centre of community.
- Youth.



Five things we would like to change in our community

- Bad people.
- Drugs.
- Rehab for drugs.
- Dealers to court/prison.
- Clean up the streets..



Our top recommendations for the future

Government	Build more homes, more funding for youth services
Dublin City Council	Clean up properly, rats around the canal.
Services	More trips available, and more football!
Gardaí	Don't harass innocent people, drug users or young people, catch actual drug dealers.
Emergency Services	Be faster – when people are having heart attacks!
Schools	Less homework, we do enough in school.
Adults living and working in the area	Get more money, more wages and more jobs for young people.
Parents	Stop kids from wrecking streets and throwing rubbish.
Young People	No need for ID! (international young people)
Children	They need safer streets.

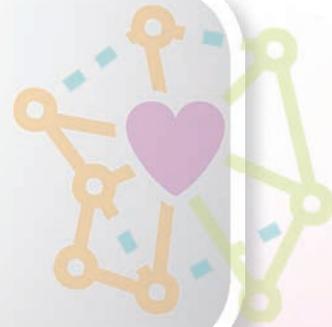


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SWAN Youth Services – Senior Group (young people aged 16 years and above)

Five things we like about our community

- Friends.
- It's close to town.
- Clubs and services.
- The people and the support.
- Community is very important.



Five things we would like to change in our community

- Not clean.
- Violence and drugs.
- Everyone knows each other's business
- Crime rate
- More Gardaí, 24-hour watch



Our top recommendations for the future

Government	More needle exchanges and regenerate the area.
Dublin City Council	Employ more people to help clean the community.
Services	More sports activities, more computer activities.
Gardaí	Presence of more police, 24-hour watch, less raiding of random houses.
Emergency Services	Ambulances should have their own lane on the road.
Schools	Promote people to finish education, more encouragement for going into 3rd year education.
Adults living and working in the area	More employment and CE schemes.
Parents	Keep their children in school.
Young People	Stop smoking and drinking in public.
Children	Stop throwing rubbish on the ground, learn about recycling.



Restorative



Section 2: External Consultant's Report

AN OUTSIDE PRACTITIONER VIEW

of

The North East Inner City 'Brighter Futures' Restorative Practices Initiative

**Dr Derick Wilson, Reader Emeritus in Education
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Aim:

The North East Inner City Brighter Futures Initiative aims to empower children and young people in the North Inner City to become actively involved in the decisions that affect their lives and to be socially included, active citizens in their own right, as per Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (Goal 3 p. 31).

This short paper gathers some 'outside practitioner' perspectives on the initial working of the Brighter Futures Initiative gathered from four days of: observing and participating in five 'one-to-two hour' restorative groupwork sessions with children and young people; attending one five-hour training programme; visiting and meeting staff involved with seven community programmes; and four meetings with ELI/NCI staff developing some restorative approaches and research guidelines.

"For the first ten minutes the young boys were edgy, giggly, uneasy, even a little disruptive. To be together in a circle, to be invited to speak for themselves and give others their turn, was new and a challenge.

Within the hour engagement had become total, insights about trust, friendship, being hurt, being included, being listened to, caring for one another, keeping one another safe, were shared with clarity and honesty. Their capacity to be open and to share deep experiences was done in a manner that adults often find too challenging. Their voice was strong and unexpectedly compassionate."

(Dublin, 7th December, 2016)

Restorative

Restorative Practices – A Definition

Restorative action is commonly regarded, in accordance with dictionary definitions of restoration, as an attempt to rebuild, repair or return to a former state. Such meanings tend to promote a nostalgia or homesickness for what was. Such definitions are not helpful.

This highly innovative programme works from an alternative and different meaning of restorative: the tendency to give new strength or vigour (Jenkins, ANZJIT, Vol 27, p 153). This interpretation points to something new, something better and healthier, something creative and productive, a revitalisation, or new possibilities that might develop.

Some Preliminary Conclusions:

1. This is a project with ground-breaking significance in restorative practices nationally and internationally. This is the case because of the potential to include diverse 'locality based' community organisations in a collaboration with public, civic, corporate and Higher Education partners for the benefits of local children, young people and their families.
2. From detailed observations of the practice with the children and young people there is no doubt that this practice is creating opportunities for the voices of children and young people living in the North East Inner City to be heard.
3. Should the next stage of this project bring the full energy of staff and Boards of the major public, civic and private organisations into the area, the project has the capacity to redeem adult society and open up more access and opportunities for children and young people in this area. It could also promote greater community safety.
4. People living vulnerable lives have 'many unexpecteds' to cope with that projects must be sensitive to. If this project is to enable the perspectives of children and young people to effect a difference, then the unique working practices being developed within the Brighter Futures Initiative need to be given time and support to embed themselves and be locally owned.
5. The funders are supporting a visionary project around developing cohorts of diverse local children and young people, parents, carers and professionals to incorporate a more restorative understanding in their relations with families and colleagues, their work and in the culture of local organisations. This programme is in the vanguard of what internationally is called 'a restorative learning region' or 'a restorative society approach' (Christie, Fattah, Johnstone, Llewellyn & Philpott, Maxwell & Lui, Strang & Braithwaite, Wilson, Wright).
6. It is obvious that college-based staff are coming into local settings as partners with local child development and youth work staff and volunteers – this is a collaboration between colleagues. The cultures of local child development and youth work settings are being continually developed along restorative practice principles by the empowered local staff.

Some Preliminary Recommendations to Consider:

One programme objective is that *“through their involvement in this high-quality learning experience, it is hoped that the children and young people will be enabled to develop a positive set of attitudes, learning dispositions and skills that will support them as they strive for their educational, career and life goals.”*

1. If the lasting systemic cultural changes sought for in this objective are to be secured, the next ‘engagement’ and ‘embedding’ stages could invite and challenge the diverse partners to envisage and establish some lasting community investment structure such as **‘An Institutional Restorative Resource Bank’** that supports educational, social, financial and motivational support being embedded in the local area.

It is possible to envisage such a ‘bank’ offering seed funding, intern opportunities, regeneration programmes and specialised mentoring support from Senior Executives as part of a Corporate Social Responsibility commitment to restore human potential within the area. Such a structure would have a life span beyond this project and signify a lasting structural commitment by the partners to the local people.

2. **The restorative training offered, and the new ways of engaging children, young people, parents and carers being developed by this programme could** be included in the mandatory pre-service training of Public Service Staff, Social Workers, Care Staff and Teachers, Youth Workers, Housing Officials and Garda Officers.
3. All time-limited ‘projects’ struggle to effect wider structural and systemic change. It would be strategically important for a number of systemic and structural elements to be put in place such as:
 - Expanding in-service training provision for child and youth development staff.
 - Support for the College to further integrate pathways for parents, carers, and local development staff to access adult and professional education.
 - Promote inter-agency access to Restorative Practices Training for teams of Gardaí, Public Servants, Social Workers, Teachers, Youth Workers and Business Staff.
4. That the existing boundaries between ‘public services’, ‘policing and the criminal justice system’ and ‘youth and community development’ could be made more permeable and that more explicit institutional support for this would be helpful. The staff consulted were very open to more collaborative local working practices.
5. Restorative practices historically have been voluntary and civil society-led practices. Notwithstanding this history, professions and states have a propensity to take these approaches over as their own. Welcome and important though such an institutional embrace is, it is particularly important that the embrace of citizens, parents, children and community volunteers is also made a priority. ELI/NCI should consider expanding its restorative practices training with parents and carers and so diffusing this skill within localities.

