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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

As the political situation in the north of Ireland continues to develop it is hoped that we are moving into a post conflict situation. In 1998 Cúnamh, which as a group is committed to supporting the needs of republican political prisoners and their families, started a consultation process aimed at exploring the effect of political conflict upon young people. In particular Cúnamh wanted to find out how the children of ex-prisoners and those who had to go into exile had been affected by the political conflict. The consultation involved representatives of Cúnamh, Tar Abhaile, the Bogside and Brandywell Initiative (BBI) and Save The Children Fund. All were conscious of the lack of research that had been done in this area, with only one other group Tar Anall in Belfast running a project, “Ag Teacht Le Chéile” (Coming Together) looking at the needs of the children of republican prisoners and their families. It is the very strongly held belief of all those involved in the consultation process that in any overall settlement the needs of the children of republican activists must to be accommodated. These children, like many other groups in our society, have their own particular identity and shared experiences and failure to meet their needs in reality means that we do not have a true overall conflict resolution process. With this in mind Cúnamh, in conjunction with Tar Abhaile, the Bogside and Brandywell Initiative (BBI) and Save The Children Fund, applied to Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (NIVT) for funding to carry out a project which would be designed by the young people to meet their needs. NIVT accepted that the overall aims and rationale of the proposal and granted funding. The groups together initiated research into the possibility of constructing a project under the title of Déagóirí Le Chéile (Teenagers Together) to meet the needs of the young people. We were tasked to carry out this piece of action research with particular aims and objectives in mind.

AIM

To produce a piece of action research based upon young nationalists’ experience of political imprisonment and exile designed to enhance their awareness of our conflict situation and their future role in shaping a new society.

OBJECTIVES

1. By exploring issues affecting young people arising from imprisonment and exile via political conflict.
2. By researching other models, concepts and thinking used to inform the development of the project.
3. Identify recommendations for selection of facilitators and governing principles of the overall project/process.

For the bulk of our research we relied upon a focus group of five young people, aged between 16 - 18 from the Derry and Letterkenny regions which it was expected would be participants in any project that came about as a result of our report. The common thread, which linked all members of the focus group, was that they had a parent or parents who were in prison or who spent time in exile as a result of their political activities connected with the Republican Movement.

From the outset of the research no attempt was made to influence the issues that the young people could raise. We wanted to consult with the young people and hear from them, in their own words, just what issues they felt affected them. While we as researchers had no wish to

be prescriptive we did lay down ground rules around confidentiality and respect. Other ground rules, which the young people felt they needed, were also put in place.

It was explained to the young people that having identified the issues that they felt most needed to be addressed that they would be involved in designing a project to fit those particular needs. It was also made clear to the focus group that the management committee of the project hoped that any ensuing project would deliver a number of valuable outcomes for the wider group who would be involved. The committee had a number of hopes and objectives in mind. Firstly, it was hoped that the project would attempt to address in full any issues that they raised, bringing in people with appropriate skills to work with them. Secondly, in line with this approach, it was hoped that through their involvement in the project that the young people would be able to become self advocates in identifying and defining their experiences and needs. Thirdly, following on from the latter, it was hoped that the young people would feel able to articulate any issues or concerns that they had to their elders, who at times had not listened, so as their views and concerns would be taken on board.

ETHOS

The ethos of the project as far as everyone was concerned is summoned up by the following beliefs:

- Listening to what children have to say is central to respecting them as human beings whose wishes and feelings deserve to be taken seriously.
- That the young people are the people with expert knowledge about the issues that affect them and ideas about how the issues could be addressed.
- That any project was more likely to succeed if the young people had their perspectives accommodated that they set the agenda and were involved in the design of the project.
- That through the design and implementation of a successful project that the young people would learn new skills that would equip them for adulthood.
- All concerned were flexible about the time span of any project. The underlying approach was that any project and its duration had to be decided upon by the young people involved.

Throughout all our approach we were guided by Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms

The child's right to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

In order to comply with the objectives with which we were tasked we conducted a literature review to discover if any relevant material existed that would help ensure that best practice would be used in carrying out the proposed project. Also in line with this approach we met with and discussed best practice in working with young people with a number of various groups. The result of this work is set out in the relevant sections below.

RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY

Our research took a number of different forms ranging from discussions with a focus group of young people who had experienced either having a parent in prison or who had to go into exile; a literature review of publications related to work done with young people in a post conflict situation; talking to different groups who work with young people and also contacting individuals who have experience of working in other areas of conflict. The problems that we encountered during this process are outlined in the various sections of this report. Our objective in carrying out all of this research was to discover what the young peoples needs were, to highlight where possible the best practices being used when working with young people and to discover if there was any relevant material which could be applied to this project.

From the outset we settled upon a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach because we felt that it was only in this manner that we could find out how the young people felt they had been affected by the conflict. We wanted them to be able to speak about their own experiences not bound by any framework that might be imposed by a quantitative approach.

We had six meetings in total with the focus group. In our first meetings with the members of the focus group we took the opportunity to outline the project and our role in it. We felt that it was necessary to adopt this approach rather than go straight into our research because we needed the young people to feel that they could trust us and feel at ease in opening up to whatever they wanted to say. We held our initial meetings with the members from Derry and Letterkenny separately. Our reason for initially going for separate meetings was our uncertainty about whether the issues that they might want to raise would be very different and so we wanted to ensure that one group voice would not drown out the other. As it transpired the drowning out process did not take place as all the young people proved to be articulate, well able to make their views and feelings known and shared some common experiences.

The discussions with the focus group were semi-structured and we tape-recorded the sessions with everyone's consent. After each tape-recorded session we would listen to the tapes and draw from them what we felt were the issues that the focus group had been emphasising were the issues affecting them. We would feed these back into future group discussions to help the process of developing a project or projects and to ensure that we were accurately reflecting what they were telling us.

The planned course of our discussions with the focus group is set out in Appendix A. There were a number of difficulties in trying to adhere to the schedule and we deal with those difficulties later on in this report. To help ensure that we covered all the areas that we needed too we drafted a set of questions for ourselves; these can be seen in appendix b. What came out of our discussions with the focus group is contained in the sections, 'Themes Arising From Focus Group Discussions', 'Menu of Needs & How Needs Should be Met', and 'Facilitators'.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

We carried out a literature review, which included a trawl of Internet sites from other areas of conflict. In doing so we hoped that we might find useful models of ongoing work with young people in a post conflict situation. The regions that we paid particular attention to were Latin America, Palestine and South Africa. From the material that we uncovered or received it became very clear that there was either a dearth of information or a lack of ongoing work with young people where they defined their needs and developed projects to meet them. In most of the conflict regions that we looked at it is clear that governments and many institutions have refused to accept that they have or had political prisoners or a political conflict. In such contexts it is easy to see why there has been a dearth of ongoing work with young people and in particular the families of those directly affected by conflict. In South Africa, where we had an expectation that things would be different, women and young people get lumped together on websites such as that of the ANC and that young people did not have an identity of their own when it came to addressing needs. Nazreen Bawa, from a legal NGO in South Africa, told us “The current youth in South Africa do not know a struggle ... as Mandela was released in 1991 and the conflict happened mostly mid 1980s and before.” Queries sent to people with contacts in areas of more recent / ongoing conflict such as Palestine have so far failed to yield any information.

The only comparable work that we did find was that of the Tar Anall project (though this does not mean there are no others) and we will deal with its relevancy later on in this report. Our inability to uncover similar projects in other post conflict situations in a relatively short time does not of course necessarily mean no such projects exist. It does strongly suggest however this project may be a pioneering one at international level.

PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES

While much has been written about conflict situations and its effects on young people much of the work has been based on medical and psychological approaches. The Western focus on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in particular is criticised in Rethinking the Trauma of War (eds.) Bracken and Petty (1998) as being individualistic and thus inapplicable to non-western societies. Such an approach also ignores the context bound nature of conflict by omitting social, political and historical conditions.

Following on from this, while people from an individualistic culture such as ours may be familiar and fluent with an individualistic approach incorporating counselling, for example, it does not follow that this approach would necessarily be the most useful. This suggests that while some young people on the project might want to avail of counselling it would be a mistake to have this be the sole approach to the project.

