

# **LOYALIST CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES**

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This paper presents the main findings from research carried out on behalf of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister into the work of a range of Loyalist Conflict Transformation Initiatives in Northern Ireland.

It explores the strengths and weaknesses of the initiatives, the benefits they bring the to peace process as well as to their communities, and also the factors that limit their effectiveness

## **SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS**

### **Aims of the research**

The aims of the research are to:

- Identify the nature and extent of the activities a specific network of Loyalist Conflict Transformation Initiatives (LCTIs) engage in.
- Map the resources and limitations that these groups work with.
- Evaluate the significance of the activities undertaken.

### **The research process**

The research process was based on a variety of methods including focus groups, site visits and supplementary interviews. These were conducted with LCTI practitioners and management, representatives from statutory bodies, community representatives and users of the LCTIs' services. Most of the research was concentrated in Belfast, although we also interviewed individuals who worked outside of Belfast and an emerging LCTI based in Newtownards. In addition, the research maps the activities of the groups through weekly work diaries. The primary research was carried out from September to December 2004. Existing literature and evaluations of the organisations were also reviewed.

### **About the LCTIs**

The LCTIs involved in the research were Alternatives, Ex Prisoners Interpretative Centre (EPIC), the Inner East Forum and Local Initiatives for Needy Communities (LINC). This is a network of initiatives that is concentrated in Belfast.

### **The context of loyalist communities**

The context of loyalist communities within which the LCTIs operate is explored in a variety of ways. Firstly, area profiles of the Greater Shankill and Inner East are provided to demonstrate the background of socio-economic disadvantage within which these organisations operate. Secondly, the policy context, particularly surrounding fractured community infrastructure in loyalist

communities, is explored. Finally, recent debates in the academic literature surrounding informal justice are discussed in so far as they relate to the work of the LCTIs.

This section also reviews existing evaluations of the LCTIs' work, generally conducted as technical evaluations for funding purposes. Based on weekly activity diaries provided by the LCTIs, it argues that much of the work they engage in is 'hidden', and therefore its value is difficult to measure.

### **The benefits of the LCTIs' work**

Based on findings from the focus groups, this section identifies the benefits of the LCTIs' work to the political process and to loyalist communities. The political benefits are as follows: the LCTIs both represent and challenge existing thinking and practice within loyalism; they help diffuse tense and violent situations which helps stabilise the wider peace process; they actively engage with statutory bodies and government, seeking to influence policy on conflict management; they constructively engage with former adversaries; they act as conduits between statutory bodies and the loyalist community, many of whom are alienated from mainstream society; and they seek to develop a transfer of model of peace building.

In terms of benefits to the community, the LCTIs work was found to contribute to community empowerment; to build bridges with civil society, in particular with the churches; to be effective in dealing with people who are alienated from mainstream society that statutory bodies often find hard to reach; and to support other groups which in turn contribute to community development.

### **The strengths of the LCTIs**

The research highlights that the LCTIs had a number of organisational strengths. These include their expertise and durability; the credibility of individuals within the LCTIs; and the interlinked nature of the LCTI organisations which aids cohesion and strength of the network.

### **The weaknesses and constraints faced by the LCTIs**

However, the research also highlights a range of organisational weaknesses of the LCTIs. These include the lack of a paper culture which makes evaluation difficult; and weakness at raising the organisational profile of the network, especially with regard to public relations activities.

A number of the external constraints are also explored. These include the problematic relationship between LCTIs and statutory bodies, issues surrounding funding; the destabilising effects of criminality on perceptions of loyalism; and the limited scope of the LCTIs' work due to the fractured nature of loyalist community infrastructure.

### **Conclusions and issues arising from the research**

On the basis of the research number of conclusions are drawn. It was found that the main barriers to the work of the LCTIs are issues surrounding legitimacy, funding and fractured community infrastructure. On the other hand, factors facilitating the work of the LCTIs' work are their credibility, expertise and commitment, the flexibility of the funding they have received to date, and the strong interlinked nature of their network. On the basis of these findings, a variety of suggestions are made for consideration by the LCTIs and OFMDFM.

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

One of the most pressing issues in Northern Ireland today is conflict and change within loyalism. Relative to other groups, loyalism has not yet been able to make the transition to the political sphere. The PUP remains small with less than 2% of the vote share, and there is a perception that mainstream unionism has not yet been able to fully address the problems facing loyalist communities.

For some it seems that the situation has been getting worse. Community workers report a surge of youth recruitment into loyalist paramilitary groups, feuds between different factions of loyalists and increasing media attention on criminality amongst sections of loyalism. However, at the same time there have been groups working towards the transformation of loyalism. Their aim is to develop loyalists into community work and politics, to enable a full transition away from violent conflict. There are a number of non-party political loyalist conflict transformation initiatives, from this point referred to as LCTIs, working to change their communities in a progressive direction. The work they do is wide ranging, for example providing conflict management education, running restorative justice programmes, facilitating cross-community contact, engaging with statutory bodies to represent their communities, helping reintegrate ex-prisoners into the community, working with churches on issues of social justice and demilitarising the urban landscape.

A high proportion of former loyalist combatants, although by no means all staff, manage and work in the LCTIs. To transform loyalist communities, the LCTIs must work with existing loyalist paramilitaries. In many ways this unique position of influence is the greatest strength of the LCTIs who are one of the only networks able to engage in this level of grassroots conflict transformation. However, their greatest strength is also their greatest weakness as their status as former combatants, and dialogue with loyalist paramilitaries, is problematic for other actors who perceive the organisations to be tainted by their past and current associations.

Despite sometimes negative perceptions, it is acknowledged<sup>1</sup> that the LCTIs have made a positive impact on conflict transformation. The Northern Ireland peace process is premised on the understanding that a peaceful Northern Ireland can only be achieved through the collective effort and involvement of all parties, including those formerly engaged in paramilitary violence. Reflecting this, the Belfast Agreement of 1998 contains an obligation to address issues regarding the reintegration of former combatants into social and political life in Northern Ireland. Appendix B, point 5 of the section entitled 'Prisoners' in the Agreement states:

*The Governments continue to recognise the importance of measures to facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the community by providing support both prior to and after release, including assistance directed towards availing of employment opportunities, retraining and/or re-skilling, and further education.*

The period since the Agreement has shown that the process of transformation to a post-conflict society is perhaps slower and more uneven than was envisaged in the more optimistic days of 1998. However, it is argued that Appendix B5 places a responsibility upon the government to explore the roles of the LCTIs, and their relationship with the state, in more depth. This need is particularly pressing given the ongoing problems within loyalist communities.

This report examines these issues in relation to a specific network of LCTIs (see below). Based on research carried out in 2004, it explores the strengths and weaknesses of the initiatives, the benefits they bring to the peace process as well as to their communities, and also the factors that limit their effectiveness. The report is structured as follows:

**Section 1** introduces the research topic and sets out the methodology employed. This section also includes a brief discussion of the limitations of the research as identified by the researchers themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> In previous evaluations of the LCTIs and the statutory bodies participating in this research, together

**Section 2** outlines both the context of the research and the context within which the LCTIs operate. It includes, in brief, a profile of the socio-economic circumstances of the geographic areas within which the organisations work, together with a brief discussion of the key issues arising from the literatures on social capital and restorative justice. It concludes with a discussion of the main findings from existing evaluations of the LCTIs.

Sections 3, 4 and 5 present, in detail, the material from focus groups, interviews and site visits conducted for this research project. **Section 3** sets out the main benefits to the political and peace process, and to the loyalist and wider community, of the work of the LCTIs. **Section 4** identifies the strengths of the LCTI organisations. **Section 5** presents both the organisational weaknesses and external constraints faced by the LCTIs who participated in this research project.

The final section, **Section 6**, presents the barriers to and factors facilitating the work of the LCTIS, together with the issues arising from the research.

### **1.1 About the research project**

This research project was initiated in August 2004. An advisory group, comprised of government representatives and four Loyalist Conflict Transformation Initiatives, was established to assist in the development of the project, with particular emphasis on facilitating access. These included the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), and the Department for Social Development (DSD). The LCTIs who participated in this research were Alternatives, the Inner East Forum, Ex Prisoners Interpretative Centre (EPIC) and Local Initiatives for Needy Communities (LINC). The Advisory Group also included one independent researcher from Queen's University Belfast and one from the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland. A small team (3) of researchers from OFMDFM and QUB had the responsibility of carrying out and delivering the research.

### **1.1.1 Aims**

The aim of the project is to provide an evaluation of the range of work undertaken by the LCTIs in question. Our aims are to:

- Identify the nature and extent of the activities these groups engage in
- Map the resources and limitations that the groups work with
- Evaluate the significance of activities undertaken

### **1.1.2 The research process**

The research process was based on a variety of methods including focus groups, site visits and supplementary interviews. These were conducted with LCTI practitioners and management, representatives from statutory bodies, community representatives and users of the LCTIs' services. Most of the research was concentrated in Belfast, although we also interviewed individuals who worked outside of Belfast and an emerging LCTI based in Newtownards. In addition, the research maps the activities of the groups through weekly work diaries. The primary research was carried out from September to December 2004. Existing literature and evaluations of the organisations were also reviewed. Full details of the research are found in Appendix 1.

## **1.2 About the Loyalist Conflict Transformation Initiatives**

The Loyalist Conflict Transformation Initiatives that participated in this research were Alternatives, the Inner East Forum, Ex Prisoners Interpretative Centre (EPIC) and Local Initiatives for Needy Communities (LINC). The aims and objectives and a short profile of each organisation follows.

### **1.2.1 Alternatives**

Alternatives is a restorative justice programme set up in 1998. It was developed for the Greater Shankill area but is now running projects in other areas of Belfast and elsewhere. The programme aimed to present an alternative resolution mechanism to punishment attacks and informal justice administered by paramilitary groups, often with the consent of the community. Such punishment attacks are a response to crime and antisocial behaviour and can take the form of shootings, beatings, threats and exclusions.

The aims of Alternatives are to:

- Educate people that a system that relies on violence is counter productive;
- Work towards eradicating punishment violence;
- Heal the relationship between the community and statutory agencies through a restorative justice approach; and
- Promote debate and discussion about the current justice system and the alternatives that may be available.

Restorative justice initiatives can take a number of forms, however all have at their core an emphasis on the process of involvement of all those affected by an offence, with a view to repairing the harm caused by the offending. In the years since it was established, Alternatives staff have become involved in a wider range of work, including mentoring and more general mediation work in the local area.

### **1.2.2 Ex Prisoners Interpretative Centre (EPIC)**

EPIC originated in 1991 from a forum PROPP [*Progressive Release of Political Prisoners*] that involved Loyalist and Republican ex-prisoners and Quakers involved in prison work. Both traditions were concerned at the absence of formal services that were acceptable and relevant to the needs of politically motivated ex-prisoners and their families facing re-integration into families, communities and the wider society. The ensuing debate about developing a community-based self-help service led to the setting up of EPIC in the Shankill area. EPIC works mainly with ex-prisoners from the UVF.

EPIC was established to provide a service to alleviate the problems associated with the re-integration of Loyalist prisoners into the community. Through continuing research, EPIC hoped to match the needs of ex-prisoners and their families with appropriate resources. At that time EPIC's objectives were:

- To identify the needs of prisoners and their families during the post-release period;
- To provide resources and facilities to help ex-prisoners and their families to re-integrate into the family and community;
- To provide a reference point for prisoners during the pre-release period and after release;
- To link ex-prisoners and their families with other existing agencies, where appropriate;
- To support them in making use of available services; and
- To provide formal and informal opportunities to share experiences and encourage the development of mutual support.

Since that time, EPIC has continued to develop support services for ex-prisoners, their families and the wider community. This includes an advice centre, advocacy and support services on social issues, counselling and trauma training, youth interventions to address issues of youth paramilitary recruitment and anti-social behaviour and restorative justice. More recently, the group has initiated a pilot project to redevelop the peaceline at Lanark Way through an art and culture based community tourism initiative.

### **1.2.3 Inner East Forum**

The Inner East Forum was established in 2001 in response to ongoing tensions in interface areas of east Belfast. The Forum is comprised of the vast majority of the community groups operating in east Belfast along with some churches and statutory agency representatives operating in the area. There

are community representatives within the membership who have direct influence within the UVF, RHC and UDA.

The mission statement of the Inner East Forum is as follows:

The Forum exists to improve the quality of life for people in inner east Belfast. It will do this by:

- Bringing together people with skills, knowledge and experience of the area.
- Lobbying on issues of common interest.
- Recognising that, as a single identity group, we can achieve can added value by involving the widest possible range of groups from the Protestant, unionist, loyalist tradition.

The Forum meets regularly to share information and provide feedback on local initiatives within the area (provided by statutory and area-wide community or church organisations). It explores issues around community safety, relationships between the community and the police, relationships between the community and the Loyal Orders and liases with statutory bodies at times of heightened tension in the area. It is also involved in the decommissioning of paramilitary murals, and engages in public relations to build a more positive profile of the area. Finally, the Inner East Forum aim to promote better community relations between loyalists in East Belfast and the Short Strand Community Forum, including operating a mobile phone network to reduce sectarian tensions.

#### **1.2.4 Local Initiatives for Needy Communities (LINC)**

LINC exists to provide resources and support services for community-based conflict transformation and social justice initiatives<sup>2</sup> in the parliamentary

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<sup>2</sup> [www.linc-ncm.org/index.htm](http://www.linc-ncm.org/index.htm)

constituency of North Belfast, Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus. It also does some work in north Antrim and north Down.

LINC was set up by ex-prisoners, with the support of the Church of the Nazarene, to help facilitate the reintegration of ex-prisoners and other former combatants back into the mainstream of community and economic life and to address the issue of conflict within and between local communities.

LINC's aims and objectives are:

- To help break the cycle of alienation, conflict and violence through the development of sustainable community partnerships.
- Working for restoration and reconciliation within and between divided communities and other areas of conflict.
- Facilitating the involvement of ex-prisoners and other former combatants in the development of conflict transformation initiatives.
- Encouraging and supporting the Christian community in Northern Ireland to engage in positive social transformation action at community level.
- Providing management support and method assistance to church and community groups involved in conflict transformation and social justice projects<sup>3</sup>.

Its work focuses on crisis intervention, conflict transformation and developmental education. It seeks to support and resource holistic conflict transformation programmes that emphasise long-term solutions to human need for people in conflict, and to facilitate education and training services that focus on the nature and causes of conflict as well as appropriate responses for the prevention and elimination of violence.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.linc-ncm.org/index.htm](http://www.linc-ncm.org/index.htm)

## **2 LOYALIST CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES**

This section sets out both the context of the research and the context within which the LCTIs operate. This includes a profile of the socio-economic circumstances of the geographic areas within which the organisations work, together with a brief discussion of the key issues arising from the literatures on social capital and restorative justice. This section concludes with a discussion of the main findings from existing evaluations of the LCTIs.

### **2.1 The context of loyalist communities: Area profiles**

To give some background to the environment within which the LCTI's work, data has been drawn together below, that gives a profile of the socio-economic circumstances of the geographic areas within which the organisations work. Due to time restrictions and the often unclear boundaries to the areas within which the LCTI's work, it was considered best to give two examples of these areas that had identifiable boundaries. The two areas chosen were the Greater Shankill and Inner East. Below, both of these areas are described.

#### **2.1.1 The Greater Shankill Area**

The purpose of this section is to present an analysis of the socio-economic profile of the Greater Shankill Area.

The section uses Census 2001 data and Noble deprivation indicators<sup>4</sup> to detail the extent of social and economic disadvantage in the area. It also provides information on demographics of the area and looks in more detail into the economic activity of the population in Greater Shankill.