The Restorative Process in the North East Inner City

1. WHAT ARE THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF IRELAND TRYING TO RESTORE, NURTURE AND RE-ENVIGORATE?

1.1 NURTURING NEW STRUCTURES OF ENGAGEMENT WITH PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS IN THE NORTH EAST DUBLIN AREA

In my meetings and observations of practice I experienced people working with integrity, their practice being informed by the highest professional values and with a clarity of purpose.

1.2 NURTURING SPACES WHERE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS WHO SUPPORT THEM FEEL SAFE AND EXPLORE RELATIONSHIPS

The National College of Ireland, as a learning organisation, has the freedom to convene safe spaces for children, young people and the adults working with them to reflect and learn together about relational ways to restore balance and possibility to relationships that sometimes are conflicted.

For children, parents and carers and those supporting them in an area that has experienced many hardships and, more recently, considerable violence, such spaces are very important in dissolving old fear filled ways and offering hope and practical ways forward.

A Higher Education institute has the freedom to use its influence to generate space:

- to restore possibilities to people who, historically, often saw opportunity as not being within their grasp;
- to convene new, and unexpected, partnerships between state, corporate, civil society, Gardaí and Dublin City Council actors.

Through working in a supportive and collegial manner also with dedicated local activists and staff involved in afterschool and youth work interventions, the National College of Ireland is developing a newly empowered group of active citizens in the local area who, now:

- value an approach in the locality that emphasises restorative practices;
- appreciate the value of this approach in their own relationships as colleagues and in their extended families and friends;
- advocate for the use of restorative ways of working in other areas of work.

A high level of buy-in to Restorative Practices from core staff in afterschools and youth work provision has been one immediate outcome from a small training investment by the Brighter Futures programme. This now means that there is a body of restorative practitioners as partners with NCI. Such a platform means that wider work with children and young people can be imagined in any further engagement and embedding phases.

1.3 RESTORING NEW WAYS OF BEING TOGETHER

Many children and young people living in areas that lack established routes to further and higher education and diverse employment opportunities are inequitably treated. Often such groups of children are viewed as 'problems' more than as 'assets'. In restorative terms it is important that they find their voice, experience relationships in which they are valued and they value others and, over time, these relationships and experiences offer them new structures in daily life that they can draw on and live from (see Zehr, H 'Journey to belonging' in Weitekamp and Kerner, 2002, Willan Publishing p.23).

At the core of this initiative is an 'asset based' approach. Children and young people are brought into potentially transformative experiences of being with different others; learning to be at ease; experiencing them speaking about their experiences and hopes; assisting them deal with experiences of loneliness and hurt as well as celebrate times of achievement and living well together. In such learning spaces they experience new ways of being together supportively, they repeat and pattern these ways in subsequent meetings and, over time the experience of expressing their voice and being in relationships that increasingly offer them support and possibilities becomes a new structure, a new base of resilience in their lives.

1.4 NURTURING NEW WAYS OF RESOLVING DIFFICULTIES AND CONFLICT

At the heart of a restorative practices programme with children and young people are practical experiences of dealing with misunderstanding and conflict that give them new possibilities together, beyond distrust and conflict. Participants are supported in finding more space and freedom together; they find more ways than they could previously imagine to dissolve conflict and build new understandings between them.

1.5 ENVIGORATING EXPERIENCES TOGETHER THAT ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES OF POWER AND ACCESS

At the core of this project is the stated wish that the voices of children and young people are heard. The first objective is to promote experiences to *"listen to and involve children and young people living in the North East Inner City so that they have an equal voice in the decisions made about the future of their community"*. Restorative practices then are used to empower voice in new and revitalised ways, supporting participation by people of all ages who have become removed from such opportunities.

Supporting the growth of voice locally is important. These young people live in a culture at times, but not always, dominated by fear and violence and it is important that their, often small voice, is curated and supported. When their voice is not heard their participation is depressed. When internal enmity dominates the culture of the area, robust and critical discussion about future oriented social and economic developments are curtailed and it is the opportunities for children and young people that are further diminished.

New and respectful relationships between powerful organisations and people facing multiple deprivation are important and essential. This project is seeking to support new engagements between a local community that has limited internal resources and significant public, civic and private institutions also located in this area.

The energy and vision of many local community activists and organisations are, in resource terms, very powerful. The financial and educational resources within many of the public civic and private organisations who share the neighbouring space are considerable. The project is attempting to work towards some new structures for a more open engagement between groups and organisations that are not used to meeting with and working collectively together.

2. FOR WHOM IS THIS BEING DONE?

A fundamental principle is that the voices of children and young people have to be heard. This is immediately evident in the diligent working practices of the team.

It is also important that a restorative working culture is promoted widely by the local staff and community organisations and not just the college staff.

This programme is in the vanguard of restorative practice, nationally and internationally. With its focus on four-year-olds and up, in informal 'after school' and 'youth club' time, it is attempting to develop a working language and working practice with these young groups that is new and challenging. Numerous local care staff spoke about how they felt their skill base in this work was being developed and their personal confidence with this approach was growing.

A distinctive feature of a training programme I observed was that the learning group itself was of a restorative nature. The very membership of the learning group brought together people with different levels of experience, age, qualifications and backgrounds. In a practical restorative manner the very breadth and diversity of life experience within the group practically enhanced the learning together.

In one community project, all 28 part-time staff experienced several training sessions in restorative practices together. This not only immediately influenced the atmospheres and ways of working in their afterschool projects but it influenced the ways colleagues worked together and, for some, supported them develop more open and reflective family and friendship relationships.

Additionally the thirst to take further accredited training was evident from feedback.

My experience was that the community leaders and care staff valued being appreciated, invested in and listened to.

3. FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

Restorative practice, especially what is termed restorative justice work, has a long association with the criminal justice system. Johnstone outlines five strands of where he saw the Restorative Justice Movement was going in 2008.

Braithwaite, Llewellyn, Maxwell, Wright, Wilson and others have more recently become associated with wider societal change strands of restorative practices, rather than have this work trapped within a criminal justice lens.

We are diminished as human beings when we do not have our potential and creativity valued, nurtured and accepted. 'Brighter Futures', potentially, can contribute to the thinking evolving in a number of international restorative programmes. At the centre of this North Dublin restorative practices initiative is a vision of a restorative learning neighbourhood or city. The positioning of this project is asking people, groups and institutions in this neighbourhood and city *'are they fit for the purposes of giving these children and young people, and others like them, a fulfilling life?'*

RESTORATIVE APPROACHES TO UNDER ACHIEVEMENT

Drawing on the above, the work in the North East Inner City seeks to promote a more just society, 'defined as a society in which all human needs are met' (Johnstone, G., 2008, Restorative Justice: From Theory to Practice *Sociology of Crime, Law and Deviance*, Volume II, p61) and is located within four evolving strands of future-oriented best restorative practices outside criminal justice which:

- 1. Promote Restorative Processes within Various Public and Civic Institutions that value (young) Citizen Voice and prioritise securing a safe local Environment.**
e.g. Schools; Youth & Community Projects; children speaking of 'living in clean streets'.
- 2. Establish Restorative Principles in Organisational and Societal Cultures.**
e.g. Public Bodies; Charities; Schools; Colleges
- 3. Embed Restorative Processes in Handling Conflict in Various Institutional Settings.**
e.g. Local Councils; Health Agencies
- 4. Secure Restorative Economic Practices within Inward Investment, Social Inclusion and Economic Development Programmes.** e.g. Early Learning Initiative and National College of Ireland

4. IN WHOSE INTERESTS IS THIS RESTORATIVE PROGRAMME?

This could become a significant model of a new relationship between very diverse people and agencies around the importance of the lives of children and young people from the immediate area of the North Inner City with high levels of multiple deprivation.