Significantly, when Tar Anall in Belfast (see section on ‘Meetings with groups’) offered counselling in 1997 as this was what funders had identified as a priority, it was not taken up. Consultation with (ex) prisoners, their partners and children identified different group based priorities. The projects developed from this process have attracted many more people.

LOCAL RESEARCH AND REPRESENTATION

There has been little research done and material written about young people's experiences of the conflict here, and none we could find that was not adult led. Marie Smyth's Cost of the Troubles Study, "Half The Battle: Understanding the impact of the Troubles on children and young people" relies heavily on previous academic research and contains little original research or consultation with young people.

Robbie McVeigh's "It's part of life here", a study of security force harassment, documents wide-ranging harassment of young people up to five years ago. This research was original but its findings cannot be assumed to apply equally now to young people of 16-18. Police harassment was identified as an issue by a Donegal participant however.

The experience of exiled families generally is invisible, in keeping with the tendency to restrict research boundaries of the conflict to the 6 Counties. Déagóirí Le Chéile's cross-border focus is unique in valuing the experience of exiled young people.

PARTICIPATION BY YOUNG PEOPLE

A 'Ladder of Participation' (Hart, 1992, quoted in All Together Now, by Save the Children) is useful for placing the approach of this project. The eight rungs on the ladder are Manipulation, Decoration, Tokenism, Assigned but Informed, Consulted and Informed, Adult Initiated, Child/young person Initiated and Equal Partnership.

Déagóirí Le Chéile at present comes under 'Adult initiated' which is defined as 'Projects initiated by adults but where decisions are shared with children and young people.' We feel from our conversations with the young people that the project needs to be looking to move towards 'Child/young person initiated' which is 'Project initiated and directed by children and young people. The original idea for and implementation of the idea comes from them.' As the focus group addressed the issue of participation, discussion and recommendations on this are presented in the section dealing with 'Menu Of Needs & How They Should Be Met'.

Adult led projects Déagóirí Le Chéile could usefully learn from include Long Benton In Tyneside, where young women successfully took on responsibility for co-ordinating a major event and The End House in Durham, which employs a variety of ways to get project user feedback and has an informal sub-group management structure. Manchester Young People's Forum has given young people a voice in decision making on city services for young people. It is setting up a regular meeting structure with city councillors. Children's Express (London) is a young people's news agency facilitating young people's access to the mainstream media. These projects are all profiled in 'All Together Now' by Save the Children.

CRITIQUE OF MATERIAL

The particular nature and scale of the conflict here – low-intensity and protracted with the majority of violent incidents restricted to a few areas - varies widely with other conflict regions and this has caused us to reflect on whether comparisons with other conflict areas would at this moment in time be productive. We have been unable to find any documented material where projects have been designed and directed by young people. The majority of research, when it has been done, has focused on children being damaged by conflict and in need of psychological help. There has been no original study of the impact of the conflict on young people which integrates social, political and historical factors.

Further, the conventional wisdom and experience outlined by Green, (1998), Dyson, (1989),

and Garbarino et al, (1992), all point to children in conflict situations having serious educational difficulties resulting in them being unable to learn in a "normal classroom situation". This did not fit in with our focus groups, as each member is involved in secondary or higher education. If our focus and second group had been judged by such a research measure then everyone would have concluded that there was no need for a project because they are good educational achievers. Yet we have the voice of the young people saying that they not only need a project but that Déagóirí Le Chéile "*Should have happened years ago.*"

The relative lack of up to date, relevant information for this consultation process was also illustrated by the work involved in identifying participants for the focus group. This highlights the importance of compiling a database of young people affected by political imprisonment and exile. This might include information on educational involvement and employment, for example. A picture would then begin to emerge of the different ways some young people have been affected in this particular conflict. Further, documentation of the process of Déagóirí Le Chéile should be seriously considered as it would provide an invaluable research source for a range of interested parties, with the added advantage of the young people having control over how such information might be used.