#### **Definition of the Greater Shankill Area**

For the purpose of analysis, the area is defined by the Local Government Authority (LGA) wards as presented in Table 3.1.

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<sup>4</sup> Measures of Deprivation for Northern Ireland (2001), Mike Noble et al.

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Table 3.1

**Greater Shankill Wards**

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<b>Greater Shankill/Woodvale</b>
Ballysillan
Crumlin
Glencairn
Highfield
Legoniel
Shankill
Woodvale

*Source: West Belfast & Greater Shankill Task Forces Report 2002*

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**Population in the Advisory Group Areas**

In the Greater Shankill there is a population of 33,638 (12 per cent of the population in Belfast).

**Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM)**

Four of the seven wards in the Greater Shankill area fall within the most deprived 10 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland in terms of multiple deprivation.

The most deprived ward in the Greater Shankill area is Crumlin, which doubles as the most deprived ward in Northern Ireland, ranking number one by Noble's measure of multiple deprivation. All the wards in the Greater Shankill area rank within the most deprived 25 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland in terms of multiple deprivation.

**Economic Activities: Income, Employment and Occupational Profiles**

There is a range of indicators, which can reflect the level of economic well-being of a community. These include Income, Employment and Occupational Profiles. Some brief information on these is detailed below.

### **Income Deprivation**

In the Greater Shankill area Crumlin is the most income-deprived ward (ranked 19 of the 566 wards in Northern Ireland). The least income-deprived ward is Highfield (ranked 168). It is noted that Shankill and Woodvale wards also fall within the 10 per cent most income deprived wards in Northern Ireland.

### **Employment and Unemployment**

Four of the seven wards in the Greater Shankill area lie within the most employment deprived 10 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland. Crumlin ward is the most employment-deprived ward in the Greater Shankill area and is ranked number two in Northern Ireland as a whole. All wards in the Greater Shankill area lie within the most deprived 25 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland in terms of employment deprivation.

In Greater Shankill as a whole only 30 per cent of the economically active population are in full-time employment, and 6.4 per cent are unemployed. Crumlin ward has the lowest number of people in full time employment (only 19 per cent of the population). All wards in the Greater Shankill area fall below the Northern Ireland average in terms of full time employment levels. Similarly all wards have a higher rate of unemployment than the Northern Ireland average. Shankill has the highest rate of unemployment (8.8 per cent), Highfield has the lowest unemployment rate (4.7 per cent). The wards in Greater Shankill account for 14 per cent of the unemployed population in Belfast.

## Self-employment

Table 3.3 provides information for wards in the Greater Shankill area.

Table 3.3  
**Economic Activity in Greater Shankill**

	Persons aged 16-74:				
	Economically active:				
	Employees		Self-employed	Unemployed	Full-time student
	Full-time	Part-time			
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	37.6%	9.9%	8.3%	4.1%	2.4%
<b>Belfast</b>	34.1%	9.3%	4.5%	5.4%	3.7%
<b>Greater Shankill</b>	29.9%	9.9%	2.5%	6.4%	1.7%
Ballysillan	37.0%	10.6%	3.0%	5.0%	1.9%
Crumlin	19.1%	7.4%	1.3%	7.8%	1.0%
Glencairn	30.4%	9.3%	2.6%	7.2%	1.8%
Highfield	35.7%	11.4%	2.8%	4.7%	1.7%
Legoniel	33.5%	11.7%	3.9%	5.0%	2.4%
Shankill	20.9%	7.8%	1.1%	8.8%	1.2%
Woodvale	25.9%	9.8%	2.0%	8.2%	1.2%

Source: Census 2001

In terms of entrepreneurship gauged by the levels of self employment in Greater Shankill 2.5% of the economically active in the area as compared to a Northern Ireland average of 8.3 per cent.

## Employment Profiles

Table 3.4 shows the profile of Occupation Groups of all persons living in the area. It is clear that these communities do not reflect the average Northern Ireland breakdown across occupational groups.

Table 3.4  
**Occupational Group Profiles for North and West Belfast**

	Managers & Senior Officials	Professional Occupations	Associated Professional & Tech Occupations	Admin & Secretarial Occupations	Skilled Trades	Personal Service	Sales and Customer Service	Process, Plant & Machines	Elementary Occupations
NI	10.60	10.56	12.53	14.58	15.57	6.67	7.33	10.38	11.79
Belfast	9.9	14.4	12.5	16.2	9.6	6.5	9.3	7.3	14.3
Belfast West	6.8	6.7	9.5	18.5	12.5	8.0	11.0	9.7	17.2
Greater Shankill	6.51	3.9	8.44	14.17	14.06	7.61	10.11	12.5	22.7

Source: Census 2001

When the top three occupational groups are combined i.e. Managers and Senior Officials, Professional Occupations and Associate Professional & Technical Occupations, they represent almost thirty five per cent of the working population in Northern Ireland and almost thirty seven per cent in Belfast. However, these represent only 19 per cent of the Greater Shankill population.

At the other end of the occupational group spectrum, Sales and Customer Service, Process, Plant and Machines and Elementary Occupations represent almost thirty per cent of the working age population of Northern Ireland. Within Greater Shankill however, they constitute 45 per cent.

### **Health Deprivation**

Across all main health domains, including SMR (standard mortality rates), levels of long term disability and health and well being among children, the Greater Shankill shows very high levels of need. This need is recorded in the Noble Indicators, the 2001 Census and the regular publications of the North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust as well as the Eastern Health and Social Services Board.

In the Greater Shankill area, Crumlin is the most health deprived ward. Crumlin is also the most health deprived ward in Northern Ireland. Six of the seven wards in the Greater Shankill area are within the most deprived 10 per

cent of wards in Northern Ireland by a measure of health deprivation and all wards are within the most deprived 25 per cent of health deprived wards in Northern Ireland. Crumlin ward has the highest percentage of population with a limiting long-term illness (42 per cent) in the Greater Shankill area. Crumlin also has the highest percentage of population with general health described as 'not good' (27 per cent).

Some other key indicators of health needs Greater Shankill are outlined below:

- while 20 per cent of the NI population have 'limiting long term illness', this rises to 30 per cent for Greater Shankill; and
- while 11 per cent of the NI population's general health is deemed as 'not good', this level rises to 16 per cent for the Greater Shankill.

Table 3.5

**Indicators of Health Need – Greater Shankill**

	Persons with limiting long-term illness	Persons of working age with limiting long-term illness	Persons whose general health was:		
			Good	Fairly good	Not good
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>70.0%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
<b>Belfast</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>65.8%</b>	<b>19.9%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>
Ballysillan	24.5%	12.3%	62.7%	22.8%	14.5%
Crumlin	41.7%	18.0%	47.2%	25.9%	26.9%
Glencairn	31.7%	14.5%	57.4%	23.7%	18.9%
Highfield	25.8%	13.2%	62.5%	21.8%	15.7%
Legoniel	26.7%	13.7%	63.1%	21.1%	15.8%
Shankill	35.6%	17.2%	52.2%	24.2%	23.5%
Woodvale	34.3%	16.2%	53.8%	23.9%	22.2%
<b>Greater Shankill</b>	<b>30.7%</b>	<b>14.8%</b>	<b>57.7%</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>19.1%</b>

Source: 2001 Census

## Education Profile

In this section, we consider education in its broadest sense including the need to acquire basic life skills, educational attainment at secondary level and ongoing vocational and professional training which focuses on the employment market.

## Education Deprivation

Five of the seven wards in the Greater Shankill area fall within the most deprived 10 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland in terms of education deprivation. Crumlin is the most education deprived ward in Greater Shankill and the second most education deprived ward in Northern Ireland. Woodvale is ranked number six in Northern Ireland in terms of education deprivation and Shankill ward is ranked number nine. All wards in the Greater Shankill area lie within the most deprived 15 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland by the measure of education deprivation.

Table 3.7 presents Census information on qualifications held by the populations in Northern Ireland, Belfast, West Belfast and Greater Shankill.

Table 3.7  
**Educational Qualifications**

Area	Percentage of Persons aged 16-74 with:					
	No Qualifications	Highest Qualification Attained: Level 1	Highest Qualification Attained: Level 2	Highest Qualification Attained: Level 3	Highest Qualification Attained: Level 4	Highest Qualification Attained: Level 5
Northern Ireland	41.64	17.23	16.36	8.98	10.93	4.87
Belfast	41.82	14.76	13.31	10.88	12.24	6.97
West Belfast	51.46	18.42	14.05	7.72	5.66	2.68
Greater Shankill	60.28	17.68	10.68	5.84	3.98	1.54

Source: Census 2001

Crumlin ward in North Belfast has the highest percentage of the population (75 per cent) without any educational qualifications.

While it is important to note the percentages with 'no qualifications', it is equally important to analyse the 'levels' of qualifications attained by residents within these areas compared to Belfast and Northern Ireland averages.

The level of those with no qualifications in the Greater Shankill area (60.28) is almost 50 per cent greater than the Northern Ireland average (41.64).

If Levels 4 and 5 of 'Highest Qualification attained' are combined, we find almost sixteen per cent of 16-74 year olds in Northern Ireland hold a HE qualification at Levels 4 or 5. This compares with 19 per cent in Belfast and six per cent in Greater Shankill area.

While these statistics present only one measure of educational attainment, they serve to highlight again the relative deprivation which exists within the area. In particular, given that education is core to life choices and employment options, one can see that for a large proportion of the Greater Shankill communities, many options are closed off at an early point.

### **Education for Life**

Education is fundamental to preparing people for life and it is recognised that it provides a route out of poverty and social exclusion. For many within the Greater Shankill, education provision has failed to provide such a route. Subsequently opportunities which present themselves for employment and career progression cannot be fully grasped since many of the core skills of literacy and numeracy are not in place.

### **Other Measures of Deprivation**

All of the wards in the Greater Shankill area fall within the most deprived 25 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland in terms of social environment deprivation. Crumlin is the most deprived ward by a measure of social environment deprivation, Ballysillan is the least deprived ward.

Deprivation in housing is a prominent issue in the Greater Shankill area. Five of the seven wards in the Greater Shankill area rank within the most deprived 25 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland by a measure of housing deprivation. Ballysillan ward is the most deprived in the Greater Shankill area in terms of housing, and is ranked number 10 in Northern Ireland.

### **Changes in Population**

The Greater Shankill area has had an increase in population of almost 5% (4.7%) over the years between the 1991 and 2001 censuses. In Belfast as a whole there has been a small decline of 1% in the population.

Given the history of the Greater Shankill over the past 35 years and the animosity between the two major communities, it was felt that an analysis of the population changes in both communities would be useful. In 2001, the census asked a new question of community background which goes beyond which religion a person deems themselves and supplements those who answer that they are 'no religion' with whatever religion they grew up in. However this question was not asked in 1991, so there are no comparisons available. Also the 1991 question of "what is your religion?" has also changed to include extra categories. Therefore it was decided that the simplest way of measuring change was to measure the change in the Catholic population in the area.

In 1991, 7.9% of the population of the Greater Shankill area was Catholic. This has remained constant (7.8% in 2001). Although the total population has increased by 4.7% in the 10 years between the censuses, the Catholic population has risen by 3% in the area. At a ward level there some interesting points to note. For instance, although in the Shankill ward the total population has fallen in 10 years by 13%, the fall in the Catholic population of the ward has been by almost 40% (38.5%). However, given the small numbers of Catholics in these wards, the movement of one Catholic household can represent a significant percentage shift.

GREATER SHANKILL POPULATION CHANGES								
	1991			2001				
	All persons	Catholic N <sup>o</sup>	Catholic %	All persons	Catholic N <sup>o</sup>	Catholic %	% Change in Total Population	% Change in Catholic Population
<b>Belfast</b>	<b>279237</b>	<b>108954</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>277391</b>	<b>116851</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>-0.7</b>	<b>7.2</b>
Ballysillan	4874	52	1.1	6020	113	1.9	23.5	117.3
Crumlin	3876	51	1.3	4376	69	1.6	12.9	35.3
Glencairn	4580	462	10.1	4026	442	11.0	-12.1	-4.3
Highfield	5392	99	1.8	5308	152	2.9	-1.6	53.5
Legoniel	5577	1831	32.8	5528	1797	32.5	-0.9	-1.9
Shankill	4333	39	0.9	3784	24	0.6	-12.7	-38.5
Woodvale	3480	17	0.5	4594	26	0.6	32.0	52.9
<b>Greater Shankill</b>	<b>32112</b>	<b>2551</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>33636</b>	<b>2623</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>

### Crime in the Greater Shankill Area

Given that an important aspect of the LCTIs work is Restorative Justice it was felt necessary to analyse crime statistics for the Greater Shankill. The PSNI provided figures for a number of years for notifiable offences recorded by them in each of the wards in question. As this information is based on postcode to identify ward the PSNI caveat the data that less than 100% postcode coverage means that these figures are not 100% conclusive. Also, it is impossible to attribute any changes in crime rates over time to any specific event or intervention but there inclusion here may point to how the community is progressing.

The Police statistics were provided for the five years from 1999-00 to 2003-04. They are also categorized into types of offences. The offence categories are:

- Offences against the Person
- Sexual Offences
- Burglary
- Robbery
- Theft
- Fraud and Forgery
- Criminal Damage

- Offences against the State
- Other Offences

Below, the changes in all notifiable offences recorded by the PSNI for the Greater Shankill Area from 1999-00 to 2003-04 are provided. The total for each of the Greater Shankill wards over these years has been included.

The graph shows that crime in the Greater Shankill has decreased since 1999. Total offences for the area have fallen from 3289 to 2412, a decrease of almost 30%. In Belfast as a whole the decrease was 15% over the same five years. The largest decreases happened in the wards of Shankill, Crumlin and Woodvale.

Figure?? Total Notifiable offences in Greater Shankill

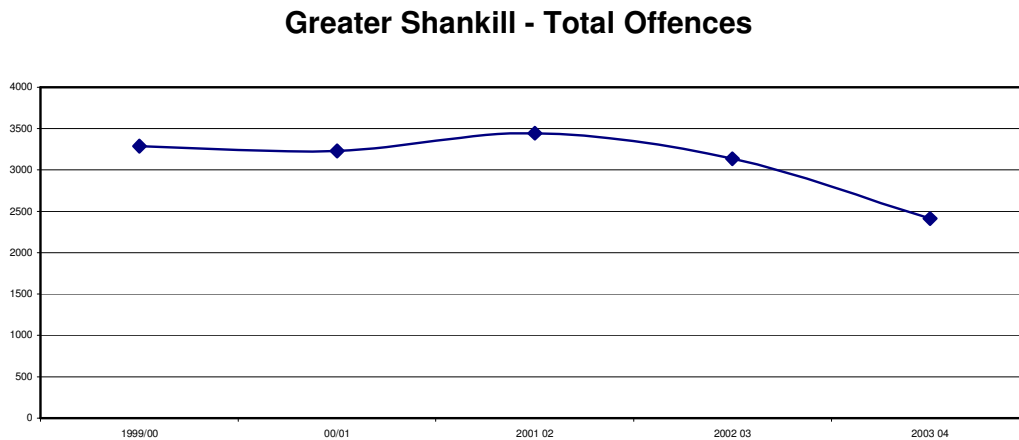


Table ?? Total Notifiable offences in Greater Shankill Wards

	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Change from 99/00 to 03/04
BALLYSILLAN	303	315	418	362	278	-8.3
CRUMLIN (BELFAST)	664	610	697	526	378	-43.1
GLENCAIRN	191	277	236	175	176	-7.9
HIGHFIELD	424	413	350	442	304	-28.3
LEGONIEL	488	527	805	760	581	19.1
SHANKILL	763	723	625	579	431	-43.5
WOODVALE	456	364	312	290	264	-42.1
<b>Greater Shankill</b>	<b>3289</b>	<b>3229</b>	<b>3443</b>	<b>3134</b>	<b>2412</b>	<b>-26.7</b>
<b>Belfast</b>	<b>38441</b>	<b>38106</b>	<b>39710</b>	<b>40267</b>	<b>32545</b>	<b>-15.3</b>

### 2.1.2 The Inner East Area

The purpose of this section is to present an analysis of the socio-economic profile of the Inner East Area.