Work aimed at building the greater common good is restorative, it brings new strength and vigour, enabling more citizens to experience they are valued, respected, safe and healthy.

Where it is possible to establish new strategic bonds and long-term commitments between the local community, private, public and civil society partners buying into an interdependent vision for the future well-being of the wider city, there may be longer-term impact.

Wellbeing is not just up to families and individuals. Where you live matters: access to green spaces, and leisure facilities; adequate housing and safe streets all impact on wellbeing. Local, regional and national governments' policies and spending impact on wellbeing. The way in which they govern matters too: with good and transparent government and opportunities for engagement being important for wellbeing...This ongoing interest in defining societal progress through measuring wellbeing, rather than through more traditional economic measures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), emerged several decades ago and has been encapsulated in initiatives such as the Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress.

(Carnegie: <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/blog/wellbeing-frameworks-cities-regions/>)

Restorative

Restorative Practices, at their best, should infuse this wellbeing practice, informing the wider public and civil society culture. The restorative society challenge thus becomes:

- To explore how we might align societal practices with a culture that is restorative in intent.
- To promote a societal understanding that when harm is done, it is not only done to individuals but to the relationships and structures all are part of.
- To embed the core restorative values and principles within institutional practices that serve the wider society, not just in the individuals involved.

This 'future oriented' restorative task, is to promote a societal culture that is committed to heal relationships and promote alternatives to being violent with one another (Johnstone).

This project has the capacity to robustly ask of wider Irish society, and certainly the public, civic and business culture of the City of Dublin, whether it is fit for the purpose of making meaningful lives and opportunities available to the children and their families served by this programme.

This project challenges 'a deficit and problem-based' mind set that often pervades views of children and young people in areas of multiple deprivation.

In my visits I met many children, young people and adults who are obvious assets.

In the earnest sharing and struggles of the children and young people to articulate their feelings and observations, and in several meetings with 'so called vulnerable or needy young people', a level of insight into what made people lasting and trusted friends was evidenced that, in my experience, rivaled with the best of many an adult reflective group I have been part of.

In the facilitating of small, safe, play and development spaces, not overly resourced, children and young people were with mainly local skilled people who secured their safety, promoted their imaginative play and creative thinking, and mediated their daily conflicts.

When each of us experiences safe environments and safe relationships we grow. Such spaces allow us to claim what it is to be fully human, and even to negotiate those relationships that are difficult in a more open and hope filled manner.

I wish to thank all those within the Brighter Futures Programme who gave of themselves so fully to the interviews and discussion sessions I participated in.

Derick Wilson
May 2017

BRIGHTER FUTURES A LONG TERM PRACTICE AND RESEARCH INITIATIVE 2016-2021

The initial phase of the Brighter Futures Initiative is attempting to lay the foundations of a 'restorative practices neighbourhood approach' that, through the convening power of the Early Learning Initiative at the National College of Ireland integrates:

- the voices, strengths and capacities of local children, young people and their families;
- the energy and vision of volunteers and staff associated with diverse local child and family support programmes, schools and youth services;
- the potential co-working of diverse local, public, civic and private institutions based in the immediate area.

This programme emphasises the importance of building and supporting new working cultures with families in areas where there are numerous socio-economic challenges in terms of child and adolescent wellbeing and wishes to demonstrate the benefits of a restorative approach that:

- is informed by the voices of local children, young people and families;
- grows a family led approach that underpins the eventual development of family strength and positive (child and) adolescent outcomes (Moore, Whitney and Kinukawa, 2009)
- is nurtured by supporting volunteers and staff working in the area in 'an ethical and purposeful' manner (Connolly, 2009)
- enables parents, carers, volunteers and staff to provide structures, boundaries and feedback that enable (children and) young people learn everyday tasks and information (Pazaratz, 2001)
- seeks to interweave the transformative potential of informal and formal education with the potential of local public and civic groups and the potential financial and social responsibility commitments of diverse financial institutions locally.

It emphasises:

A focus on strengths and assets rather than deficits and problems;

Strengths and assets are usually acquired through positive relationships, especially with pro-social and caring adults; The development and acquisition of (children and) youth assets occurs in multiple contexts and environments (Butts, 2005).

In essence it wishes to promote a systemic approach that nurtures and energises the community priority associated with NCI, and the actual and potential commitments of local civic organisations and large public, civic and private organisations, to work collectively and imaginatively in support of the wider restorative neighbourhood vision.

If successful, the learning potential from this project is of relevance to other areas of Ireland and, potentially, is a restorative neighbourhood approach that will be of interest internationally.

Restorative

A five-year scenario associated with the hopes of this project would have three phases.

Phase 1: The Enquiry Phase – Year 1 – (month nine in process currently)

The initial phase of the Brighter Futures Restorative Initiative is underpinned by a core set of restorative principles focused on gathering the experiences of children, young people and families who are living in the North East Inner City of Dublin. Underpinned by core restorative values of respectful listening and hearing the voice of the most vulnerable, this practice is a Human Rights-based approach, honouring the UN Declaration on Restorative Justice (2002).

The experiences and voices of many of the children, young people, parents and carers in the area, along with the experiences and best intentions of a range of care and developmental staff working with children, young people and families are being gathered. These voices sit alongside those of some other people within different levels of the major state, city, HE and financial institutions located in the immediate area.

The core developmental task is to establish the potential of securing major institutional buy-in to what we would call a 'restorative neighbourhood programme', exhibiting the best elements of restorative practices in informal and formal educations as well as restorative economic development being promoted in a number of 'restorative region approaches' in other countries.

These are being gathered through recording the experiential learning accumulated in this period through meetings, interviews and initial short courses on Restorative Practices with people and groups exercising their voices alongside a number of empirical instruments gathering the experiences during the approximately six months of engagement in this Enquiry Stage.

Phase 2: Looking Forward, The Engagement Phase – Year 2 (Year 2 to end of Year 4)

Subject to securing significant buy-in from: the major public institutions responsible for Justice, Children Young People and Family Services; local and city wide civil society organisations and private financial institutions encircling this area, the long term intention of this programme is to engage deeply with the various people already identified living and working locally and develop an integrated restorative practices programme that:

- Attends to the rights of children, young people and families locally to enjoy a life with a higher quality of wellbeing than they currently have, in the main;
- Ends a toleration in local society and wider of ongoing violent actions that impinge on the lives of families;
- Opens the local area and the wider city to one another in expanding local training and educational opportunities for children, young people, parents and carers in the neighbourhood;
- Builds a strong and cohesive community-corporate/civic and public culture that restores a quality of life; promotes the wellbeing of all and expands economic and social opportunities for local people.

Phase 3: Embedding – An Increasingly Integrated Way of Working (Year 4 and Beyond)

Based on the envisioned new ways of working this phase will seek to establish a number of locally run integrated restorative practice hubs that embed:

- A neighbourhood social and economic regeneration initiative between diverse local, city and national partners;
- A restorative learning hub that underpins support for the long term development of day care, primary and secondary, youth, community, sports and cultural developments;
- Innovative neighbourhood economic, career development and adult education initiatives based within and around NCI.