On the bright side, examples of good practice working with young people abound, others of which are outlined in the section 'Meetings with Groups'.

The idea and rationale of Déagóirí Le Chéile then, is path breaking. Exiled young people have never been included before. Children of political prisoners have been continually overlooked. Valuing these young people's experiences with the assumption they have something to offer in building a new society, is new. As this short piece of research will show, these young people have plenty to offer, and are a valuable resource both for now and the future.

FOCUS GROUP

SELECTION

The selection of the members of the focus group was carried out by Cúnamh's facilitator. We were unsure as to how representative our focus group would be of the overall group of young people at whom the project is aimed. We are implying no criticism when we say about being unsure as to how representative the focus group is. Time was of a premium during our research and we understood the difficulties faced in trying to find a group of young people who were not only committed to the idea of the project but who would be available and willing to ensure that we were given a clear picture of the young peoples needs. In the final analysis it proved necessary to consult with a second group of young people in order to ensure that the ideas put forward by the focus group was an accurate reflection of what was needed for the target group as a whole. There were differences of opinions and emphasis between the different groups and we deal with this in the section 'Menu Of Needs & How They Should Be Met'.

CHALLENGES

One particular problem that we encountered was that it improved impossible, for a variety of reasons, to ensure that all the members of the focus group attended each meeting. At only one of the meetings, a getting to know each other, did it prove feasible to have all five focus group members present. It was our intention to hold some of the meetings in the Letterkenny region and this provided a difficult challenge with us cancelling a planned meeting because none of the young people from Derry had turned up.

BACKGROUND

Our focus group of five was made up of three females and two males aged between 16-18. During our research, for administration purposes, we used the term research participant when working with the young people. In order to set out their backgrounds we will simply refer to them as RP1, RP2 etc.

RP1 is aged 16 and from Derry. She is still at school working to do her "A" levels and works part-time during the summer. As a young person she had experienced both a period of exile as well as having had her father in prison on a number of occasions.

RP2 is aged 18 and from Derry. She is presently studying childcare and works part-time during the summer. As a young person she had experience of having her mother in prison and spent a number of years living with her aunt whilst her mother was in prison.

RP3 is aged 18 from Derry. This young man has an interest in art and attends an art college. As a young person he had experience of having his father in prison. During the time that his father was in prison his parents separated and his father has now started a new family with his new partner

RP4 is aged 18 and from the Letterkenny region. He is going into his second year studying computers at college. Even before he was born his father from the south Derry area had been forced into exile.

RP5 is aged 16 and from the Letterkenny region. She is due to start studying in September for her Leaving Certificate. Like RP4 her family was originally from the south Derry area and had

been forced into exile before she was born. She has a large extended family still living in north and south Derry who she visits regularly and feels at home there.

SECOND FOCUS GROUP

The second focus group was convened to get a wider consensus on issues and met once for two hours. The three participants were all female and from Derry.

THEMES ARISING FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

INTRODUCTION

In preparing for sessions 3 and 4 we drew on the Tar Anall report on work with children of current and ex prisoners as a partial guide for anticipating issues. The length of time the Tar Anall researcher had to work with groups – 1 year – meant there was time for participants to explore their feelings relating to their parent's imprisonment in some depth. Emotions such as fear, anger and loneliness were explored. This was beyond the scope of this short piece of research and so we focused our discussions on identifying issues. The following themes reflect the discussions. Presumably other issues would be identified during a longer-term discussion process where a greater degree of trust had been built up. It was reiterated at each focus group session that individual support was available from Cúnamh.

FOCUS GROUP PROCESS

Throughout our discussion with the young people they emphasised the importance that they attached to at last being able to come together and talk about their experiences. The young people felt that whilst their parents might have known each other and had the chance to exchange experiences or use each other to help through difficult times that this option had not been open to them. The Derry / Donegal exchange of experiences in particular resulted in respectful listening and interest. While two hours was allowed for each session, the small numbers at different times meant this length of time was not always necessary.