As in the Greater Shankill profile, this section uses Census 2001 data and Noble deprivation indicators to detail the extent of social and economic disadvantage in the area. It also provides information on demographics of the area and looks in more detail into the economic activity of the population in Inner East.

#### Definition of the Inner East Area

Defining the Inner East area proved more difficult than in the Greater Shankill given that the Inner East boundaries were not as defined as in the Greater Shankill. For the purpose of analysis, the area is defined by the Local Government Authority (LGA) wards as presented in Table 3.1.

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Table 3.1  
**Inner East Wards**

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<b>Inner East</b>
Ballyhackamore
Ballymacarrett
Bloomfield
Island
The Mount
Woodstock

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### **Population in the Advisory Group Areas**

In the Inner East there is a population of 29,844 (11 per cent of the population in Belfast).

### **Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM)**

Four of the six wards in the Inner East area fall within the most deprived 10 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland in terms of multiple deprivation.

The most deprived ward in the Inner East area is Ballymacarrett, which is the fifth most deprived ward in Northern Ireland, ranking number five by Noble's measure of multiple deprivation. Again, unlike in Greater Shankill, there are some areas of Inner East that are affluent such as Ballyhackamore, that is 444 on Noble's index of Multiple Deprivation as well as Bloomfield, that sits just outside the 25% most deprived wards in Northern Ireland.

### **Economic Activities: Income, Employment and Occupational Profiles**

There is a range of indicators which can reflect the level of economic well-being of a community. These include Income, Employment and Occupational Profiles. Some brief information on these is detailed below.

### **Income Deprivation**

In the Inner East area Ballymacarrett is the most income deprived ward (ranked 12 out of 566 Northern Ireland wards). The least income deprived ward is Ballyhackamore (ranked 458). It is noted that The Mount also falls within the 10 per cent most income deprived wards in Northern Ireland.

### **Employment and Unemployment**

Four of the six wards in the Inner East area lie within the most employment deprived 10 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland. Ballymacarrett ward is the most employment deprived ward in the Inner East area and is ranked number four in Northern Ireland as a whole. Again, both Ballyhackamore and Bloomfield are not as employment deprived as their neighbours.

In Inner East as a whole 36 per cent of the economically active population are in full-time employment, and 6.3 per cent are unemployed. Ballymacarrett ward has the lowest number of people in full time employment (24 per cent of the population). Four of the six wards in the Inner East area fall below the Northern Ireland average in terms of full time employment levels. Five of the six wards have a higher rate of unemployment than the Northern Ireland average. Ballymacarrett has the highest rate of unemployment (9.3 per cent), Ballyhackamore has the lowest unemployment rate (2.9 per cent).

## Self-employment

Table 3.3 provides information for wards in the Inner East area.

Table 3.3  
**Economic Activity in Inner East**

	Persons aged 16-74:				
	Economically active:				
	Employees		Self-employed	Unemployed	Full-time student
	Full-time	Part-time			
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	37.6%	9.9%	8.3%	4.1%	2.4%
<b>Belfast</b>	34.1%	9.3%	4.5%	5.4%	3.7%
<b>Inner East</b>	36.4%	9.5%	4.1%	6.3%	1.5%
Ballyhackamore	46.1%	11.0%	7.3%	2.9%	2.2%
Ballymacarrett	23.8%	9.0%	2.2%	9.3%	1.6%
Bloomfield	43.5%	9.6%	5.2%	4.4%	1.5%
Island	35.1%	9.7%	2.4%	6.3%	1.4%
The Mount	31.2%	8.4%	2.4%	9.2%	1.4%
Woodstock	34.7%	9.0%	3.5%	7.2%	1.1%

Source: Census 2001

In terms of entrepreneurship, the levels of self employment in Inner East at 4.1 per cent, lower than both the Belfast and Northern Ireland levels. This indicates that there is a need to promote and encourage such activities within the area.

## Employment Profiles

Table 3.4 shows the profile of Occupation Groups of all persons living in the area.

Table 3.4  
**Occupational Group Profiles for North and West Belfast**

	Managers & Senior Officials	Professional Occupations	Associated Professional & Tech Occupations	Admin & Secretarial Occupations	Skilled Trades	Personal Service	Sales and Customer Service	Process, Plant & Machines	Elementary Occupations
NI	10.60	10.56	12.53	14.58	15.57	6.67	7.33	10.38	11.79
Belfast	9.9	14.4	12.5	16.2	9.6	6.5	9.3	7.3	14.3
Belfast West	6.8	6.7	9.5	18.5	12.5	8.0	11.0	9.7	17.2
Inner East	9.4	10.6	12.6	15.9	10.9	7.2	9.1	8.3	16.0

Source: Census 2001

When the top three occupational groups are combined i.e. Managers and Senior Officials, Professional Occupations and Associate Professional & Technical Occupations, they represent almost thirty three per cent of the working population in Inner East.

### **Health Deprivation**

Across all main health domains, including SMR (standard mortality rates), levels of long term disability and health and well being among children, the Inner East shows very high levels of need. This need is recorded in the Noble Indicators, the 2001 Census and the regular publications of the North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust as well as the Eastern Health and Social Services Board.

In the Inner East area, Ballymacarrett is the most health deprived ward. Crumlin is also the fourth most health deprived ward in Northern Ireland. Five of the six wards in the Inner East area are within the most deprived 20 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland by a measure of health. Ballymacarrett ward has the highest percentage of population with a limiting long-term illness (31 per cent) in the Inner East area. The Mount has the highest percentage of population in Inner East with general health described as 'not good' (21 per cent).

Some other key indicators of health needs Inner East are outlined below:

- while 20 per cent of the NI population have 'limiting long term illness', this rises to 27 per cent for Inner East; and
- while 11 per cent of the NI population's general health is deemed as 'not good', this level rises to 17 per cent for the Inner East.

Table 3.5

**Indicators of Health Need – Inner East**

	Persons with limiting long-term illness	Persons of working age with limiting long-term illness	Persons whose general health was:		
			Good	Fairly good	Not good
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>70.0%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
<b>Belfast</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>65.8%</b>	<b>19.9%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>
Ballyhackamore	18.9	11.7	70.0	20.2	9.8
Ballymacarrett	31.4	28.3	59.1	20.6	20.3
Bloomfield	24.5	18.6	61.8	23.5	14.7
Island	30.8	25.4	57.5	23.3	19.2
The Mount	30.5	27.7	54.7	24.7	20.6
Woodstock	28.7	24.0	57.8	24.6	17.6
<b>Inner East</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>60.6</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>16.7</b>

*Source: 2001 Census*

### **Education Profile**

In this section, we consider education in its broadest sense including the need to acquire basic life skills, educational attainment at secondary level and ongoing vocational and professional training which focuses on the employment market.

### **Education Deprivation**

Five of the seven wards in the Inner East area fall within the most deprived 20 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland in terms of education deprivation. The Mount is the most education deprived ward in Inner East and the third most education deprived ward in Northern Ireland. Island is ranked number 17 in Northern Ireland in terms of education deprivation and Woodstock ward is ranked number 29.

Table 3.7 presents Census information on qualifications held by the populations in Northern Ireland, Belfast, West Belfast and Inner East.

Table 3.7  
**Educational Qualifications<sup>5</sup>**

Area	Percentage of Persons aged 16-74 with:					
	No Qualifications	Highest Qualification Attained: Level 1	Highest Qualification Attained: Level 2	Highest Qualification Attained: Level 3	Highest Qualification Attained: Level 4	Highest Qualification Attained: Level 5
Northern Ireland	41.64	17.23	16.36	8.98	10.93	4.87
Belfast	41.82	14.76	13.31	10.88	12.24	6.97
West Belfast	51.46	18.42	14.05	7.72	5.66	2.68
Inner East	49.3	16.1	12.1	7.2	10.4	4.8

Source: Census 2001

Ballymacarrett ward in Inner East Belfast has the highest percentage of the population (64 per cent) without any educational qualifications.

While it is important to note the percentages with 'no qualifications', it is equally important to analyse the 'levels' of qualifications attained by residents within these areas compared to Belfast and Northern Ireland averages.

The level of those with no qualifications in the Inner East area (49.3), 8 percentage points higher than the Northern Ireland average (41.64).

If Levels 4 and 5 of 'Highest Qualification attained' are combined, we find almost sixteen per cent of 16-74 year olds in Northern Ireland hold a HE

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<sup>5</sup> Levels of educational qualification are defined by Census 2001 as follows:  
(1) GCSE (grades D-G), CSE (grades 2-5), 1-4 CSEs (grade 1), 1-4 GCSEs (grades A-C), 1-4 'O' level passes, NVQ level 1, GNVQ Foundation or equivalents.  
(2) 5+ CSEs (grade 1), 5+ GCSEs (grades A-C), 5+ 'O' level passes, Senior Certificate, 1 'A' level, 1-3 AS levels, Advanced Senior Certificate, NVQ level 2, GNVQ Intermediate or equivalents.  
(3) 2+ 'A' levels, 4+ AS levels, NVQ level 3, GNVQ Advanced or equivalents.  
(4) First degree, NVQ level 4, HNC, HND or equivalents.  
(5) Higher degree, NVQ level 5 or equivalents.

qualification at Levels 4 or 5. This compares with 19 per cent in Belfast and 15 per cent in Inner East area.

### **Other Measures of Deprivation**

Four of the six wards in the Inner East area fall within the most deprived 20 per cent of wards in Northern Ireland in terms of social environment deprivation. The Mount is the most deprived ward by a measure of social environment deprivation, and is the most deprived in Northern Ireland, while Island is the least deprived ward in Inner East.

### **Changes in Population**

The Inner East area has had a decline in population of almost 2% (1.8%) over the years between the 1991 and 2001 censuses.

As with the Greater Shankill area, given the history of the Inner East over the past 35 years and the animosity between the two major communities, it was felt that an analysis of the population changes in both communities would be useful. In 2001, the census asked a new question of community background which goes beyond which religion a person deems themselves and supplements those who answer that they are no religion with whatever religion they grew up in. However this question was not asked in 1991, so there are no comparisons available. Also the 1991 question of "what is your religion?" has also changed to include extra categories. Therefore it was decided that the simplest way of measuring change was to measure the change in the Catholic population in the area.

In 1991, 9.3% of the population of the Inner East area was Catholic. This has increased to 10.5% despite the fall in overall population. Although the total population of Inner East has decreased by 1.8% in the 10 years between the censuses, the Catholic population has risen by 11.5% in the area. At a ward level there are some interesting points to note. For instance, although in the Mount ward the total population has fallen in 10 years by 20%, there has been a rise in the Catholic population of the ward by 13% (38.5%). However, given

the small numbers of Catholics in these wards, the movement of one Catholic household can represent a significant percentage shift. For instance in the Example just given, the rise in the catholic population of Mount by 13% was due to a population change of 60 Catholics in the ward in 1991 to 68 Catholics in the ward in 2001.

INNER EAST POPULATION CHANGES								
	1991			2001				
	All persons	Catholic N <sup>o</sup>	Catholic %	All persons	Catholic N <sup>o</sup>	Catholic %	% Change in Total Population	% Change in Catholic Population
<b>Belfast</b>	<b>279237</b>	<b>108954</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>277391</b>	<b>116851</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>-0.7</b>	<b>7.2</b>
Ballyhackamore	5830	461	7.9	5693	491	8.6	-2.3	6.5
Ballymacarrett	4908	2130	43.4	4942	2200	44.5	0.7	3.3
Bloomfield	4477	55	1.2	5537	188	3.4	23.7	241.8
Island	4496	29	0.6	4280	54	1.3	-4.8	86.2
The Mount	5298	60	1.1	4259	68	1.6	-19.6	13.3
Woodstock	5397	85	1.6	5133	144	2.8	-4.9	69.4
<b>Inner East</b>	<b>30406</b>	<b>2820</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>29844</b>	<b>3145</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>-1.8</b>	<b>11.5</b>

### Crime in the Inner East Area

Given that an important aspect of the LCTI's work is Restorative Justice it was felt necessary to analyse crime statistics for the Inner East. The PSNI provided figures for a number of years for notifiable offences recorded by them in each of the wards in question. As this information is based on postcode to identify ward the PSNI caveat the data that less than 100% postcode coverage means that these figures are not 100% conclusive. Also, it is impossible to attribute any changes in crime rates over time to any specific event or intervention but there inclusion here may point to how the community is progressing.

The Police statistics were provided for the five years from 1999-00 to 2003-04. They are also categorized into types of offences. The offence categories are as outlined above for the Greater Shankill:

The changes in all notifiable offences recorded by the PSNI for the Inner East Area from 1999-00 to 2003-04 are shown below. The total for each of the Inner East wards over these years has been included.

The graph shows that crime in the Inner East has decreased since 1999. Total offences for the area have fallen from 4404 to 3802, a decrease of 13%. In Belfast as a whole the decrease was 15% over the same five years. Decreases happened all inner east wards bar one. In wards such as The Mount and Ballymacarrett notifiable offences recorded by the PSNI fell by 20-30%, while in the Island ward over this five-year offences rose by almost 45%.

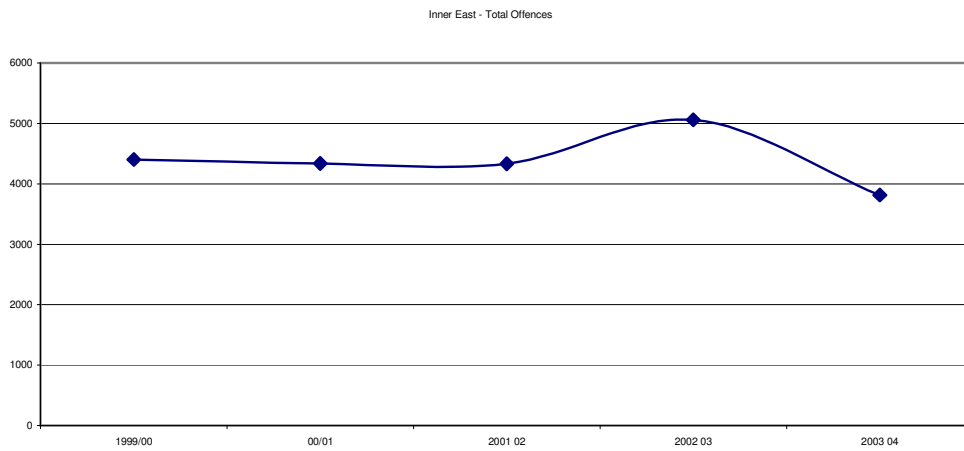


Table ?? Total Notifiable offences in Greater Shankill Wards

	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Change from 99/00 to 03/04
BALLYHACKAMORE	627	592	790	809	481	-23.3
BALLYMACARRETT	618	737	784	993	467	-24.4
BLOOMFIELD (BELFAST)	942	938	873	855	717	-23.9
ISLAND	729	677	750	1120	1054	44.6
THE MOUNT	898	833	694	692	615	-31.5
WOODSTOCK	590	562	441	591	478	-19.0
<b>Inner East</b>	<b>4404</b>	<b>4339</b>	<b>4332</b>	<b>5060</b>	<b>3812</b>	<b>-13.4</b>
<b>Belfast</b>	<b>38441</b>	<b>38106</b>	<b>39710</b>	<b>40267</b>	<b>32545</b>	<b>-15.3</b>

## 2.2 The context of loyalist communities: Community development

The purpose of this section is to examine the work of LCTIs against a number of important policy considerations that impact negatively on working class loyalist communities, namely:

- \* Poor Social Capital;
- \* Relative Deprivation;
- \* Lack of Community Cohesion; and
- \* Weak/Fragmented Community Infrastructure.