Community

*...it's just I think
opening the kids
eyes up to what's
there other than,
just what they know.*

Afterschool Educator - Sheriff Street

Community

Section 3: Programme Evaluation

Community

Introduction:

Following the recent violent incidents in the North Inner City, the Government decided as a matter of urgency to introduce a number of interventions to best support the communities affected to deal with the present situation, by working together to envision and plan for a better future for the children and young people in the area. One of the projects proposed, **the North East Inner City Brighter Futures Initiative**, is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and is being delivered through the Early Learning Initiative, at the National College of Ireland. Designed to empower and involve children and young people in the decision-making processes affecting their community, the aim is to provide young people with a platform to voice their opinions about their community, to devise effective policies relating to the future of their community, and to become active and responsible citizens. Enabling children and young people to identify what is working well for them in their community, what some of the real difficulties and problems are, and what needs to be changed in order to make this community not only a safe place to live, but one of the best places to grow up in, is at the heart of this initiative.

Children and young people form an integral part of the North Inner City's diverse community and are its future community leaders. Despite this, far less attention has been dedicated to listening to the voices of children and young people than that of adults. For too long, children and young people have remained unheard, especially in the context of decision-making regarding their social, economic and environmental futures (Kelleher et al, 2014). Furthermore, children and young people are often invisible in decision-making processes concerning their community and are seldom given opportunities to express their opinions (Hill, 1998). Therefore, the Brighter Futures Initiative has placed children and young people at the centre of its focus, and aims to empower children and young people in the North East Inner City, through the use of restorative practices. The Brighter Futures Initiative is attempting to lay the foundations of a restorative practices neighbourhood approach in Dublin's North East Inner City that integrates the voices, strengths and capacities of local children, young people and their families. It seeks to enable restorative engagements, while cultivating mutually respectful and collaborative relationships.

Restorative Practices (RP), which evolved from restorative justice, has the potential to positively influence human behaviour and strengthen community. "Restorative practices are those which reflect a concern for such values as respect, inclusion and self-determination, equality, truth telling, listening and understanding, humility, responsibility, safety, renewal and reintegration" (Dyck, 2004, p.275-6). Restorative Practices help to develop and sustain strong, happy communities by actively developing good relationships, preventing the escalation of conflict, and handling conflict in a creative and healthy manner if or when it does arise. All encounters should be viewed as opportunities to connect, and a chance to 'be' restorative – while the approach should be viewed as an ethos and a way of being rather than a process or a model to learn (Hopkins, 2016, p.90).

Community

Aim and Key Objectives of the Brighter Futures Initiative:

Aim:

The North East Inner City Brighter Futures Initiative aims to empower children and young people in the North Inner City to become actively involved in the decisions that affect their lives and to be socially included, active citizens in their own right (*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People*, 2014, p. 31).

Key Objectives:

- Listen to and involve children and young people living in the North East Inner City so that they have an equal voice in the decisions made about the future of their community
- Train and support adults in the community in how they can enable and facilitate children and young people to be reflective, critical citizens and actively contribute to the decisions being made about their local community
- Enable the views of children and young people in the North East Inner City to be taken into account by the North East Inner City Task Force and other representative community organisations in the area
- Support afterschool and youth services in the North East Inner City to provide positive high quality play-based/active learning environments, through the provision of professional development in Restorative Practice and a supportive peer-learning network
- Through their involvement in this high quality learning experience, it is hoped that the children and young people will be enabled to develop a positive set of attitudes, learning dispositions and skills that will support them as they strive for their educational, career and life goals



Community

Brighter Futures: Working with Children (aged 4-12 years)

A fundamental objective of the Brighter Futures Initiative is to strengthen emotional literacy and develop empathetic abilities in children through a restorative practice approach. Each afterschool service had its own distinctive approach and makeup. Some services served children from four to eight-years of age, while others were tailored towards children from six to twelve-years-of-age. The number of children catered for also varied per service, from fifteen children in one service to over eighty children in another.

Due to the wide-ranging ages and backgrounds of children attending afterschool services, play-based methodologies were adopted for this age group. Strategies used include, story and picture-book reading, creative play, language play, and physical activities. The foci for this age group was to introduce children to the idea of working together in restorative circles, to familiarise children in the use of talking/listening pieces and to encourage the development of emotional literacy. A 'draw, write and tell' framework was adopted to assess this element of the program because it facilitates children's participation by offering them time to think and build ideas in stages (Angell & Angell, 2014). It allows children to self-express and express their voice through creative means. This framework is especially beneficial when the focus is on children's social perceptions. It also allows us to identify children's real ideas and beliefs. A 'draw, write and tell' approach was used several times during the project to give voice to younger children and also as a means to collect data for future evaluation.

All the interactive sessions with children were divided into five phases - check-in/opening circle, a mixer (to encourage children to collaborate with children they might not normally interact with), a main focus (sessions focussed on a different element each week e.g. restorative values, emotional intelligence, relationships, community, fairness etc.), an energiser (a fun activity to reenergise children and get them active), and check-out/closing circle. This structure was inspired by Belinda Hopkins' most recent explorations into using restorative approaches in child-friendly settings, with the structure enabling practitioners to replicate and then develop and build on within their own practice.

In the initial sessions rapport was built with children by encouraging them to speak about topics that were relevant to them, e.g. 'how did you get to school today', 'what did you see on your way to afterschool', 'if you could be a superhero, which superhero would you be', 'if you could choose somewhere to go for your summer project, where would you go' etc. During these sessions children were invited to draw pictures of what they saw and what they did in their community, and were then asked to describe their pictures. There were also encouraged to share their views and ideas about community, e.g. 'what community means to them', 'something they like about their community', 'something they don't like about their community', as well as their ideas on what needs to be done make the community a better place to grow up in.

The majority of children drew family and friends. Some of the drawings were portrayals of education and play facilities (e.g. playgrounds) while some were depictions of festivities (e.g. Halloween, Christmas etc.) and often the weather. While sharing their views on community, especially the positives of their community, the majority of the children (57%) expressed that it is the kindness and respect people have for each other that is working well in the community. Children's perceptions of community were quite varied. Forty-two percent (42%) defined community as family and friends, while 24% expressed that community consists of schools and afterschools. Some of the children (6%) could not define community but expressed that they like everything about their area. Twenty-one percent (21%) described community as a place for games, fun and paint.

Community

Comments regarding community:

- *Everyone takes care of each other in our community.*
- *In this community we share with each other.*
- *A community is a little club and a centre of people.*
- *Community is life.*
- *Community is when people have problems they can ask the rest of the community for help.*

Although children's views on the difficulties and problems faced by the community were quite varied, some common themes emerged. Some (26%) reported that homelessness is a big problem. Some (21%) expressed that cleanliness is a big issue in the community. Thirty four percent (34%) felt that there are not enough spaces or facilities available for them to play in. Several mentioned the number of fires, especially burnt-out cars, in their area, while others were aware of drug problems, particularly the presence of drug dealers in the community. Also mentioned were the Luas works in the inner city and how that was impacting on people.