HAVING TWO HOMES

RP4 and RP5 both referred to Derry and Donegal as 'home'. RP4 felt *"It's strange, aye, it is."* RP5 said *"We felt it was our home too (in Derry). I always felt it was more of a home there."*

RP4 referred to feeling *"Things might have been easier living in the north sometimes, when times were hard in Donegal"*.

PRISON VISITING ARRANGEMENTS

Neither RP2 nor RP3 were happy with visiting arrangements. Lack of privacy and time, being searched up to four times per visit, being crammed into a mini-bus and visits being cancelled with no notice were highlighted as contributing to the challenge of maintaining a relationship with the imprisoned parent. One participant went on very occasional visits with their parent's new partner despite not knowing them very well. This became his only opportunity to get a visit.

Visits were mostly on Saturdays so they did not interfere with schooling. It was felt visits were hard but you got used to them. Any parties that were organised were too short.

INFORMATION GIVEN BY FAMILY

The two participants in exile reported their parents had always answered questions relating to the family displacement and subsequent police harassment etc. They felt comfortable asking questions and did not keep worries private. At the same time they accepted it was appropriate there were some things they should not be told and trusted their parents to make those decisions.

There was family concern about one exile participant possibly being targeted by the Gardai for harassment and this was discussed openly. This participant appreciated his parent's openness: *"It's hard to deal with something if you don't know what it is."* He also felt *"It's a family situation, it has to be. Everyone in the family is affected – you can't exclude anybody from it."*

The Derry participants found information about the parent in prison was not forthcoming. Both participants were young children when their parents were sentenced which helps account for that. However, neither found they got clear information later on either. One said *"Nobody ever told me anything."*

One participant did not know why their parent was in prison for some time. *"I had it in my head it was something 10 times worse than what it was."* This young person was told their parent would be released after her court appearance, but instead the parent went on to serve five years.

One participant described being in the position of getting information from some adults but having to conceal it from other adults.

MAINTAINING / BUILDING RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENT IN PRISON AND AFTER RELEASE

One participant has no memory of his father before he was imprisoned. As visits declined in frequency he found it more difficult to keep in touch with his father.

Paroles should have been more frequent and longer in the year before release. There was a feeling of unreality about them.

It was assumed after RP2's mother's release that they would move in together. This was *"wile hard"*, not least because RP2 had a close relationship with her aunt, with whom she had lived for five years. She recounted how her mother had difficulty adjusting to her daughter being older: *"'You be in at this time' and I was like 'No...' (laughs). Big blazing rows so there was."*

One participant described how he is still working on building a relationship with his father a year after his release. RP2 and her mother had to agree to disagree politically.

CONCERN ABOUT PARENTS / GUARDIAN

RP4 was aware that his father might be arrested any time he crossed the border. Worry about his father's safety was more acute because of the UDR presence in Co. Derry: *"If something happens he mightn't come back... you wouldn't see him ever again, you know. It's kind of a worry all the time."* RP5, who is two years younger, did not have the same worries.

One participant remembered worrying about her parent worrying about her, especially after visits. RP2 felt it was hard on her aunt when she moved back in with her mother after her mother's release, as she and her aunt were so close.

BEING AN OUTSIDER

RP4 remembered it being hard to settle in Donegal at the beginning: *“Nobody would speak to any of us.”* He experienced this as *“Like a racial thing - discrimination.”*

Both exiled participants were conscious of being different from their peers but stressed they had not been singled out. RP5 would sometimes get slagged about being ‘Derry’ but that was as far as it went. When asked, RP4 said others at secondary school had parents in the Gardai but he did not remember this as being a big factor. He spoke more generally of being labelled.

One participant said that although everybody had been good to her she ended up feeling on her own.

HARASSMENT

Raids and Garda surveillance in Donegal was very visible to neighbours and isolating. One participant remembered being raided when he was a toddler and not being allowed to move about: *“You don’t forget a strange man poking around in your bed and around your clothes and your cupboards. It’s not a nice thing.”* He recalled his older sister’s very strong feeling of invasion at this. He has no confidence in the Gardai.

RP2 remembered *“The first time I seen her (mother after her arrest) she had a black eye.”* Her aunt had thought the injuries received during interrogation would have cleared up. Neither RP2 nor RP3 experienced house raids after their parents were imprisoned. Searches during prison visits were felt to be excessive. RP3 described how up to eight guards would be present during a visit.