The above issues all act to prevent the positive development of loyalist communities. We first attempt to identify, with the aid of the available literature, an assessment of how each of the above considerations impact on loyalist communities. We then assess the overall impact of fragmentation - a somewhat less known or examined policy and practice term - on loyalist communities in Northern Ireland.

One thing that has been researched and is now evidenced is that loyalist communities face a number of challenges. A number of loyalist communities, for example, are among the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland and the profile of the Inner East and Greater Shankill areas of Belfast show evidence of high levels of relative deprivation. They also face the problems of an aging population, high crime rates, high unemployment, low educational attainment, poor housing, poor health, and lack of community cohesion. Loyalist

communities are often described as having poor social capital, a lack of community infrastructure and poor access to funding. Statutory bodies in their attempts to deal with the concerns of these communities have found major difficulties in addressing issues such as lack of community infrastructure. Another complicating factor is that there is a view within these communities that the 1998 Belfast Agreement has benefited the Catholic/nationalist/republican community at the expense of loyalist communities. There is a view that Catholic communities are better funded and get more government assistance than their communities.

### **2.2.1 Poor social capital**

Social capital, as developed by Robert Putnam, is an idea that has been taken up by academics and policy makers and used to measure the development of communities. The theory of social capital relates to the connectedness of a community. A community that has good social capital is one where the individuals within it feel safe, feel that they belong, that they have a voice and that their community can affect change and draw on expertise and wider relationships. The three main aspects of social capital are bonding, bridging and linking capital. Bonding capital is described as the trust and unity within a community, bridging capital is a community's relationships with other communities and linking capital is a community's relationships with government and statutory agencies.

The prevailing view in Northern Ireland has been that loyalist communities suffer from poor social capital. Cairns et al, ("Social Capital, Collectivism - Individualism and Community Background in Northern Ireland" OFMDFM October 2003) point out that 'funders frequently remark that the community organisations are more developed in predominantly Catholic/nationalist areas than in Protestant/unionist/loyalist areas'. Cairns et al tested this perception of difference through survey work and found that there were no differences between the social capital of Catholics and Protestants. However, their

qualitative investigations noted that loyalist communities did have less social capital than Catholic areas.

Studies of social capital in Northern Ireland have tended to suggest that loyalist communities have too much bonding capital (ref?) and not enough bridging capital. This is to say that loyalist communities are unified and contain many bonding relationships but through the Northern Ireland conflict they have become very inward looking and possess very little bridging links to the 'other' community, either failing to identify with or actively distrusting other communities.

However, more recent work by Morrissey (interview with author) suggests that the opposite may be the case. Morrissey suggests that loyalist communities now are so fractured through feuds and because they inhabit such small and disjointed physical environments that they have very little unity or bonding capital and that the growth of the LCTIs has provided these communities with wider links with other communities and thus provided much needed bridging capital.

The third tenet of social capital, linking capital, is also integral to this report. A central finding of this report is that LCTIs feel peripheral to the statutory sector. Loyalist communities could be said to have poor linking capital due to their lack of community organisations; and that the organisations that do exist, namely the LCTIs, are not fully acceptable to the statutory sector because of their relationships with paramilitaries. This issue is further addressed in the findings section of this report.

### **2.2.2 Relative deprivation**

The Government's Multiple Deprivation Measure (Noble Index) shows that loyalist communities suffer from multiple forms of deprivation. The Index shows that electoral wards in loyalist areas rank high on income, employment, education and health deprivation among others. However these are factors that are not exclusive to loyalist communities. The impact relative deprivation

does have on loyalist communities is to magnify the other problems faced in these areas. It has been well researched that deprivation leads to social exclusion and therefore compounds the disadvantage within an already impoverished community.

### **2.2.3 Lack of community cohesion**

A policy initiative that may be of increasing importance in Northern Ireland and especially in loyalist areas is community cohesion. The basis of community cohesion, the Cattle Report ("Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team" Home Office, 2001) which arose out of the English race disturbances noted that "there is an urgent need to promote community cohesion, based on a greater knowledge of, contact between and respect for, the various cultures that now make Great Britain such a rich and diverse nation".

The concept of community cohesion as a policy initiative differs from current thinking in Northern Ireland which is focused more on dealing with individual contexts and choosing an approach to fit - single identity or otherwise - than on always using a community cohesion approach. In dealing with the animosity between racial groups in close proximity, community cohesion aims to prioritise its resource delivery to partnership working. This sentiment, transposed to Northern Ireland policy, will mean that policy interventions may be geared toward cross-community partnerships and the twinning of communities.

Evidence would suggest that loyalist communities suffer from a lack of community cohesion. These communities as discussed earlier are isolated from the Catholic community, from other factions within loyalism and they also feel that they have been abandoned by mainstream unionism and by middle class Protestants. To date, a large proportion of the projects funded in loyalist areas are single identity projects. Community cohesion development in Northern Ireland means that single identity work would become less of a priority.

#### **2.2.4 Weak Community Infrastructure**

Again, like poor social capital, this is a term often used to articulate the difficulties facing Loyalist communities. Unlike social capital, it refers more to the resources a community has enabling it to deliver services to its members. Community infrastructure as defined by the Department of Social Development is as follows.

Community Infrastructure is the combination of physical resource, structures, capacity and skills which support communities to collectively identify and articulate their needs. Effective community infrastructure supports work within and across community boundaries resulting in sustainable, accountable and community led activities which address individual and community needs.

Cairns et al (2003), point out that the term 'weak community infrastructure' is disputed by some members of both communities. Their research found that some within loyalist communities felt that the term stigmatised their community as being backward with regard to social development. Nationalist areas, the research found, felt the term 'was being attached to Unionist communities in order to enable them to benefit from positive discrimination and to qualify unfairly for funding which they would not have been entitled to under conventional criteria for allocating funds to communities' (2003).

On the one hand, there is some academic research to suggest that Protestants, along with women and farmers, have traditionally been under-represented in particular types of community development initiatives in Northern Ireland<sup>6</sup>. Whilst a Department of Finance and Personnel study on PEACE 1 spending found that there was slightly more funding going to the Catholic community, they found that this was explainable on grounds of higher disadvantage in Catholic areas and the targeting need basis of the fund. However the study did show that higher proportions of applications came from

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<sup>6</sup> This research was .... DETAILS OF LIMITATIONS

Catholic areas (“The Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation: an Estimate of Community Uptake”, by Trutz Haase and Jonathan Pratschke, 2003)

Nonetheless, much of the research, such as Cairns et al's, does highlight that there is a continuing, widespread perception that differences in community infrastructure do exist between deprived Catholic and deprived Protestant areas. However the actuality of this difference in infrastructure has not been well evidenced. One study, carried out by OFMDFM on community groups in North Belfast did find that there are differences between groups in both communities. The study found that groups in Catholic areas had more active members, more users of their services, had less of a difficulty finding skilled members and had more paid staff. However other work looking at why these differences exist has found that it is not a matter of weak community infrastructure but rather fragmented community infrastructure.

This idea of fragmented infrastructure refers to the fact that loyalist communities suffer from a lack of cohesion. The feuding between paramilitary groups and the separation from middle class unionism and its political parties has left loyalist communities disjointed and fearful of reaching outside of their immediate area. The notion of fragmented community infrastructure is an idea that runs through the other issues already mentioned. Morrissey's suggestion that there are more partnerships between loyalist and nationalist groups and communities than there are between loyalist groups and communities is indicative of the divisions within loyalist areas.

### **2.2.5 Summary: Introducing fragmentation as a policy response in loyalist communities**

The fractured nature of loyalist communities has been a constant theme through the above review, and it is consistently highlighted in the findings of this research. The critical policy question is why is there such fragmentation in loyalist areas compared to nationalist areas with similar or even worse levels of deprivation - and also in relationship to wider unionism. To this, there are a number of possible or compounding answers. Research suggests

that loyalist areas have suffered from a lack of political unity and leadership. Nationalist communities are represented by two major political parties and these two parties, the SDLP and Sinn Fein, have substantial support and both or either one of them is accepted across the Catholic community. This is not the case in loyalist areas. Some representatives from loyalist areas suggest that the main unionist political parties are unwilling to engage openly with and support loyalist communities. Loyalist communities have therefore felt that they suffer from a lack of access to government at a political and policy development level. Loyalist areas have also been separated by feuds within and between competing paramilitary organisations and these feuds have led to disputes resulting in communities separating and continued fragmentation exists. For a combination of these reasons, this fragmentation is the background against which the LCTIs carry out their work.

### **2.3 The context of loyalist communities: Informal justice**

Much of the LCTIs' work is concerned with community development, which is directly affected by the policy context outlined above. Other aspects of their work fall into the sphere of 'informal justice', in particular restorative justice. This is where community-based groups seek to play a role in the mechanisms of justice outside the formal criminal justice system. There is a small, but burgeoning, academic literature on this topic. Below we explore how the key arguments have been played out in the context of Northern Ireland.

Some of the literature expresses reservations about community organisations that seek to address crime, but do not operate within the formal justice system. There are also concerns about certain organisations' relationships with paramilitary groupings, and in many cases, the former combatant status of the staff of the organisations. Morrissey (ref?), for instance, while pointing to the constructive possibilities of community organisations engaged in informal justice, argues that there is a danger of what he terms the "warlord syndrome". He describes this as a situation where organisations wish to be the sole gatekeepers of their communities, and where the statutory sector must to "do business" with them before they can gain access to that community. Similarly, Knox (ref?) expresses concern that the gatekeeping

role of some community organisations, especially regarding criminal justice issues, allows a “murky world” to be hidden from the scrutiny of the police. Knox suggests that giving organisations a certain amount of licence to police themselves means that they get to choose what to deal with and what crime they allow to exist uncensured. These issues are raised in the context of both loyalist and republican communities in Northern Ireland.

McEvoy and Mika (2003) summarise the main critiques of informal justice as follows: that the organisations are sinister; that they idealise the notion of community; that they have been a technical and evaluative failure; and that they are impossible to operate in reality. Based on extensive and direct experience of these organisations over three years in Northern Ireland, McEvoy and Mika counter these critiques in a variety of ways, concluding that informal justice in Northern Ireland is both possible and positive under certain circumstances.

With regard to the organisations being sinister, McEvoy and Mika acknowledge that in post-conflict situations, state suspicion of paramilitary involvement is understandable and that some small element of coercion will inevitably occur within any restorative justice scheme. However, they point out that in the three years since the projects have been operational, and despite intense scrutiny by the media and the police and their formidable caseloads, no credible evidence has been produced to suggest that there has been any violence or threats against anyone involved in restorative justice programme. They conclude that accusations of being sinister are based on false premises.

McEvoy and Mika have sympathy with Dignan’s (2000) view that community-based organisations, in this case restorative justice programmes, idealise the notion of ‘community’ as something that is consensual and harmonious and that this may ignore the wishes of those who do not agree with them. However, McEvoy and Mika argue that it is possible to avoid the pitfalls of authoritarian communitarianism where there is an organised and dynamic community sector and a commitment to non-exclusionary practices; where individuals possessed of political skills and ability both facilitate negotiations

with funding and state agencies, and existing community groups and resist pressure for local vigilantism; and where there is a commitment to human rights standards. All of these, they argue are possible, and happening, in the context of Northern Ireland.

McEvoy and Mika are in favour of the rigorous evaluation of restorative justice programmes, but argue for an additional element, beyond mere comparisons with other crime prevention strategies on the grounds of effectiveness to be considered. That element is the context of post-conflict transition, which they argue opens up the whole evaluation process to new considerations. They agree with Braithwaite (1989)<sup>i</sup> that it is too 'static' a view to judge the effectiveness of restorative justice purely as a crime reduction strategy, and point to the following developments in Northern Ireland in support of their case: Hardened paramilitaries are embracing restorative justice values and practices; Communities who once demanded violent punishments are now using restorative justice projects and accepting those previously banished back into the community.

Such evidence of positive transition suggests that evaluation should be of a political rather than a technical nature. They argue that at grass roots level, such an evaluation of community-based restorative justice in Northern Ireland provides insights well beyond the technical merits/demerits into the extent to which cultures of violence and poor state/community relations have genuinely altered over the course of the transition.

Finally, McEvoy and Mika ask whether community-based restorative justice is actually possible. Reliance on state funding and referrals form the formal justice system and the relative power of statutory agencies in relation to community-based schemes ensures that such schemes end up squarely in the 'belly of the beast' of state power (Boyes-Watson 1999).<sup>ii</sup> In the Northern Ireland context, such criticism has been strongest from now dissident republicans who argue that mainstream support is an example of a sell-out of traditional republican objectives. McEvoy and Mika argue, however, that the development of indigenous forms of law in community-based restorative

justice schemes can be an empowering and educating aspect of community development — particularly for those communities estranged from the state.

Following Daly and Immarigeon<sup>iii</sup> (1998), they do, however, sound a note of caution that advocates of restorative justice should promise less. These organisations cannot address structural problems underlying criminality and anti-social, behaviour in Northern Ireland, nor single-handedly end punishment attacks. What they can do, as Merry and Millner<sup>iv</sup> (1993) argue, is to entrench and reinforce changes already occurring in segments of society, or consolidate changes accomplished through other forms of political transformation.

Overall, it is clear that there are mixed opinions about the theory and practice of informal justice in Northern Ireland. These debates are echoed throughout the primary research we conducted for this report. The literature to date highlights that academics and policymakers have a number of reservations about organisations engaged in informal justice. However, others are more positive and the literature also underlines the positive impact that organisations in Northern Ireland have actually made in the transition away from conflict. With these debates in mind, the report now turns to the primary research on the network of Loyalist Conflict Transformation Initiatives outlined above.

#### **2.4 Existing evaluations, hidden work and added value**

Analysis of the existing evaluations revealed a focus on **funded** actions. These tended to demonstrate the range of activities engaged in by the LCTIs, and reported positively on the outputs of actions: numbers completing training, inquiries at advice centres, information disseminated and so forth. These evaluations also included some case studies illustrating the impact of LCTI outcomes. A number of barriers or problems faced by the LCTIs have been highlighted, including, access to funding, demand exceeding supply in the initial stage of initiatives, a range of staff training and development needs especially the need to develop skills in the areas of finance, monitoring and evaluation methodologies.

In the case of restorative justice initiatives, evaluations tended to stress the positive impact of initiatives on victims of crime and the successes in working with young men (a notoriously difficult group). Evaluations also identified the need to move towards good practice guidelines developed in other jurisdictions and to address the outstanding issues around the relationship between restorative justice initiatives and the criminal justice system

However, the existing evaluations contained little material on those largely **unfunded** areas of work undertaken by the LCTIs. It became apparent early in the course of the research, through discussion and site visits with the individual LCTIs that these areas had to date largely been hidden from view. A more detailed appreciation of the type and extent of this hidden work was gathered through the use of work diaries, where the LCTIs were asked to record in detail all work activity undertaken during one week in October 2004. This provided a snapshot of the typical workload carried by the LCTIs.

The work diaries revealed that, in addition to the management and delivery of funded programmes and actions, each LCTI was contributing a significant amount of additional time each week to routine and unplanned conflict transformation activities. Such routine activities included sitting on the management committee of other LCTIs, assisting in the development of LCTIs in other areas, and participating in committees and steering groups of other community based initiatives (often in partnership with statutory agencies). This also encompassed engaging with other groups and organisations in their areas on issues such as, parading, decommissioning murals and the display of flags and emblems. The unplanned activities reported by the LCTIs included responding to interface, parading and intercommunal tensions, and assisting colleagues, from their own and other LCTIs, with situations around paramilitary violence and intimidation.