- *I don't like the dirt in the area.*
- *Sometimes people are a little bit angry and grouchy.*
- *Tracks are going everywhere and blocking roads.*
- *Need more homes.*
- n *Stop burning cars when mums are walking with their babies.*

Children suggested that more homes should be built to tackle homelessness. Investments should be made with regards building playgrounds and parks with added facilities e.g. zip lines, hula hoops, swings etc. while also fixing broken facilities so that children have nice outdoor spaces to play. They also suggested that people in the community should share, be kind, helpful and respect each other.

Comments regarding how to make the community a better place:

Comments regarding the difficulties and problems faced by the community:

- *Give money and food to homeless people.*
- *Fix broken things at the playground.*
- *I would clean up, and use a vacuum to speed it up and pick up the rubbish.*
- *I will win the lottery and give all the money to charity.*
- *Start respecting the kids!*

One of the main objectives of Brighter Futures Initiative is to create emotional awareness, and build children's emotional vocabulary. Restorative processes are marked by three general stages where emotions are expressed – the past, present and future. When enquiring about children's feelings and emotions about their community – in the past, in the here and now, and in what they want changed for the future – it is important that they can accurately express their feelings and understand their own, and the community's needs. Increasing children's emotional literacy enables them to talk about, understand and manage their feelings, thus enabling them to communicate with others, avoid or resolve conflicts and build better relationships. Children were asked to name emotions during interactive sessions. They engaged in activities where they named and examined different positive and negative feelings. Utilising the *Centre for Nonviolent Communication's 'Feelings Inventory'* to guide these exercises, participating

Community

children had initial difficulty in naming common emotions. The most frequent emotions named were: happy, sad, angry, scared and excited. Words like calm, worried, hurt and hopeful were words that most children didn't understand. Through the use of photographs, storytelling and role-playing, children began to develop their emotional vocabulary and increasing could name and describe common emotions. Following a series of interactions with children over several weeks, 89% of the children could name positive emotions correctly, while 78% of children could name negative emotions correctly.

Comments regarding emotions and feelings:

- *Imagine if communities helped each other, we have to appreciate what people do.*
- *Sometimes people are a little bit angry and grouchy.*
- *Young people should be nice to everyone.*
- *Don't keep everything to yourself.*
- *I want people to be good boys and girls.*

Initial Findings:

- Children are comfortable sitting and working in circles and are respectful of the talking/listening piece.
- A marked increase in restorative practice-related knowledge and language among the participating children has been shown.
- Participating children's emotional literacy and their capacity for reflection and empathy has improved.
- Children have developed the ability to come up with ideas, problem-solve and make decisions creatively and democratically.

It's just opening up their eyes, about community, what it is...and basically they know themselves, their responses speak for themselves, "all we want is a new school, we want new roads. We want homeless shelters". They're quite big into community, and they know what it is, so community spirit is really, really big...it's just I think opening the kids eyes up to what's there other than, just what they know.

Their imagination is not running wild, as kids they should want an awful lot more for their community...so I think liaising with the NCI, their minds are getting broadened. There's different things out there, there is college. Kids from the North Inner City...college isn't on their agenda, so projects like this, just opening up their minds to what it is, and just showing them there is bigger and better things for their community and if we all do pull together we can get things... we can make it happen. There's nothing stopping us.

Afterschool Educator - Sheriff Street

Community

Brighter Futures: Working with Young People (12 years+)

One of the main objectives of the Brighter Futures Initiatives is to develop a strong youth voice in the North East Inner City and to consider young people as resources and assets in the community. As with the local afterschools, youth services connect with a wide-range of young people from within, and beyond, their local communities. Again, the number of young people supported by each service was wide-ranging, with many young people engaging with a number of the local youth clubs in the area, rather than just one.

A restorative practices framework was again implemented to achieve the objectives of the initiative as restorative approaches empower people of all ages by providing life skills and strengthening people's ability to express themselves safely and imaginatively. Restorative practices provide young people with a range of skills and methods that promote mutually respectful relationships while building community cohesion. It is an asset-building endeavour in which young people develop a greater sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem, sense of community and empathy and emotional literacy.

Restorative sessions that the local young people engaged in were conducted in their own youth services through a series of interactive sessions. These sessions placed an emphasis on gathering young people's voices about their community through a restorative process. Utilising the Nonviolent Communication Model, and building on the work of Marshall Rosenberg, young people were encouraged to establish trusting relationships and to "listen when someone is speaking, not just to the words, but also to the deeper meanings" (Cameron, 2016, p.85). Methodologies used with this cohort ranged from storytelling, reciprocal teaching (e.g. think, pair, share), cooperative learning, peer tutoring and problem-solving instruction. Questionnaire surveys were applied to understand the impact of the workshops on the participating young people, while observations and group exercises were also used to analyse the effect of the programme on participating young people.

As in the case of younger children, each interactive training session with young people contained five stages; check-in/opening circle, a mixer, a main focus (sessions for this older group involved more high-level thinking elements than the younger group e.g. circle processes, restorative values, emotional intelligence, the Relationship Window, connecting feelings with needs, making doable requests, community, fair processes, problem solving circles etc.), an energiser, and check-out/closing circle. Similar to the younger groupings, questions and topics were carefully chosen, in the first instance to build connections with young people, while also fulfilling the objectives of the Brighter Futures Initiative. Generally, restorative circles involve each participant describing their energy levels at the beginning and end of each session. Energy levels go from a one, 'I'm here in body but not in mind', to a ten, 'I'm totally engaged'. Added to this within the first few weeks of the project was a 'mood level' marker, suggested by some of the young people because 'sometimes you can be really tired, but in great form...and other times you can have lots of energy but you might be fidgety and not concentrating.' Similar to the young children youth groups were asked to consider their feelings about community (e.g. what community means to them, what is working well in their community, what are some of the real difficulties and problems in their community, and what needs to be done to make the North Inner City a healthier, safer place to grow up in). Older groups became more reflective and critical in their thinking, ending each session with a wholly reflective circle which mirrored Gibbs' reflective cycle, with description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action planning.

Generally, young people found it quite easy to envisage what is meant by community. Most of the participants referred community as 'people living in the same place' and the coming together of 'people and their ideas'. While discussing the question 'what is working well in the community', most of the participants (78%) highlighted community spirit, especially the indomitable spirit of the community in the aftermath of violent incidences in the area, as well as respect towards each other. Other positives include the significant efforts of youth projects in providing space and opportunities for young people (11%), the open communication among community members (6%), and the importance of positive family values (5%).

Community

Comments regarding the positives in the community:

- *People in the community are very close.*
- *Youth clubs are good at keeping kids out of trouble*
- *People in the community communicate with each other*

Drug problems and crime (83%) were identified as two of the main problems in the area by the vast majority of young people. Other difficulties and problems identified include; homelessness, lack of education, lack of sports facilities and lack of funding for services. Participating young people also expressed their concern regarding the way the community has been portrayed by the popular media. Most of them felt that media highlights only the negatives, like crime and drug problems, rather than the many positives of the community.

Comments regarding difficulties and problems faced by the community:

- *Young people do not realise the influence of drugs. They see the money side and not the tragic outcomes.*
- *Stop the drugs being sold in front of kids.*
- *Classes on drug awareness and alcohol-related problems.*
- *Not enough homes for everyone in the community.*
- *Everyone in the community should feel safe, day and night.*

Suggestions made by the participating young people to make the community a better place to live, include dealing with drug dealers through increased Garda presence in the community, increased funding for services, building more local youth and sports organisations, more community centres and building more homes. They also expressed that their voices are often relegated to the side-line and excluded from having a say in decisions affecting them.