Not only was detailed consideration of these types of activities largely absent from the existing evaluations, perhaps more importantly, these activities are of a type where the LCTIs were uniquely placed to make a positive contribution,

and thus to add significant value. It is an exploration of this hidden work that forms a large part of the focus of this research.

### **3 THE BENEFITS OF LCTIs' WORK**

The benefits of the LCTIs' work can be identified as different, yet interrelated, levels of conflict transformation. Whilst the report did not generate 'hard' statistical data to evidence benefit, the fieldwork produced individuals' accounts of benefit, based on their experience of the LCTIs' work. The LCTI staff's own accounts have been interpreted in the light of findings from non-LCTI focus groups and interviews. These accounts often tended to be mutually re-inforcing. The main benefits identified are explored below.

#### **3.1 Political and peace process benefits**

One of the major benefits the LCTIs' work brings is enabling progress in the political and peace process. This arises from their work mediating tensions within and between communities and their liaison between official bodies and the loyalist community.

##### **3.1.1 They both represent and challenge existing thinking and practice within loyalism**

Firstly, the LCTIs both represent and challenge existing *thinking* within loyalism. They are pro-Agreement in politics. As a participant in the LCTI management focus group stated, 'we are quite content with the constitutional situation. The UVF and RHC believe they have a settlement'. The LCTIs argue that although mainstream unionism claims to represent working class areas, they have little understanding of the problems facing loyalist communities. Therefore, along with the PUP, the LCTIs see their role as providing progressive analysis of the political situation as it affects working class Protestants. They do have reservations about the political process and argue that the stalemate at the level of political elites does not set a good example for loyalists. Nonetheless, they are broadly pro-Agreement and do not wish to oppose political change.

The LCTIs are one of the very few actors in a position to engage with loyalist paramilitaries. As former combatants in the LCTI management focus group pointed out, 'the RHC and UVF listen to what we say...because we are ex-

prisoners and were part of these organisations we understand how far we can go and can bring them along'. As another former combatant put it, 'we have the trust of UVF and RHC because no matter how far we engage with republicans they know we won't sell them out.'

This enables LCTIs to raise current debates and concepts within the loyalist constituency that enables conversation on conflict transformation. For example, the Inner East Forum fostered a debate with loyalists on 'what is social justice?'. Similarly, the LCTIs launched a document on 'Truth Recovery' in November 2004, which was the result of key loyalist figures' and activists' reflections on a truth recovery process in Northern Ireland. So the LCTIs create a forum for loyalists to discuss sensitive and current issues. These forums encourage paramilitaries to explore things from their perspective. The agenda is steered towards facilitating paramilitaries to develop their own understanding of key issues and opening up opportunities for others to engage with paramilitaries. Moreover, LCTIs are skilled at translating wider political debates into a language that paramilitaries understand. For example LCTIs have drawn parallels between 'human rights' stressed by the Agreement and 'civil and religious liberties' stressed by paramilitaries. It is important to underline that these debates now include lower ranks of paramilitaries, not just senior levels.

LCTIs do not just listen to paramilitaries; they also aim to provide leadership in terms of ideas and vision for the future. The LCTIs believe that their role is to help paramilitaries understand their options and how they can move forward non-violently. The more these discussions are embedded and supported, the more trust is built between participants and the more topics can be discussed. Whilst truth and social justice are on the agenda currently, many hope that even more issues can be dealt with over the next two to five years. In short the LCTIs are able to challenge thinking in a way that does not alienate loyalism.

The LCTIs also challenge current *practices* within loyalism. For example, LCTIs have been crucial in demilitarising the social environment by removing

paramilitary flags, replacing paramilitary murals etc., working to end punishment beatings, diffusing interface rioting and violence through the mobile phone network and mediating tensions around parading. Cultural and sporting themed murals, for example, have been replacing military images over recent years around Belfast. This requires delicate dialogue with paramilitaries that other bodies are not position to engage in. Participants in the statutory focus group corroborated the accounts of the LCTIs and agreed that the LCTIs were highly effective in transforming these practices.

### **3.1.2 Diffusing situations helps stabilise the wider peace process**

The kinds of activities described above do not just benefit loyalist communities; they help stabilise the wider peace process. Participants in the LCTI practitioners focus groups gave the example of Torrens, where 25 families were displaced. They pointed out how EPIC brought them together as a collective and involved statutory agencies in order to address their situation. A representative from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive agreed that EPICs role was vital and highlighted their work in helping rehouse 300 families during the Shankill feud in 2000. Participants in the statutory focus group as well as the LCTIs themselves agreed that these positive responses to crises promote stability in the wider peace process. For example, a PSNI representative argued that the LCTIs played a vital role in calming tensions in interface areas. The absence of interface violence takes Northern Ireland collectively towards a more normalised situation beneficial for the wider peace process. Moreover, the absence of interface violence helps remove the perceived need for paramilitaries to defend their areas. Similarly, a representative from the Parades Commission was positive about the role of the LCTIs in reducing the contention around parades. He described how the wider loyalist community perceives the Parades Commission as being opposed to loyalist culture and is therefore hostile to it, and how the Commission's relationship with the LCTIs proved an invaluable source of contact with loyalism that helped facilitate dialogue and understanding. It is clear that these mediations help stabilise the wider peace process.

### **3.1.3 Actively engage in seeking to influence policy on conflict management**

The LCTIs play an important role both in lobbying and seeking to influence policy on behalf of deprived loyalist communities. EPIC for example engage in dialogue with the Irish government, and receive some of their funding from them. The wider network of LCTIs lobby government ministers and departments such as NIO and OFMDFM, in order to raise awareness of their work and of the issues faced in loyalist areas such as paramilitary youth recruitment and the integration of former combatants into civic and political life. The LCTIs also talk with the PSNI and other statutory bodies about relevant policy areas, although they do not have as much influence as they would like. The LCTIs argue that they are one of the few agencies that have the skills, confidence and contacts to engage with government to enable working class loyalists to get their voice heard. Representatives from the statutory focus group echoed this point. They said that the LCTIs ‘provide a conduit and an articulate voice’; and that they are ‘mature and balanced’. They also described organisations as forward thinking

### **3.1.4 Constructively engage with former adversaries**

A major benefit the LCTIs bring to the political process is the example they set by making peace with their former adversaries. One participant in the LCTI management focus group commented on the irony of former combatants engaging in face-to-face dialogue and reconciliation while politicians have made slower progress. After the ceasefires he points out how cross community contact expanded and loyalist and republican former combatants began to come together to talk about their commonalities as well as their differences. Another LCTI practitioner agreed that loyalist organisations have found it easier to talk to their former republican enemies, than transcend class divisions within unionism itself ([see 4.2.4 Below](#)).

### **3.1.5 Act as conduits between statutory bodies and the community**

LCTIs are beginning to work with relevant statutory bodies such as the PSNI and Probation Board of Northern Ireland. This would not have been possible

ten years ago. This contact benefits both marginalized individuals in loyalist communities who have been alienated from the statutory system and also statutory bodies themselves who are able to reach a wider number of individuals. Both the LCTIs and the statutory focus groups pointed out that progress remains patchy and slow, however, they agree that substantial progress was being made. For example, regarding the 25 displaced families from Torrens, EPIC acted as a bridge between families and agencies, enabling DHSS officers and solicitors to meet with the families on their premises. In addition, statutory bodies do refer cases on to the LCTIs. Of course there remain contentious issues in the relationship between statutory bodies and the LCTIs (see 4.2 below), but there is certainly evidence of good working relationships and strong potential for further co-operation.

Both the LCTIs and PSNI in the statutory focus group reported positive and positive working relationships, in particular between LCTIs and the community police. Whilst the relationship is far from unproblematic (see 4.8 below), PSNI representatives sit on the management boards of most of the LCTIs and they report constructive contact between themselves and the LCTIs that benefits the community.

### **3.1.6 Seeking to develop a transferable model of peace-building**

The projects and processes developed by the LCTIs provide a transferable model of conflict resolution in Northern Ireland. LINC are involved in supporting and training individuals and groups in conflict resolution all over the north east of Northern Ireland. Their model of peace-building is also copied by other groups who have not necessarily worked directly with the LCTIs. One PSNI participant gave an example of a Belfast housing estate where the residents had repeatedly asked the UDA to discipline young people loitering on their estate,

*I know that in terms of restorative justice that that is something that they are trying to look at, which only they can start to look into, but in terms of other organisations following suit, like the UDA et cetera, they became a lot more open to listening to alternative means of dealing*

*with young people rather than beating them. For instance, one of the communities we worked in, Lyndhurst and Westway, the communities were torturing the UDA to come out and beat young people for standing around kicking footballs and stuff like that, and pinging windows et cetera. The organisation itself saw that these young people were not doing anything too bad, but the community was torturing them so much that they were demanding that something be done. The UDA approached a member of my team and asked us to respond to it so that they wouldn't have to, and I see that as being very much another organisation taking a lead from what Alternatives are doing, which is to try to find alternative solutions. That is a major impact.*

The work of the LCTIs, however, is not simply about individual and local community benefits in Northern Ireland. Their work is acknowledged as significant within the wider peace building community. Northern Ireland Alternatives for example has created a model of restorative justice that has been exported not just around Northern Ireland, but also globally. It is an international example of good practice.

### **3.2 Community benefits**

In addition to helping create positive conditions for political progress, the LCTIs work also benefits individuals and communities in loyalist areas. This arises from their support of people as well as other community groups, and the bridges they have been able to build with civil society.

#### **3.2.1 Contributes to community empowerment**

The LCTIs encourage participation in community life in Protestant working class areas in a way that provides an alternative to mainstream unionism and to paramilitarism. The main finding from the site visits was that community empowerment is one of the primary ways in which LCTIs benefit the communities they live and work in.

An example from a visit to North Belfast Alternatives provides a snapshot. North Belfast Alternatives is run out of a maisonette in Ballysillan, with another

major project, Good Morning Ballysillan, and the Residents' Association housed on the same premises. A welfare rights worker from the Community Forum comes in weekly to give advice, as does an employment advice worker. Good Morning Ballysillan is a project where elderly people in the area, including victims of crime, receive a phone call each morning. As a result they feel less socially isolated (Field 2004), and feel more able to report incidents to community associations, and Alternatives itself. Sometimes victims from the Alternatives programme will ask to be put on the Good Morning Ballysillan database. Some previous offenders from the Alternatives programme, and their parents, are now Good Morning Ballysillan volunteers. These activities promote social integration and empower a wide spread of individuals within the community.

North Belfast Alternatives maintain contact with many teenagers who come through their programmes. Alternatives recently enabled a team of three teenagers, some who have been through the restorative justice programme, to carry out research on 'What is Crime?' They interviewed politicians and have produced a report based on their findings. Alternatives have helped two local young men put together a funding proposal for compost making, where schools and households will donate their waste products to make compost. This shall be used to improve the local environment, and participants aim to turn it into a sustainable business. Alternatives have helped them secure some land, ordered machinery and facilitated a visit to a similar project in Ballymun, Dublin. In an area of third-generation unemployment, this programme will provide the young men with a volunteer allowance, important skills and contact with an advisor from Queen's University Belfast. Other teenagers in the Alternatives building reported that although they were lacked confidence to go straight into employment, volunteering for a while opened up their horizons, and helped them access training programmes. In short, North Belfast Alternatives plays a vital role in empowering the local community, not just through restorative justice, but also through a diverse range of unfunded activities.

Similar issues arose in other site visits and in LCTI focus groups. LCTIs emphasise their role in providing people with opportunities and skills. Rather than filling in paperwork for individuals, LCTIs aim to explain statutory processes, educate people about their rights and provide transferable skills. They aim to provide resources for communities that do not exist, for example the establishment of an affordable community gym in the Shankill Road.

The statutory focus group also highlighted these issues. Alternatives was commended for being an effective advocate of young people. One participant, a youth worker, described a change in attitudes, where if a young person was beaten by the paramilitaries in the past, the perception was that they deserved it. He said that young people are now thinking about this issue more, becoming aware of human rights, and their rights as children. He describes this as a 'major impact' of the programme.

The above examples are mainly from north Belfast, where we conducted an extensive site visit. However these forms of community empowerment activities are common to the entire network of LCTIs under examination in the research.

### **3.2.2 Build bridges with civil society, in particular with churches**

The LCTIs work with a wide variety of constituencies, aiming to build bridges between diverse groups in Northern Irish society. One of the main contacts is with the churches. LINC for example is connected to the Church of the Nazarene and specifically aims to encourage the Christian community in Northern Ireland to engage in social transformation action at community level. Alternatives in some areas enjoy good relationships with the churches and actually get referrals for their restorative justice programmes from them. In north Belfast for example, Alternatives go to the church to do training around restorative justice issues and the church meets one evening a month in the community centre. A minister from the Shankill area, although he has reservations about the LCTIs' associations with paramilitaries, reports they have some contact – the LCTIs come to Boys Brigade to talk about crime

issues for example. LINK in Newtownards works closely with churches and faith-based initiatives to transform loyalist communities in their area. The Newtownards Community Forum meet in the local Presbyterian Church on the Westwinds housing estate. LCTI representatives are also working with ECONI (Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland) to build understanding with churches and ministers.

Contact between the LCTIs and churches is important because the churches continue to have the respect of large numbers of people. This helps to build bridges between loyalism and civic unionism. Indeed churches emerged in the research as important partners of the LCTIs, where they are willing to engage with loyalists on social rather than spiritual issues. Where clergy prioritise spiritual issues, good working relationships are more difficult to build.

### **3.2.3 Deal with people alienated from mainstream society, that statutory bodies often find hard to reach**

Another way in which LCTIs benefit the community is their ability to deal with people alienated from mainstream society, for example young people involved in the paramilitaries. The growth of paramilitary youth recruitment was continually highlighted in the research and is one area that statutory bodies struggle to access. On the other hand, LCTIs can engage with these issues. A practitioner from outside Belfast highlighted their experience,

*Young people have been lying about their age to join the paramilitaries. When they realise they can't handle it, we work to get them out. Recently we got four out.*

LCTIs also engage with adults who are alienated from the statutory culture. If it were not for the existence of the LCTIs, many of these individuals may have gone to paramilitaries when they had problems. This theme emerged clearly in the LCTI practitioners focus group, and was consolidated by participants at the statutory focus group. It was the perception of some of the LCTI practitioners that statutory bodies had little involvement with hands-on conflict transformation. They point out that they deal with low levels of crime such as

drinking on the corner or car crime, which can have a significant impact on the well being of community members. There was also a feeling that statutory bodies were reluctant to engage with the 'murkier' side of loyalism. A practitioner from outside Belfast gives the following example,

*We held an anti-racist conference a couple of years ago and invited a [statutory representative]. She later said that she had been disgusted because an attendee had a '100% white' tattoo. She found that repulsive. But the very point was to invite those who were involved with the BNP. Those are the people we need to reach.*

However, this was coupled with the perception that to effectively deal with the issues good – horizontal – relationships with statutory bodies and LCTIs had to be developed, and that in some instances this was happening.

Participants from the statutory group articulated this issue in a different way. They said that the LCTIs were able to get access to areas where they could not, in particular where young people were coming under paramilitary threat. They also said that the LCTIs were able to connect more successfully with victims than the statutory bodies.