Comments regarding how to make the community a better place:

- *We need to get important people involved.*
- *We need more police.*
- *More support for kids in school. More leisure facilities and play areas for children and teenage clubs.*
- *Our voices should be heard everywhere.*
- *Important people need to listen to young people and really listen, not just tick a box.*

Part of this initiative also focussed on ensuring that participating young people became familiar with the concept of community action research. An essential feature of the Brighter Futures Initiative is a report written by the children and young people reflecting on their own findings about the community and the restorative process. Throughout this process, young people were facilitated to conduct participatory action research, with additional support provided by practitioners in their services. Their account is contained within Chapter One of this report.

Community

Initial Findings:

- Restorative practice-related knowledge among the participating young people has improved. The majority of them (76%) became aware of restorative values and how their actions impact on themselves and their community. While discussing restorative values during sessions, some (47%) described it as ‘treating people same’ and being non-judgemental. For some (28%) it is respect and for others (25%) it is loyalty towards family, friends and community. Young people felt that restorative values provided motivation to be honest, committed and trustworthy.
- Participating young people explored aspects of emotional intelligence and learned how to acknowledge, understand and manage feelings, both positive and negative emotions. They were introduced to the many emotional concepts, guided by the Centre for Nonviolent Communication’s ‘Feelings Inventory’, and invited to discuss these ranges and how they might expand their emotional vocabulary in a safe and healthy manner. On average, young people’s initial comprehension of ‘feelings words’ was measured at 38%. This rose to 54% over the course of the sessions.
- Post-restorative practice sessions, young people’s self-efficacy rose (71%), as did their sense of community (51%). A growth in emotional intelligence (54%), learning dispositions (56%), learning skills (72%) and attitudes (51%) was also observed. More work needs to be done to improve their self-esteem. About 24% of participants reported having low self-esteem.
- Contributing young people can be said to have a deep attachment to their area and their community, as well as the people within it. We are seeing that they are more consciously and consistently thinking about their communities and how their actions, and the actions of others, affect everyone.

Comments regarding the impact of Restorative Practices:

- *Restorative means to restore. It is quite helpful.*
- *Sitting in circle is normal for us.*
- *Restorative values provide motivation.*
- *Restorative practices teach us to be non-judgemental and treat everyone with respect.*
- *Restorative practice is about self-worth, honesty and self-discipline.*
- *Restorative practice is about family, friends and loyalty.*

Community

Brighter Futures: Working with Adults

To date, a majority of adult practitioners (225) working in the participating services have received introductory training in restorative practices. Two hundred and eleven community practitioners have received two half-day training workshops (eight hours in total) on restorative principals, concepts and approaches. The aim of these adult-focussed training sessions was to ensure that staff in all services were aware of the elements of restorative practice being used during the course of the project, so that they had the ability to support the children and young people in their services. Supporting all members of the community in the use of restorative language, and the supplementary skills attached, was imperative to this initiative – as it is only through a collaborative process of ‘working with’ that we can build communities that are supported by shared power, mutual understanding, and accountability.

Advocating the prominent restorative values of respect, empathy, fairness, personal accountability, honesty, collaboration and problem-solving, these training workshops concentrated on providing participants with an understanding of restorative practice, some essential tools and skills (e.g. restorative questions to repair harm, fair process, affective statements, an increased emotional vocabulary etc.) and an understanding of, and practice in, facilitating restorative circles and how these can be used in afterschool and youth settings as well as in the wider community. Restorative circles are a versatile technique that can be used to develop relationships, build community, discuss pertinent issues and, most importantly, to prevent problems before they occur. The circle process allows people to tell their stories and offer their own perspectives (Pranis, 2005). Moreover, sharing together in restorative circles develops empathy and provides a better understanding of another’s perspective. Participants contributing to these introductory sessions gained the knowledge and skills to facilitate:

- Restorative Language – providing skills to express feelings to promote empathy and build relationships
- Restorative Conversations – providing skills to facilitate one-to-one conversations to resolve conflict, or provide positive feedback.

In addition to the initial introductory workshops, a further fourteen community members from participating afterschool and youth services (as well as members of An Garda Síochána) received an intensive three-day upskilling training course which included instruction in restorative circles, restorative meetings and restorative conferencing techniques. The aim of the upskilling training programme was to develop capacity and sustainability in the community, and to encourage the development of meaningful support networks to promote the use of restorative approaches. Participants contributing to these upskilling sessions gained the knowledge and skills to facilitate:

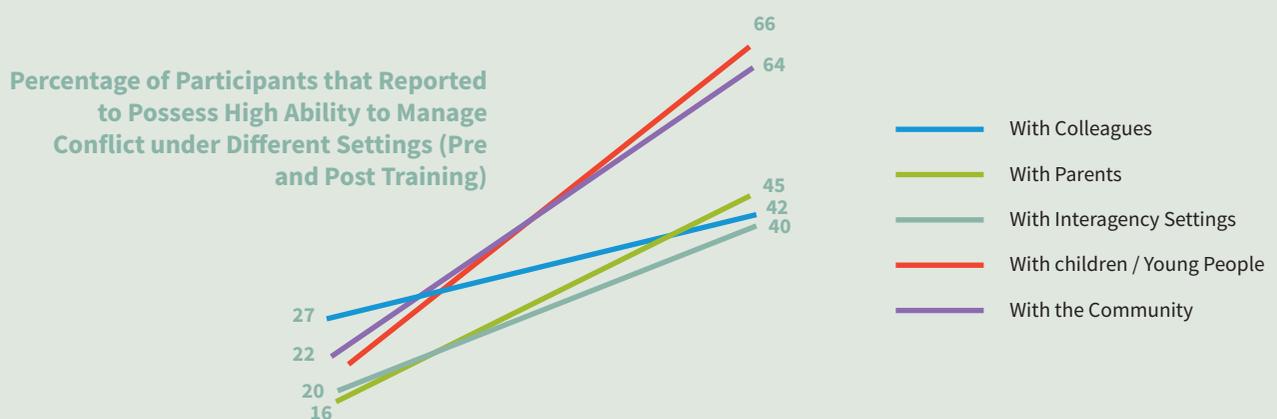
- Restorative Circles – providing skills to build effective relationships in groups, and to undertake creative problem-solving
- Restorative Meetings – providing skills to enable practitioners to address conflict between individuals, or in groups
- Restorative Conferences – providing skills to enable practitioners to address wrongdoing and repair harm.

Community

Qualitative data was collected from surveys completed both before and after these adult-focused training sessions. The methods used to collect data included questionnaire surveys, observations, feedback and group exercises. Data was collected with an aim to analyse the effectiveness of the training programme, as well as gathering information on the desire of participants to bring about lasting change in their community. It is central to this initiative to guarantee that these training programmes can impart the skills and confidence needed to bring this change to fruition. The objectives of the Brighter Future Initiatives can only be realised through the wider implementation of restorative philosophies and values in a neighbourhood approach.

Initial Findings:

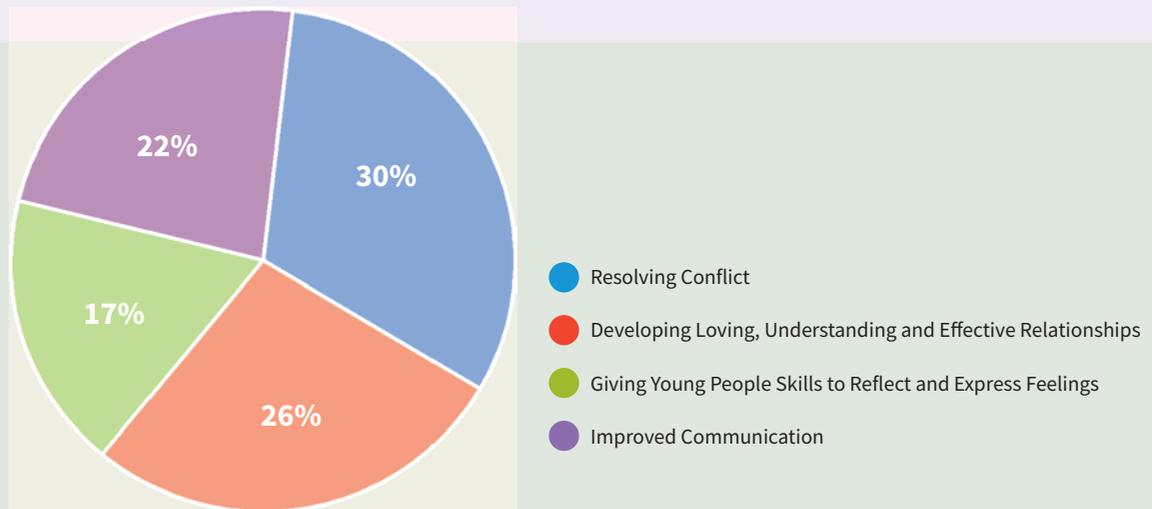
- The level of restorative practice-related knowledge among participants has improved. A majority of the respondents reported having little or no knowledge of restorative practices prior to beginning the training, with only 37% asserting 'a little knowledge' and 10% of respondents reporting to have 'good or excellent' knowledge of restorative practices. Prevalence of this 'good or excellent' knowledge of restorative approaches among some of the participants can be attributed to involvement in restorative practice training provided by ELI under the Area Based Childhood Programme. Post training, saw a dramatic increase with 78% of the participants reporting to possess 'good or excellent' restorative knowledge.
- The programme can be said to have had a positive impact on the capacity of adults to manage conflicts and to help support others in finding solutions to conflicts. Post-training there was a marked increase in the percentage of those who rated themselves as 'moderately high' or 'high' at managing conflict across a variety of spectrums; with inter-agency settings (from 17% to 40%), with other community members (from 22% to 64%), with parents (from 16% to 45%), with children and young people (from 20% to 66%) and with colleagues (from 27% to 42%). Confidence levels in terms of managing conflict in inter-agency settings and with colleagues remains low and needs further supports put in place. More work is also needed to improve participants' confidence levels in relation to using their new knowledge and skills.



- Participants expressed that restorative practice approaches can also be beneficial in areas other than conflict resolution. In fact, all participants agreed that restorative practices provided multiple benefits, both on an individual and community-level. During post-training surveys, participants were asked to mention their own preferences regarding areas where the approaches would prove to be most beneficial.

Community

Post-training Participant's Opinion on how Restorative Practices is Making a Difference in Community



- Satisfaction rates for those attended training is quite positive with 95% of the participants reported that they were 'satisfied or highly satisfied' with the training.
- When asked about the likelihood of using restorative practice knowledge and skills post-training, 60% of the participants expressed confidence in utilising their newfound skills and techniques in their services.
- An overwhelming majority of participants (82%) felt that there is a strong need for improving the relationships among community members and a majority of them (92%) expressed that this can be achieved through community-wide implementation of restorative practice.
- Similar to the children and young people, most adult participants (71%) also agreed that the community spirit among the residents in the North East Inner City was working well. Other positive aspects identified by the participants included: respect for each other, continuous good work done by the youth services, community projects and youth projects.
- Furthermore, the main concerns raised by the participants (86%) regarding the community's general wellbeing surrounded safety issues and concerns about drug dealing. Echoing the young people, adults were also aggrieved that the community is continually portrayed in a negative manner in the media. Instead of highlighting the positive aspects of the community, adults concur that the media concentrates on negative news and sensationalism instead of concentrating on the fantastic work going on in the area.
- The vast majority of adults (96%) expressed the need for regular training and communities of practice. Recommendations made by the participants include further capacity development through regular restorative connections and booster/refresher training.
- Further interventions were also suggested to embed restorative practices in workplaces, third level institutes, afterschool and youth services, and within state agencies working in the community, to sustain the inroads made through the Brighter Futures Initiative.

Community

Comments regarding the impact of Restorative Practices:

- *It is helping to develop effective and helpful relationships.*
- *I see it as avoiding situations escalating, making communities stronger, giving people their own tools and the ability to solve problems and not to always rely on agencies.*
- *Through RP people might speak more about their feelings and that will build more empathy.*
- *Because it's being taught to all carers now, there could be a big change as to how to handle confrontation in the next generation.*
- *It is making the workplace safe.*
- *It is removing shame.*
- *RP might give a teenager support and understanding about the impact their behaviour has on wider community.*
- *For the people who may be harmed, I see RP as a very useful tool in helping them to try and overcome whatever happened.*
- *RP allows people to be reflective, more empowered.*
- *It can even just show that people are aware and about to make a difference.*
- *RP could give residents a sense of ownership about issues we are having.*
- *Most people don't want to live in conflict, fostering this tool can help communication improve.*
- *It brings cooperation and change for the better (a better community) and understanding of other people and their feelings.*
- *RP makes people see the impact of their actions.*
- *It will hopefully reduce conflicts and violence in the city and promote more calm and less confrontations.*
- *Restorative practice will support the community in bringing lasting change.*
- *There are better relationships, better flows of communication among adults as well as children.*
- *RP will help in preventing future conflict, building stronger relationships and equality, allowing people to be reflective and empowered.*
- *It will help reduce conflict in the service I work in and by modelling RP the hope is that it will be used by service users thus reducing conflict in the community.*
- *Once it becomes enshrined in the culture of all schools and clubs, it will be a social structure and restore conflict in all social institutions.*

I think you need to have a positive attitude. Everything that goes on (in the North Inner City) people act about it negatively, everything that goes on makes the news, all the negative things make the news. To get rid of the negativity I think you need some people having positivity and trying to spread positivity around. Trying to educate others to make positive decisions and not go into the negative ones....having ambition is one of the essential bits.

(Brighter Futures) helps the kids to be educated to make positive decisions, and especially through education. Young people can change things.

Young Person – Buckingham Street

Community

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Brighter Futures Initiative is attempting to strengthen the capacities and voices of local children and young people by laying the foundations of a restorative practices neighbourhood approach. Building cohesive and productive communities is at the core of the Brighter Futures Initiative. To that extent, it has already been somewhat successful in empowering and strengthening the voices of local people, especially children and young people, by creating positive avenues to convey their opinions in a restorative way, and by focusing on the strengths and assets within the community, rather than the deficits and problems.