### **3.2.4 Support other groups**

Finally, the LCTIs play a crucial role in supporting other groups in Belfast and outside Belfast. This is something they are not funded for, but is a by-product of their other work. LINK in Newtownards for example report that LINC were instrumental in helping them set up projects to deal with loyalism. LINC has been vital for providing contacts for emerging LCTIs, and providing ongoing support, training and management where required. LINC also supports a variety of lone individuals outside Belfast who are unpaid conflict transformation practitioners. All LCTIs find that they have been asked to line-manage extra workers who are not employed by their organisations, both formally and informally. LCTIs support groups on a long-term basis. Members of a women's organisation on the Shankill Road, FADDD, described how EPIC had not only assisted them with rehousing after the 2000 feud, but had

helped them establish their own group, set up education and training, and had supported them since that date. In sum, the LCTIs' reach extends far beyond their own organisations and benefits communities all over Belfast and Northern Ireland.

## **4 THE STRENGTHS OF THE LCTI ORGANISATIONS**

The LCTIs have a range of important strengths that stem from their individual expertise and credibility as well as their organisational durability and cohesion.

### **4.1 Expertise and durability**

Everyone we spoke with recognised the commitment and expertise of individuals involved in the LCTIs. These groups have been training themselves for over ten years and have accumulated an impressive breadth and depth of experience. For example, the EPIC Advice Centre between January and October 2004 had 1024 enquiries and dealt with 194 in-depth special cases (representations, tribunals etc.). Their one funded member is acknowledged as an expert in rights and social services. Statutory bodies not only recognise, but also avail of, the expertise of all the LCTIs. A representative from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive explained how the LCTIs helped him validate the legitimacy of claims after the 2000 Shankill feud.

LCTIs are also durable groups that have been successfully operating for over ten years. Their work is often done at weekends and at night, and often at short notice in response to crises. They are constantly on call. As one participant from the practitioners focus group puts it,

*Our organisations are good at seeing things through. We do not go home at the end of our shift, unlike many of those in statutory bodies. This is because we do actually care about the people in our communities.*

This kind of commitment is a major strength, although it can also lead to stress and exhaustion. Individuals reported that they are sometimes personally in danger and described threats to themselves and family, property being damaged and so on. In addition, a lot of work in rural areas is voluntary and those from the practitioners outside Belfast focus group are not paid for their work, for example in Antrim, Monkstown, Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus.

## **4.2 Credibility of individuals**

The LCTIs have credibility on a variety of levels: within loyalist communities, amongst statutory bodies and with funders.

LCTI practitioners are often, but not always, former paramilitaries. This gives them a unique source of credibility within loyalist communities, not least amongst their former colleagues and young people vulnerable to paramilitary recruitment. This influence also extends from the fact that LCTIs members live and work in the communities they represent; this is seldom the case with statutory representatives. Their status helps at interfaces where they are able to discourage people from rioting. Because they have experienced conflict they are perceived as respected voices and are listened to, at least for the meantime. As a result they are one of the very few networks that know how to deal with issues surrounding paramilitarism. For example, when decommissioning paramilitary murals in east Belfast, the LCTIs had the relevant contacts and networks, including paramilitary participation, to gain consensus and replace images of violence with cultural and sporting murals. It is only their individual and organisational credibility that makes this possible.

The network of LCTIs is also credible amongst statutory bodies which work with them in a range of areas. This relationship is analysed more fully below under section 5.2.1. Finally, the LCTIs are trusted by major funders such as Atlantic Philanthropies. They have developed good practice in project management, financial and human resources and evaluations show them to be transparent and accountable. Most of these funding sources are, however, external to Northern Ireland and no funding is received from the government.

## **4.3 Interlinked nature of the LCTI organisations aids cohesion and strength**

The research has highlighted that the strength of the LCTIs lies in their interconnected nature. There are linkages between the core groups and linkages between core groups and other community groups, as well as the linkages between the core groups and civil society and statutory bodies

outlined above and below. LCTI practitioners report that they are in constant telephone as well as face-to-face contact with each other. They share knowledge and are all able to tap into each other's expertise by giving each other information and advice.

## **5 THE WEAKNESSES AND CONSTRAINTS FACED BY THE LCTIS**

Participants were asked during focus groups and interviews to identify their weaknesses: those areas where they felt their group or their practices could be improved, and the factors external to their groups that constrained their ability to operate effectively. These issues were also raised with non-LCTI participants, in particular, with representatives from statutory agencies. . Where there were complexities and contradictions in the findings, these are reported. Due to limited time and resources, this research is not able to do more than raise key issues for further exploration. The issues identified are discussed in turn below.

### **5.1 Organisational weaknesses**

The weaknesses identified by participants relate in part to their own practice and, in part to the nature of the work carried out by the LCTIs. Those identified included: a lack of a paper culture; the learning process associated with group start-up; and the sensitive nature of some of the issues addressed.

#### **5.1.1 Lack of a paper culture**

Focus groups with management and practitioners highlighted the challenges represented by the need to document their work and maintain records. Although some of the groups had developed more comprehensive record keeping, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms than others, overall they felt that this was an area where they had struggled to develop. As participants in the management focus group expressed it:

*In the past you would not have put anything down on paper or computer ... everyone was suspect and nothing was written down.*

Although, security concerns such as those expressed above are no longer to the fore, the management focus group was keen to stress the sensitivity of the

situations and issues with which they deal in the course of their work. For example, re-housing as a result of intimidation, or negotiating parade routes and protocols require the highest levels of confidentiality. In addition, many of the recent and more progressive moves by loyalist paramilitary groupings have been preceded by a long process of dialogue and lobbying for change by the LCTIs.

Difficulties in this area are not attributable to past concerns over security, or current sensitivities, alone. Focus groups with managers and practitioners reported that within their organisations, such tasks often fall to one individual, and that without core funding this type of work is often carried out in addition to other project or service delivery responsibilities. Many groups also lack skills and expertise in management and evaluation methodologies. To address this, efforts have been made to bring in these skills from outside their own communities, however they report a reticence on the part of others to engage with what they perceive as loyalism. In addition, some staff members' and volunteers' confidence levels and concerns in relation to literacy and numeracy, may also be at work here.

Participants were clear, however, that across the LCTIs there had been change in this area. For example, one of the groups involved in the research (LINC) use a social accounting methodology to monitor and evaluate their work, while another (Alternatives) has an ongoing relationship with a leading academic engaged in a long-term monitoring and evaluation programme on their behalf.

### **5.1.2 Organisational learning curve**

The organisations participating in this research are relatively young. Like all organisations, they experienced a steep learning curve in the first years after they were founded. As one group reported,

*Peace I funding was almost too easy ... led to a rapid expansion to meet demand ... but the capacity wasn't there to support this*

*expansion and adequately manage projects. [This was a] harsh learning experience.*

All participants in the management focus group reported that their organisations had experienced some false starts, followed by the need to pull back and reconsider their core purpose and future direction.

Although it is clear that lessons have been learned from such early experiences, there remain some areas where all groups could benefit from a more strategic approach to organisational planning and development.

### **5.1.3 Raising the organisational profile**

There was universal agreement that none of the organisations had fully engaged in work to raise their profile, or promote their work. Participants at the management focus group expressed it thus;

*We are not good at telling people how good we are.*

There were a number of reasons suggested for this. The first related to pressures of work. Respondents felt that there were a relatively small number of people to do so much work.

*It is difficult to say no to your own people so you end up with lots to do.*

However, it would also appear that LCTIs hold somewhat contradictory views on this aspect of their practice. On the one hand they reported that it was difficult to get people to promote and publicise the work of the LCTIs. For example:

*We can get people to do practical stuff but it is difficult to get them to do PR and networking for funding.*

On the other hand the management group was very clear in their assessment of peace building conferences and seminars.

*[We] aren't on the conference / peace-building circuit. If you are doing this you aren't doing your day job. People go to conferences to be seen*

*there ...*

They contrasted this with what they perceived to be a better situation in republican community.

*The republican movement has greater capacity and community development links ... and greater support. We also lack a high profile political machine like republicans.*

Although it would appear that the LCTIs recognise the importance of publicising and promoting their work, and participating in conferences and seminars in the area of peace-building and conflict transformation, there may be little time or little appetite, as yet, for this type of work.

## **5.2 External Constraints**

The constraints discussed in this section were identified in focus groups and interviews by participants in the LCTI, statutory bodies and community representatives.

### **5.2.1 A problematic relationship with statutory bodies**

The research revealed a complex and often contradictory relationship between the LCTIs and a wide range of statutory bodies.

A consistent theme in discussions at LCTI focus groups and site visits was that the statutory agencies were too far removed from the situation on the ground in loyalist areas to fully understand the problems or identify the solutions. In illustration of this point, one LCTI respondent reported that on the issue of peace lines;

*... the culture [CIV] rep for North Belfast from the NIO was only interested in the number of walls, where they were and how high they were ...*

This may be exacerbated by the different working styles exhibited by the LCTIs and statutory bodies. Statutory bodies, in common with all bureaucratic organisations, operate with a clearly delineated area of responsibility, and an

established set of processes designed to deliver fairly standardised services to a target audience. Against this, the LCTIs operate in a more immediate manner. As members of the community in which they work their relationships with users are less formal. As organisations they tend also to be less hierarchical, less bureaucratic, and more oriented towards outcomes than process concerns.

An equally strong theme emerging from research with the LCTIs was their perception was that there was a double standard about the stance adopted by the statutory agencies to their dealings with them. All were very clear in their assertions that they had good quality, co-operative and productive relationships with particular individuals and local offices of statutory agencies on the ground, however, they felt this rarely extended to official acknowledgement or support in the form of public statements, financial or other resources. The following selected comments illustrate this point;

*We have very good relationships with the community police, but at higher levels this has not been so positive ....*

*[Statutory agencies] need to acknowledge contact and admit working with us ... [we have] good relationships and feedback from working at local level, sitting on boards etc. but people at more senior levels don't feel they can support the work officially.*

*Money is not everything or the only thing. You also need good committed people to do the work ... more acknowledgement and support from central government to do our jobs. With validation and support you can attract more resources and support from outside government*

Participants in the focus group drawn from statutory bodies with a history of engagement with the LCTIs also reported these strong relationships thus;

*There would be a serious impact on our ability to do youth work in this area if they [LCTIs] were not actively engaged with us...*

*EPIC have been excellent on housing issues, and were of particular help in dealing with the feud ...*

*They deliver on what they say they will on very contentious issues ...*

They also highlighted a frustration with the development of the LCTIs thus far. One point of concern for some statutory bodies who participated was what they perceived there to be a reticence on the part of the LCTIs to fully engage with the statutory agencies, or to make the transition to a more “community development” stance. The following extracts from the focus group with statutory bodies illustrates this view:

*There is a step for them to take. They want to be in the mainstream, if I can put it that way, and I think there is a step they can take to that. That is about using careful language and all the rest of it; it's about fully engaging with the police; it's about fully engaging with all other agencies. And like all of us taking the step and saying, 'Ok, what's past is past and we need to move forward.' Full engagement: and on that basis an awful lot can be built.*

While the initial discussion focused on issues of engagement, in relation to formally engaging with the criminal justice system on issues of restorative justice, and with the statutory providers on other service delivery issues, exchanges later in the focus group gave some clues as to what this might mean.

*If they want to be involved and be seen as legitimate service providers in the same way as Youth Service or Probation or anything else in terms of any aspect they're dealing with, well then they need to make the same transition that we do. As a statutory agency, you are bound by certain requirements, you have expectations in terms of the wider community that you have to meet, and it's no different for those organisations. And I think that's where the naivety comes, or the frustration comes in terms of them needing to make that step forward.*

It would appear then, that for some of the statutory bodies present, a prerequisite for full engagement would involve the LCTIs adapting themselves to become more like the statutory bodies, in terms of their role, remit and operating style.

Some ambiguity emerged when the focus group turned to the apparent contradiction in, on the one hand, engaging with the LCTIs to try to influence situations and groups that statutory bodies could not normally reach, and on the other, exhorting the LCTIs to become more like statutory providers. The statutory participants expressed it thus:

*They come with influence in the sense that they can deliver on things. One key area for us in parading is the fact that whether we like it or not, bands, which are also a social outlet for young people, are very much under the control — not exclusively — but quite a lot of them are under the influence of one grouping or another to the extent that we would informally label parades as being UVF, UDA or whatever. In that sense, they exert an influence and they are very useful to us ...*

Despite this useful relationship, this respondent went on to ask the question

*Have they taken that step away from what is quite a lot of influence from their point of view, positional influence?*

*I just get the feeling that ordinary people out there just want to be part of normal life. These groups have come from a history over the last 30-odd years, and they have a power base. Power is very important in any community, but is it what their communities actually want from them? It's something that we all need to be looking at: they need to be looking at, and we need to look at. Because if it's not what people want, should we be preserving it and supporting it?*

*...[A]s the democratic structures take a firmer foothold and issues like the parades are resolved, which they will be eventually ... Those things will be resolved and as we move on their influence will wane ... But certainly if you are looking at the short term — and by the short term I*

*mean the next two to three years — I don't see their influence waning that substantially. But the community has to have an opportunity to grow out of these organisations and what they do. They will recognise that their time has come.*

These extracts would appear to suggest that the ongoing working relationships that exist between the statutory bodies and the LCTIs are, for some statutory bodies, more a pragmatic necessity than a recognition of the legitimacy of the LCTIs as grassroots organisations. Their status as former combatants, or proximity to some sections of the community, undoubtedly remains an issue.

Although this ambiguity remained unresolved, these views were not shared by all the participants present. There was strong feeling among several of those present that accommodation should work both ways, and that the statutory agencies also needed to take steps towards facilitating a more wholehearted partnership with the LCTIs. For example one participant said:

*I'm not sure about [name deleted] term of 'naivety', because sometimes I think that we expect groups to behave in a particular way, which isn't necessarily the same way as they think. And it's not necessarily that we have it right and they have it wrong, or that they have it right and we have it wrong. ... But it's about almost legitimising a place for them to do what they're good at and what does make a contribution. ... I am just stating that there are other ways of dealing with situations that might be more constructive at times. ... For example, the criminal justice system has been very poor in its response to victims, and it has recognised that, but it doesn't have all the answers to it either. So my wish is just to have an inclusive model where we all do the things we are good at for the benefit of the whole.*

Another expressed it thus;

*We need key players and that idea of a more inclusive model. I think that if I was to speak about statutory organisations, we are very good at lifting the hoop and saying, 'Jump', and we need to lift it higher each*

*time they jump, and there's always this thing of how close do organisations ever get, especially whenever they come from grass roots up. It is important that [the LCTIs] have come from grass roots. ... Very often, we, as the statutory agencies, come in with our top-down agenda. It's that thing about how do we stop this? People are knocking on the door and we're coming down blocking the way up. We need to sit down and look practically at are we really only paying lip service to this idea of partnership, or do we really mean it?*

It is clear that while co-operative work is ongoing between the statutory bodies and the LCTIs on a range of issues, this is neither a comfortable nor an ideal situation for some of the statutory bodies who participated in the research. On the other hand, a significant minority of those participating in the statutory bodies focus group were keen to develop closer working relationships. They stressed the importance of building a more inclusive model of working, focusing on partnership working and accommodating loyalist grassroots organisations. Ultimately, however, there was no clear agreement on the nature and extent of future change required by both statutory bodies and the LCTIs.

### **5.2.2 Funding issues**

Many of the funding problems faced by the LCTIs are the same as those faced by other community based groups in Northern Ireland. These arise as a result of changes in funding opportunities for the voluntary and community sector, in particular changes in the European Union structural funds and agenda change on the part of some funders who were active in Northern Ireland in the past. The following range of observations on funding illustrates the range of problems faced by LCTIs in relation to funding.

*Funding is short-term. Budgets have set time and money needs to be spent within deadlines ...*

*Non-recurrent and scrappy funding triples your work as every year you need to be looking for new funding.*

*Sometimes workers have not been paid for weeks ... sometimes you have to live from month to month relying on dedication and commitment but [workers] can't be expected to live so insecurely.*

There are some funding problems that, while not exclusive to the LCTIs, are exacerbated by the nature and work of the LCTIs themselves. These are discussed in turn below.

Participants at the management and practitioners focus groups and during site visits reported that they felt that conflict transformation work was '*in practice excluded from many funding opportunities*'. Many single identity groups and initiatives have reported problems securing funding, particularly under Peace II as there are difficulties in demonstrating 'reconciliation' as an element in their projects. As one participant said:

*Funding for cross-community work does not make much sense in a Catholic / Protestant context in Newtownards where 90% of people are protestant. Community relations are needed between estates, intercommunally. Cross community work is too advanced [for some] at this stage.*

Participants also felt that funders often funded the 'wrong thing' and this was the cause of some frustration for LCTIs, for example:

*The council had £350,000 to tackle anti-social behaviour in Kilcooley, but this was spent on lighting and a park warden, not on going into estates and talking to people.*

Another issue arising in relation to funding, relates to the nature of the funding opportunities available. Many of these are project or activity driven, and as a result, focus on delivering tangible outputs. Extracts from the focus management and practitioners focus groups illustrate this point:

*Funders' priorities have been skewed ... they seem to prioritise bums on seats and not the real issues.*

*The answer is not to get 1000 paramilitaries to do IT training and get jobs and go away ...*

This emphasis on activities was, they felt, detrimental to making progress in developing the process of reconciliation and peace building. The complex nature of the work of LCTIs and the sensitivity of some of the issues they address, means that progress is often slow and piecemeal. In this context, one participant said:

*The North Belfast Conflict Transformation Forum only got together in the last few months, but we are working on developing the contacts for this for 10 years.*

The establishment of the North Belfast Conflict Transformation Forum is the result of a ten-year process. A focus on projects and outputs conceals the ten years of groundwork and capacity building needed to bring all parties to the point where they were able to engage in this Forum with one another. The difference between process and project is clearly demonstrated here. Funding regimes that focus only on short-term projects and tangible outcomes effectively exclude this type of essential work.

Another commented that:

*Peace I said 'do community development for 3 years' and then Peace II said 'do economic and social development' ... this is unrealistic because communities are all at different levels and different people within communities are at different levels so they don't all fit into a wider plan ...*

Those LCTIs that had funding reported that they found the administrative burden associated with the majority of application, monitoring and evaluation regimes onerous.

On the other hand, they also identified a range of benefits associated with the experience of applying for and managing external funding such as the opportunity to develop skills and experience in the application process.

Another main benefit identified was that they had learned to become highly accountable and transparent in their practices. One practitioner expressed it thus;

*We are actually very accountable and are happy to show everybody our accounts ... we could now stand up to any audit.*

Overall, the LCTIs would appear to have some of the funding problems common to all community based groups in Northern Ireland, however there also appears to be some issues particular to the LCTIs which constrain their ability to operate effectively within current funding frameworks. What is unclear at this stage in the research is whether the problems identified by LCTIs can be overcome by changes in funding alone, or whether other factors, such as capacity building and community infrastructure would need to be addressed in parallel.

### **5.2.3 The destabilising effects of criminality on perceptions of loyalism**

A recurring theme was the criminality, in particular surrounding drugs and organised crime, within loyalism and the LCTIs' perception of an official reluctance to deal with it. LCTI groups made the point that during conflict the police seemed to have lots of resources to tackle political violence, whereas now there is less intervention. They believe police primarily deal with issues such as counterfeit DVDs, CDs and cigarettes and do not pursue drug dealers with the 'full vigour of the law'. They feel that 'bad apples' destabilise, and tarnish the reputation of, loyalism in general. The persistence of criminality makes it difficult for them to improve their communities and effectively do their jobs. In addition, they highlight the negative impact of the growing drugs culture in their communities.

A variety of reasons for this perception were put forward. Some believe it is class related. A practitioner from Belfast says that there is a communication difficulty with middle class policemen who work in working class communities who are 'not in touch with what is actually going on in these areas.' Others highlight the role of informers and argue that drug networks are not tackled

because individuals within them provide information to the security forces. Some wonder whether this is a deliberate strategy of abandonment in order to let loyalist communities implode. Others again believe the PSNI is reluctant to embrace change because there is still a 'willingness on the part of the police to let paramilitaries deal with things.' They say there is an official perception that 'it's just wee scumbags fighting each other.' Across the LCTIs there was frustration because they feel that criminality is a matter for the PSNI to deal with, and feel they cannot offer a solution to these types of behaviour.

In response to this criticism of the PSNI some commentators on the wider political process have suggested that this position tends to remove responsibility for criminality away from loyalists themselves. For all subgroups within loyalism, there is capital to be made by blaming others for unsavoury activities that go on. All police forces, to a greater or lesser extent have used informers. However loyalist criminal activity already exists. Therefore loyalists have to take responsibility for this activity.

There was some acknowledgement that criminality was an internal loyalist problem, not simply an external imposition. As one practitioner from Belfast pointed out,

*young people can make much more money selling drugs and joining a paramilitary organisation than going on a computer skills course.*

So criminality is also seen as the fault of certain sections within loyalism itself, albeit sections that the LCTIs feel they have no influence over.

From a sociological perspective, all large organisations are comprised of competing interests. Just as loyalism is fractured, the PSNI should not be seen as a homogenous organisation. The police force is a multi-faceted organisation, with many interests within it. In other words, there are necessarily competing interests, attitudes and aims within the police. The LCTIs' perception of a deliberate anti-loyalist strategy may be the product of frustration with certain sections within the force, whilst enjoying good relationships with others.

In sum, criminality within loyalism imposes a significant constraint on the effectiveness of the LCTIs' work. In part criminality persists because it is profitable for some individuals who identify as loyalists, and in part because in some cases criminality has not yet been dealt with conclusively by the PSNI. This remains a complex and sensitive area on which this research can offer no firm conclusions.

#### **4.2.4 Alienation from middle unionism**

Focus groups with LCTI management, practitioners inside and outside Belfast, Newtownards as well as the site visits all underlined working class loyalist communities' alienation from 'middle unionism'. LCTI workers report good working relationships with some individual unionist politicians, including some UUP, but overall emphasise the lack of relationship. Most agreed that in their experience the DUP disapproved of any engagement with paramilitaries or those in dialogue with them (although there is also some evidence of a thawing of this position). In contrast, the PUP was unsurprisingly reported to be extremely helpful. LCTI representatives expressed frustration that, as a participant in the Newtownards focus group put it,

*unionist politicians will talk to paramilitaries and communities quietly to sort things out, but they will not do it publicly*

In contrast, when the Assembly was operational, LCTIs felt that unionist politicians did not do much to help address the real problems they face regarding interfaces, deprivation and so on. As one practitioner from outside Belfast put it,

*We deal with a small group of certain people who are not going to affect MLA votes, so MLAs don't feel the need to talk to them.*

At the same time, other LCTI practitioners report cases being referred to them by MLAs via intermediaries.

There is also a feeling of being abandoned by unionists who were, in the words of one former combatant, 'quite happy when I was dirtying my hands'.

LCTI members felt that this estrangement is a Protestant phenomenon; one member of the management said,

*This doesn't happen to the same extent in the nationalist and republican community – they are more forgiving of the past*

Another said that,

*Nationalists understand what I was involved in but won't agree with it. They are more empathetic to my position [than middle unionism]*

Indeed those we talked to who could be perceived as 'middle unionists' did articulate doubts about the legitimacy of the LCTIs. A clergyman expressed frustration that,

*Government are throwing money at groups associated with paramilitaries, but will give nothing to the churches who have preached a message of reconciliation all throughout the Troubles*

For this clergyman, this co-existed with a perception that the groups were making some positive impact on the community. Nonetheless there is certainly reluctance amongst 'respectable' Protestants to endorse what they perceive to be slightly sinister organisations, which some fear may be 'a front for paramilitaries' (see McEvoy and Mika critique of informalism article). This imposes a significant constraint on LCTIs who find that middle unionists simultaneously distance themselves from their organisations, whilst benefiting from the work that they do.

### **5.2.5 LCTIs have a limited scope**

An important theme in the existing evaluations was that the LCTIs influence is limited in a variety of ways. Firstly, they only have influence with the UVF and RHC; they do not have the ear of the UDA or any other loyalist paramilitary groupings. This is because of the fractured nature of the Protestant community in general, and loyalist working class communities in particular. As one participant in the statutory focus group said,

*the downside is that they do only tend to talk for one side of a very fractured community.*

Another participant in the statutory focus group criticised the LCTIs for remaining in their 'comfort zone' by not extending out their skills and experience to others. In response to this the LCTIs argue that they can only be expected to work with those constituencies that accept them, and are as yet unable to extend their influence to other groups. On the other hand, LCTIs have developed models of good practice that are seen to work by other groups, who may in turn follow suit. As one statutory representative pointed out,

*Now you are seeing UPRG/UDA individuals who are in some ways starting to mirror or try to mirror their activities and using organisations like EPIC as a benchmark for the way forward. They have organisations such as PIN et cetera, so in some ways EPIC were groundbreaking. [...] There are still a lot of things that they could do, and certainly they could widen their approach. But they have given a lead within their own community for others to follow and to develop.*

Therefore, it might be argued that whilst the LCTIs work is limited in scope in an immediate sense, the ripples of their influence extend more widely. Although their limited appeal in some areas continues to significantly constrain their work, it is possible that loyalism may transform far enough to open these opportunities in the future.

### **5.2.6 The 'consequences' of failure**

The focus groups and site visits revealed a very human side to a lot of the work carried out by the LCTIs. In an environment where people were in danger of physical harm, or experiencing the stress and emotional harm associated with sectarian conflict and violence, there are very real consequences associated with LCTI failure for the people concerned, and in some instances for the wider community. The context of interface conflicts and punishment violence is often complex and sensitive, and a resolution will

frequently involve meeting and mediating with a number of different opposing groups. This can be a slow and intensive process. The LCTI management and practitioners who participated in this research were keenly aware of these pressures and consequences, and as a result they felt they needed to respond to all such issues as they arose. The frequency and intensity of such issues could not be anticipated, and responding to these issues has tended to take precedence over what they perceive to be other less urgent work, in many cases, this is strategic planning and management development work

### **5.2.7 Weak community infrastructure**

The issue of weak community infrastructure within loyalist communities arose in the focus groups with management, practitioners and the statutory bodies. Although there was some disagreement as to whether community infrastructure in loyalist areas was weak or disorganised, there was a general perception amongst practitioners and management that republican / nationalist communities had better or stronger community infrastructure.

Participants posited a variety of reasons for this. It was suggested that the republican community were better at retaining their educated classes, while the educated or professional classes from loyalist backgrounds tended to move away, physically and ideologically, from their communities. It was also suggested that Catholicism as a unified religion aided in the cohesion of the republican community, whereas the factions within Protestantism contributed towards the fragmentation of the loyalist community. It is interesting to note the resonance of this view with the existing academic literature on poor social capital and fractured community infrastructure discussed at Section 2 above.

On the basis of the research conducted as part of this project, it has not been possible to reach any firm conclusion on this issue of access to funding, and the question remains an open one for the LCTIs, and within the academic debate more generally.

Findings from this research project indicate that the LCTIs have unique experience and skills in areas including youth interventions, housing and advice, and managing and transforming sensitive conflict issues such as parading, punishment attacks, interface violence, and paramilitary symbols. This represents a valuable resource for their community. However, the divisions within loyalism itself, mean that this capacity is not, at present, easily available to the wider loyalist community. What we have seen is strong capacity within one constituent part of a split community. It would appear more appropriate, then, to talk of fractured rather than weak or disorganised community infrastructure in the loyalist community as a whole.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH**

This section brings together the findings from the research and identifies the barriers to, and factors facilitating the work of the LCTIs. The research has highlighted many complex areas around the LCTIs' work, and has exposed contradictions in how others perceive this work. Given the limitations of the research identified in Appendix 1, it is not possible to explore these complexities and contradictions further – where found, they have simply been reported. Moreover, without the additional time needed to investigate the technical aspects of any potential recommendations, it was considered more prudent to limit the scope of this section to an identification of the issues for exploration arising from the findings. These are presented in bullet point format at the end of the section

### **6.1 Barriers to the work of the LCTIs**

The main barriers to the work of the LCTIs were found to be around legitimacy, funding issues and questions of weak or fractured community infrastructure. These barriers are discussed in turn below.

#### **6.1.1 Legitimacy**

Although it is clear that the LCTIs have credibility within their community, and enjoy the confidence of those statutory bodies with whom they work, it would appear that there remains an issue around perceptions of legitimacy. Central to perceptions of legitimacy is the LCTIs' role as conduit between loyalist paramilitaries, the wider loyalist community and state bodies. Their role as conduit is enabled by the former combatant status of many key players in the LCTIs. As former combatants they can credibly promote an alternative to violence within their own community and to loyalist paramilitaries. This influence allows them to reach individuals and groups not normally accessible to statutory bodies. However, it also leaves them vulnerable to suggestions of 'guilt by association'.

In order to continue to operate effectively as a conduit LCTIs need to maintain their own working style and a stance independent from statutory bodies. Statutory bodies have often interpreted this as reluctance on the part of LCTIs to be fully open and transparent in their actions. This makes them extremely cautious in their engagement with the LCTIs. Both the LCTIs and the statutory bodies acknowledge that this hampers effective working practices on both sides. For the LCTIs, this has wider implications, particularly in terms of access to government funding and support. In the medium term the absence of official recognition, funding and support may undermine the LCTIs' credibility within the wider loyalist community and hamper their ability to demonstrate the viability of their alternative to paramilitarism.

This lack of legitimacy also manifests itself in the distance middle unionism places between itself and organisations with any potential association with paramilitarism. Despite their close relationship with the PUP, this distance from mainstream political influence places increased pressure on the LCTIs to build bridges with civil society and create the conditions for loyalist participation in conflict transformation.

Given that Northern Ireland is still in a period of transition from conflict, it is understandable that all parties would have some concerns in relation to partnership working and co-operation. This is a new phase for everyone. However, until the issue of legitimacy is addressed it will remain a barrier to the LCTIs fulfilling their full potential.

### **6.1.2 Funding issues**

Many of the funding difficulties experienced by the LCTIs are common to many other community groups. These include lack of access to core funding, to flexible funding and what is perceived to be an overly burdensome application and monitoring procedures. The LCTIs also experience some specific funding problems in that the sensitive nature of their work makes it difficult to document activities and the complex nature of their work means that progress is often slow and piecemeal and makes it difficult to measure

impacts and outcomes. The mainstream funding opportunities available tend to be project or activity driven, and as a result, focus on delivering tangible outputs that do not easily cater for the *process* of conflict transformation. Difficulties in accessing funding have implications for staffing and the continuity of the LCTIs work, which imposes a significant barrier to their short and longer-term effectiveness.

There is also an issue over the sources of the LCTIs' funding, which have to date been primarily from outside Northern Ireland. This is connected to issues of legitimacy and the nature of Peace II funding criteria.

While funding alone may not be the answer to the LCTIs' problems, it will play an important part in any solution. For example additional resources would enable the LCTIs to address their own organisational weaknesses in the areas of developing monitoring and management information systems and acquiring expertise and experience in promoting their work, networking and sharing best practice.