One of the core philosophies entrenched in the Brighter Futures Initiative is to move from a position where we, as adults, do things for or to children and young people, to doing things with children and young people. This initiative is in the early stages of changing a mind-set, from taking charge and speaking for or on behalf of children and young people, to engaging them in the conversation from the outset. Still, there is a lot more to achieve. Due to the short time span of the project and a slight shift in focus, children and young people didn't receive as much attention and time as was initially intended, and ultimately deserved. Initially, the entire focus of the project was directed towards children and young people. However, during the preparatory consultation stage, services expressed the need for training of adults, so that they could adequately support children and young people in their services. The importance of this cannot be underestimated, and while capacity building in adult practitioners has its own merit, additional training for adults did consume additional time and resources. Embedding the values and principles of restorative practice takes time. Within the short time period of this project, the groundwork for the development of decision-making opportunities has been laid. An environment where children and young people feel comfortable and confident to participate has been created. Through restorative practices, children and young people have learned to be reflective and express themselves with more understanding of their feelings.

Embedding restorative practices through the promotion of a systemic approach, that nurtures and invigorates the community, will allow the community to develop and build relations in a safe and healthy manner. Despite the initial advances that this initiative is making, there is a larger community who have not yet been in a position to engage. In order to sustain the benefits of this initiative, this wider community needs to be embraced and the voices of local children, young people, their families and the wider community need be further nurtured through restorative practices. The results of the initiative are promising, showing a marked increase in confidence in terms of emotional literacy, conflict resolution, relationship building and effective communication among participants.

In order to sustain and build upon the foundations laid by the Brighter Futures Initiative, long-term interventions are needed to engage major public institutions, civil society organisations and private financial institutions encircling this community. This should be a phased process.

Community

International research has demonstrated that it takes a number of years to embed restorative values and principles in a community, any community, while also attempting to develop active participation and decision-making capacities within children and young people. Through the Brighter Futures Initiative, the experiences and voices of many of the children, young people and other community members in the area are now being gathered and presented to a wider audience. This could be described as the 'enquiry' stage. The following stage would be an 'engagement' phase. The objective of this phase is to engage deeply with the various stakeholders living and working in the community.

This stage would also attempt to develop an integrated restorative practices programme that attends to the rights of children, young people and families locally – to enable them to enjoy a life with a higher quality of wellbeing (than they currently have) and to build a strong and cohesive community.

This 'community' should be one that incorporates corporate, civic and public culture, and one that restores a quality of life, promotes the wellbeing of all, and extends the educational, economic and social opportunities for local people. The final phase of this process would be the 'embedding' stage. To embed these practices authentically and faithfully an increasingly integrated way of working by creating restorative neighbourhood hubs will need the time. Space and support to develop and grow. In this way, the ambitious objectives of building a strong, empowered and cohesive community – that restores a quality of life and promotes the wellbeing of all – can be realised.

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Acknowledgements

This report, *Building Hope for Brighter Futures*, would not have been possible without the active engagement and genuine collaboration of the children and young people in Dublin's North East Inner City. We would like to acknowledge the significance of your voices, especially your honesty and insight. The level of openness, empathy and expertise displayed by the children and young people involved was truly outstanding. Thank you.

We would also like to recognise the contribution made by the afterschool and youth services in the community. Your time, patience and experience not only supported this initiative, but also encouraged and empowered children and young people to find their voice.

To an Taoiseach Enda Kenny T.D., for taking personal charge of a taskforce to lead the restoration of the North Inner City, Minister Katherine Zappone T.D. and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, who envisaged and funded this initiative, and Minister Paschal Donohue T.D. and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, who always champions for the North East Inner City – we greatly appreciate all the support and encouragement you have provided to ensure brighter futures for all the children and young people in the community.

We would like to acknowledge the National College of Ireland and our President Gina Quin, whose mission is to change lives through education and who are committed to working with the local North East Inner City community to improve outcomes for children, young people and families in the area.

We are likewise indebted to Dr. Derick Wilson, for your wisdom, your encouragement and your belief, in this initiative and this community. We hope that you will continue to follow our restorative journey.

Finally, we would like to thank all of those who generously supported and advanced this initiative, in particular, Chief Superintendent Pat Leahy and Sergeant Martin Moloney from Store Street Garda Station, CDI Tallaght, Connect RP, the Young People at Risk (YPAR) network, our local corporate partners, and all of our public representatives, local councillors and community and statutory organisations who work tirelessly every day to ensure that Dublin's North East Inner City truly can be the very best place to grow up in.

Appendices

After Schools Education and Support Programme (ASESP)

1 Crinian Strand,
Lower Sheriff Street,
North Wall
Dublin 1.
Telephone: 01 855 4043
Email: after.schools@hotmail.com

Ballybough Youth Service

Ballybough Community, Youth & Sports Centre,
Ballybough Road,
Dublin 3.
Telephone: 01 856 1383
Email: ballyboughyouth@gmail.com

Ballybough Under 10s

Ballybough Community, Youth & Sports Centre,
Ballybough Road,
Dublin 3.
Telephone: 01 856 1383

Belvedere Youth Service

41 Lower Buckingham Street,
Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 855 0282
Email: belvedere@eircom.net
Website:
<http://www.belvedereyouthclub.ie/>

Community After School Project (CASPr)

1 Portland Square,
Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 856 0561
Email: caspr@iol.ie
Website: <http://caspr.ie/>

Community Policing Forum (CPF)

Unit 1,
Killarney Court,
Upper Buckingham Street,
Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 8879442
Email: cpfneic@eircom.net

Cooperative Childcare Afterschool – Island Key

Island Key Childcare and Family Service,
166 Island Key,
Block 4,
East Road,
Dublin 3
Telephone: 01 876 0400
Email: islandkey@nabco.ie
Website: www.islandkeychildcare.com

Foundations Project – Afterschool

CDET B Foundations Project,
Adult Education Centre,
1 Parnell Square,
Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 878 6658 / 01 873 6012
Email:
clare.schofield@parnell.cdetb.ie
Website: wwwFOUNDATIONSproject.ie

An Garda Síochána

Store Street Garda Station,
4-6 Store Street,
Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 666 8000
Website: www.garda.ie

Neighbourhood Youth Project 1 (NYP1)

c/o 22 Mountjoy Square,
Dublin 1
Telephone: 01-836 3822 / 01-836 5475
Email: nyp1@hse.ie

Neighbourhood Youth Project 2 (NYP2)

Bridgewater Hall,
Summerhill,
Dublin 1
Contact name(s): Fergus McCabe
Telephone: 01 856 1316 / 087 650 0253
Email: nyp2@hse.ie

Ozanam House Resource Centre – Afterschool

53 Mountjoy Square West,
Dublin 1
Phone: 01 874 2802
email: ozanamkids@iol.ie
Web: <http://www.ozanamhouse.ie/>

Ozanam House Resource Centre – Youth Service

53 Mountjoy Square West,
Dublin 1.
Phone: 01 874 2802
email: ozanamkids@iol.ie
Web: <http://www.ozanamhouse.ie/>

SWAN Youth Services

St. Agatha's Hall,
Dunne Street,
Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 856 0945
Website:
<http://www.swanyouthservice.org/>

Sherrard Street Youthreach

7 Upper Sherrard Street,
Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 804 7224
Email: Paula.daly@yrsherrard.cdetb.ie

Young People at Risk (YPAR)

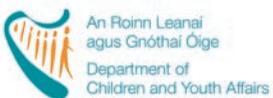
Ballybough Community Centre,
Ballybough Road,
Dublin 3
Telephone: 01 819 4779
Email: infoypar@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.ypar.ie/>



Restorative Practices will support the community in bringing lasting change

Hope

A research report presenting key findings from a unique initiative, aimed at empowering the children and young people living in Dublin's North East Inner City, through Restorative Practices.



An Foinn Leanaí agus Gnóthai Oige
Department of Children and Youth Affairs



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