### **6.1.3 Fractured community infrastructure**

Given the complexity of the debate around weak/disorganised community infrastructure in loyalist communities, it has not been possible in this research to reach any firm conclusion or recommendation on this topic. The research revealed that the fractured nature of loyalist communities has tended to be mirrored in the community infrastructure in loyalist areas. This has had some impact on the work of the LCTIs in their own areas, and may also limit the effectiveness of the LCTIs in seeking to work outside their own section of loyalism. What is clear, however, is that as organisations they represent a considerable capacity building resource for their own communities and for wider loyalism. Although the LCTIs could play a key part in developing community capacity and cohesion, at this time it would be both unfair and unrealistic to place the onus for addressing the fractured nature of loyalist community infrastructure onto the LCTIs alone. A programme of additional

research, support and policy-development would be required from government before this issue could be coherently addressed.

## **6.2 Factors facilitating the work of Loyalist Conflict Transformation Initiatives**

The research identified a range of factors that facilitate the work of the LCTIs. These are the credibility and expertise of the organisations themselves, the flexibility of some sources of funding currently held by the LCTIs, and the existing organisational networks and personal commitment of individuals with the LCTIs. These facilitating factors are discussed in turn below.

### **6.2.1 Credibility and expertise**

As discussed above, the key strength of the LCTIs is their ability to act as a conduit between the wider loyalist community, paramilitaries and statutory bodies. Their credibility within the wider community and paramilitaries springs from the status of many of the key players within the LCTIs as former combatants. As former combatants they can credibly promote an alternative to violence within their own community and to loyalist paramilitaries. This influence allows them to assist in the resolution of contentious and sensitive issues. For example: demilitarisation of the urban environment, parades, interface violence, punishment beatings and so forth.

At present, only a small number of individuals or organisations have the credibility and experience to engage in these types of activities with any success.

### **6.2.2 Flexibility of funding**

At present many of the LCTIs have access to some sources of flexible funding. This is essential for the ability of these organisations to maintain a flexibility in their day to day operational activities. This flexibility is a key strength of the LCTIs, as it allows them to assist statutory bodies in

addressing issues of contention and to respond to urgent requests for assistance from others engaged in conflict transformation work in loyalist communities across Northern Ireland. It also supports LCTIs to carry forward the long-term capacity building work needed to bring together fractured communities and former enemies with a view to reconciliation and transformation. In addition, it has allowed some of the LCTIs to think outside the box, and pursue innovative and cross-cutting community regeneration projects. This type of funding tends to be supported by organisations outside Northern Ireland, and indications are that this valuable source of flexible funding will be unavailable after May 2005. While this funding is available, it is a strength of the LCTIs, however the likely result of the ending of this type of funding will be a reduction or withdrawal from those areas of work outlined above.

### **6.2.3 Networks and personal commitment**

The LCTIs involved in this research benefited from the interconnectedness of the individual organisations, and the support and resources they each bring to the work of the others. Over the years, a history of joint working on the ground between the LCTIs and the statutory bodies, has also contributed positively to the capacity of the LCTIs to operate effectively in their communities.

The research also revealed a high level of personal commitment on the part of the management and practitioners involved in the LCTIs. This commitment to their work springs from their living and working in the communities they serve, and is what sustains their interest in circumstances of financial and job insecurity, conflict and personal stress.

### **6.3 Issues arising from the research**

Two key issues arise for the LCTIs from the research: legitimacy and funding. These are explored in turn below.

The general perception of the legitimacy of the work of the LCTIs is one of the two key issues arising from the research. Addressing this issue is a complex and long-term process of trust building and transformation across all sections of Northern Ireland society. Although LCTIs are credible to their own communities, outside of this, legitimacy cannot be conferred by, for example, political endorsement or electoral support. Northern Ireland remains a deeply divided society, and the past will continue to influence current perceptions of legitimacy for many years. In many respects this is understandable, particularly at this relatively early point in the peace and reconciliation process in Northern Ireland. This said, there may be benefits to working to improve the public perception of LCTI groups and activities within wider society, and amongst the statutory bodies in particular.

- The Advisory Group might consider options to support the LCTIs in compiling and disseminating a statement of common values and purpose, highlighting their commitment to and vision of transformed loyalist communities.
- The Advisory Group might wish to consider options for compiling and disseminating examples of good practice, successful interventions and innovative projects in the areas of conflict management and transformation and broader community development activities of the LCTIs.
- The Advisory Group might consider the feasibility, including funding, of creating a website to support the work of the LCTIs. Although it is not possible to predict the impact of any web based resource, it may, over time, facilitate and strengthen existing networking between the LCTIs and others seeking to engage in conflict transformation initiatives. In the longer term, it could also make a contribution towards the development of community cohesion within the loyalist community, raise the profile of the LCTIs, and help to address issues of poor perception and legitimacy through greater visibility and transparency.

Dialogue is ongoing between statutory bodies and the LCTIs involved in this research on a small number of issues specifically related to restorative justice. Due to the limitations of this research, the depth of data needed to reach any

sound conclusion on these specific points was not possible. For this reason, such topics do not feature in our treatment of the question of fostering legitimacy. However, we would encourage all parties to continue with what is a potentially fruitful engagement.

Funding represents the second key issue arising from this research. In common with other groups in Northern Ireland, the LCTIs have experienced some difficulties in accessing funding for single identity projects under the current funding regimes. Some of their difficulties spring from the sensitive nature of many aspects of their work. However, it is unclear from the research what, if any, part of these difficulties are related to fractured loyalist community infrastructure.

- A more stable funding regime would:
  - Allow the LCTIs to address their own internal organisational weaknesses, strengthen their management culture and develop the professionalism and qualifications of their staff;
  - Provide stability to the LCTIs and facilitate medium to long-term planning;
  - Contribute towards the development of trust and closer co-operation between the statutory bodies and the LCTIs by facilitating the development of joint initiatives within a certain planning horizon;
  - Provide the resources for LCTIs to document, publicise and share their work; and
  - Afford the committed practitioners and management of the LCTIs some measure of job security.
- The Advisory Group might consider a collective review of existing sources of funding to identify where opportunities may lie for the LCTIs.
- The Advisory Group might wish to consider methodologies to implement the recommendation, presented by the Community Evaluation Northern Ireland '*Evaluation Toolkit*', and DSD's '*Investing Together*', that funders should take a broader view (beyond narrow programme and action delivery) to encompass the social capital implications of funding decisions.

- The Advisory Group might consider conducting a skills and activities audit of the LCTIs to identify those areas of expertise that might be capitalised on by the LCTIs themselves to provide future revenue streams.
- Consideration might be given by the Advisory Group to developing capacity across the LCTIs to manage, monitor and evaluate all aspects of their work, in order to demonstrate the benefits arising from their activities.
- In the absence of an adequate monitoring and evaluation methodology, and on the basis of this research, it would appear that the decision to recognise and fund the more sensitive areas of LCTIs activities (addressing parading, youth recruitment, punishment beatings, interface violence and paramilitary flags and murals) will remain a political one. Given the difficulties of recording and measuring such activities, it may not ultimately prove possible to design a methodology to capture these activities in any quantitative way. However, consideration might be given by the Advisory Group to developing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation methodology to reflect the contribution of the LCTIs' more sensitive activities.

## **APPENDIX 1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research was participatory in that representatives from the LCTIs in the advisory group helped to define the research questions and contributed to the research process. Meetings of the advisory group were held monthly during the course of the research (4 in total) to clarify aims and provide feedback on the researchers' design. In addition, the final report was discussed at a final meeting.

The research process lasted from September to December 2004, with the three authors working part-time throughout this period. The research design was based on a multi-method approach and included analysis of primary and secondary, quantitative and qualitative data, as outlined below.

## **Review of existing research**

Firstly, we undertook a review of existing research. This included secondary literature on loyalist conflict transformation initiatives, restorative justice etc. In addition, existing documentation on the groups was collected and analysed, including any evaluations conducted to date. Their findings were summarised with a view to identifying gaps and questions for further research.

## **Mapping the activities**

The review of existing research highlighted a variety of gaps in our knowledge. In particular, there was a lack of clarity about the specific activities the groups engaged in, and questions surrounding the benefits they bring to their communities and to Northern Irish society. As a result we engaged in fact-finding work about the groups. The researchers made exploratory visits to EPIC, LINC, Alternatives (Greater Shankill and East Belfast) and the Inner East Forum to talk with staff about their work. EPIC, LINC, Alternatives and the Inner East Forum members of the Advisory Group were asked to produce weekly work diaries that would help capture the range of activities they engage in.

## **Focus groups, site visits and supplementary interviews**

The bulk of the research involved focus groups, site visits and supplementary interviews, all with the purpose of identifying strengths and benefits, weaknesses and limitations of the groups' work.

In total five focus groups were conducted – two with LCTI practitioners, and one each with LCTI management boards, statutory representatives and one group attempting to set up their own initiative.

In a sense the people who can tell us most about the impact are the LCTIs themselves. This is why we included three groups drawn from the LCTIs, two from practitioners (Belfast and outside Belfast) and the other from management (Belfast). The LCTIs suggested names of participants for these groups. Participants were drawn from a range of projects over Belfast

including Inner East Forum, LINC, Alternatives (North Belfast; East Belfast; Bangor; Greater Shankill), EPIC, the EPIC Advice Centre and the Crown Project (East Belfast). Participants from outside Belfast included Community Voice Ballymena and four independent practitioners: one from Larne/East Antrim, one from Antrim and two from Carrickfergus. Although in practice there is overlap between LCTI management and practitioners, each individual attended only one focus group. Questions focused on perceptions of the strengths, benefits, weaknesses and limitations of the LCTIs work.

It is important that the research goes beyond the LCTIs' own self-evaluation. To this end, a further focus group comprised statutory representatives who have experience of the LCTIs' work. For this, we took many suggestions of relevant participants from the LCTIs, however, the research team independently approached and selected participants. This was to ensure that participants were not handpicked by the LCTIs, thus helping to establish the neutrality and validity of the research project. In total six statutory representatives were included: two PSNI (one from headquarters dealing with policy issues and one senior officer in Belfast), one each from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, The Belfast Education and Library Board (Upper Shankill Area Project), the Probation Board of Northern Ireland and the Parades Commission. Questions centred on the relationship between statutory bodies and the LCTIs and statutory representatives' perceptions of the benefits and limitations of the LCTIs work. Representatives from Social Services who were not able to attend provided written feedback to these questions.

For similar purposes, the initial research design included a focus group comprised of unrelated community representatives such as clergy, women's groups or sporting organisations. The intention was to gain additional views that were independent from LCTI selection. Unfortunately the logistics of this proved unmanageable. Repeated attempts at contacting community representatives over three weeks did not result in phone conversations, never mind agreement to meet as a group. Due to time and resource pressures we abandoned this focus group. In its place we contacted a small number of

individuals for one-to-one interviews, which in retrospect was positive in that it may have enabled freer expression of views and opinions. Participants included a community worker, a member of the clergy (both from the Shankill area) and an academic with experience of informal justice issues. Whilst this is not a wide or representative sample of 'community opinion', it was nonetheless beneficial to gain these extra perspectives on the work of the LCTIs.

Analysis of existing research demonstrated that there are difficulties in measuring the impact of the LCTIs because much of their work is preventative in nature and may seem intangible. Our hypothesis was that examining an area without formalised LCTI projects would throw light on the added value of the LCTI's work. Therefore we conducted a focus group with community workers in Newtownards who have identified the need to engage in loyalist conflict transformation work but who lack the structures in place in Belfast (training, mentoring, support, funding etc.). The six participants included three members of the Newtownards Community Forum and three youth workers. Most of these participants had some connection to a church or faith-based organisation, including one member of the clergy. Although this was undoubtedly an influence, due to the variety of secular work they undertake it is not possible to classify this group as a faith-based initiative. The nature of problems experienced in loyalist areas, the nature of their work and the need for more formalised structures were explored in this group.

Finally, two site visits were conducted: one to EPIC and one to North Belfast Alternatives. This was to hear the perspectives of people who actually use the LCTIs' programmes. The LCTIs helped us organise the groups, but did not control whom we met and spoke with. In the case of North Belfast Alternatives, we spoke to more than ten workers and young people involved in a variety of projects from Alternatives itself to Good Morning Ballysillan to the Residents' Association. With EPIC we met a group of women from FODDD, a group EPIC supports and visited the community gym. People were asked what type of contact they had with the LCTIs and what was the nature of their

experience. The aim was to ascertain what impacts or benefits, if any, the LCTIs might bring to their local communities.

Taken together, the focus groups, site visits and supplementary interviews provided a good breadth of data, from a wide range of respondents. There was a good balance of participants selected by the LCTIs on account of their expertise, and participants independently selected by the research team. The data provided a rich depth of understanding through hearing different stories, examples and experiences.

In sum, the research design combines activity mapping exercises, existing evaluations, analysis of relevant statistical material, focus groups, site visits and supplementary interviews. This provides triangulated data that is much more reliable and valid than any of these approaches could provide alone.

### **Limitations of the research**

However, there are a number of limitations to this research, mainly due to constraints of time and resources. First of all the research was concentrated in Belfast. Although we recognise the importance of loyalist conflict transformation initiatives outside Belfast, for reasons of practicality we could only include two exploratory focus groups from Newtownards and from the northeast. We could not study these in depth or conduct site visits. Even within Belfast there was a slight 'Shankill Road' bias, simply because EPIC and Greater Shankill Alternatives are based there. Again this was for pragmatic reasons and we appreciate that the Shankill Road is not necessarily representative of loyalist communities in Belfast.

Moreover, these groups are not a representative sample of loyalist conflict transformation groups in Northern Ireland. They were not sampled for any sociological reason. Rather these groups were chosen because they are a specific network that have a relationship with OFMDFM. In terms of loyalist paramilitary groupings, the participating LCTIs' direct sphere of influence is limited to the UVF and RHC, so the research does not tell us very much about

the dynamics of loyalist groupings outside this. Therefore, we are unable to draw any wider conclusions about loyalism in Northern Ireland or Belfast as a whole based on this sample. If anything, the research confirmed the fractured nature of loyalism.

A further limitation was our reliance on the LCTIs to gather participants for management and practitioners groups. Given more time, we would have conducted extra independently selected groups. Site visits were also very limited and in presence of LCTI staff. These factors may well have influenced the types of responses we got. However, it was only because of the efficiency of the LCTIs in helping organise aspects of the fieldwork that we were able to complete the research within such a narrow time frame. In addition, the LCTIs are small organisations and whilst it could appear that participants were handpicked, it is more likely that we spoke to nearly everybody who actually works for these organisations.

Because of the tight time frame we were also limited in that the research design was influenced more by pragmatic questions rather than based on issues identified from the academic literature. Of course we believe that there is significant overlap, however, there is clearly a need for more in-depth research to be done about the LCTIs. Similarly, we were limited in that where more paper-based evidence existed, we did not get time to do a full analysis of organisations, including site visits. LINC for example suffered from this, as their record keeping was the most advanced of all the groups. However, being more church-based than the other initiatives, it is likely that a deeper exploration of LINC's work would have added another dimension to the analysis.

Therefore, this research is not intended to be an exhaustive evaluation of the LCTIs' work. But despite these caveats, this report offers a useful piece of research that maps the field and that can be used to convey initial findings, formulate policy recommendations and that can form the basis for further research.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Braithwaite, J. (1989) *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*

<sup>ii</sup> Boyes-Watson, C (1999), 'In the Belly of the Beast? Exploring the Dilemmas of State-Sponsored Restorative Justice', *Contemporary Justice Review*, 2/3: 261-81

<sup>iii</sup> Daly, K. and Immarigeon, R (1998), 'The Past, Present and Future of Restorative Justice: Some Critical Reflections.' *Contemporary Justice Review*, 1:21-45

<sup>iv</sup> Merry, S and Milner, N. 'Introduction', in S. Merry and N. Milner, eds. *The Possibility of Popular Justice*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.