IGNORANCE ABOUT EXILE FAMILIES

One exile participant felt that there is a general ignorance of what it is like to be living in exile and that people in the North *“haven’t a clue”*. This might also come under ‘*Being an Outsider*’ as these exiled young people feel themselves to be members of the republican family yet the people who ‘haven’t a clue’ would include republicans in the North.

EFFECTS ON FAMILY

One participant referred to how exile meant only being able to visit family in Co. Derry for very short periods and having to choose between family members on each visit.

Another’s parents broke up. This meant that when his father got out on parole he stayed elsewhere and he didn’t get much time with him. Yet another felt that her extended family’s relationships were strained or changed following her parent’s imprisonment and release.

Most participants had experience of parents missing out on important occasions such as birthdays and funerals.

EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

Some of the young people made it clear that they had difficulties with the expectations that a parent may have or have had of them. In particular this related to sharing the political beliefs of the parent. Failure to do so meant in many cases being made to feel that they were betraying the parent. For the young people this meant that they were not being allowed to be themselves. They want the opportunity to talk to and have parents listen to them. They want

the chance to explore their experiences and they also want the chance to talk to parents and to let them know how they were affected by the decisions that they made.

SUPPORT

“Nothing at all” was the consensus. At the same time it was acknowledged that family and family friends provided support by *“checking in on you. The only kind of support you’d get is from your own.”* While exiled families look out for each other, it may be that the main contact is between adults. Both focus group participants in exile knew of each other prior to the focus group but that was the extent of their contact.

One young person described how other children *“were kind of warned off by their Mammies and Daddies”* from mentioning her parent’s imprisonment.

In the two exiled participant’s experience the kind of neighbourly support after house raids available to many republicans in urban communities in the North was not there for them. For one, living in a rural area meant no other exiled families lived nearby either.

Clear and open information given by adults was identified as supportive.

One group member felt strongly that a project like Déagóirí Le Chéile *“Should have happened years ago.”*

ANALYSIS OF THEMES

The themes identified and discussed above begin to illustrate how exile and a parent’s imprisonment can and has impacted on young people: affecting family life, their sense of belonging to the wider community and their relationship to the state. It is clear that despite well-meaning adult attempts to shelter and protect children and young people, they can be and are directly affected by their parent’s experiences and choices.

There is no doubt in our minds that the young people that we spoke to feel that they have many experiences that they want to share and hear about. We feel that it would be fair to extrapolate from this that many young people in similar positions would want the opportunity that this project might provide.

This section then, can be seen as the starting point and basis for meeting the aims and objectives of the Deagoiri Le Cheile project. Further themes remain to be identified and expanded on. It is fair to assume that the process up to this point has not necessarily provided a safe enough setting for exploring some issues. One possibility, *Was it worth it?* for example, could look at how the current peace process matches up to political objectives sought by parents who were subsequently imprisoned or had to go into exile and indeed, whether it is useful to evaluate experiences in that light. This can be assumed to be a complex and potentially difficult issue which may take time to explore.

It is appropriate therefore that the full impact, social, emotional and otherwise, of exile and parental political imprisonment remains to be explored with an experienced facilitator working within a more structured long term project.

MENU OF NEEDS & HOW THEY SHOULD BE MET

INTRODUCTION

Both groups were encouraged to identify a range of options and their ideal one, even if this turned out to not be feasible. The Donegal participants were particularly clear in preferring a drop-in centre. The second group – all Derry based – focused more on setting up dialogue with adults though a drop-in centre appealed to them as well. Their sense of a shared identity is very important to them at this stage and they wish to maintain and develop it as they explore and learn about their own and each others experiences.

NEEDS

- The young people felt that they had not had the opportunity to talk about their experiences before, welcomed this particular opportunity and are keen to develop it further.
- They would like the chance to hear the experiences of others who have been in a similar situation as themselves.
- To this end, they need an environment conducive to bringing people together to talk, share and learn from each other's experiences and build up trust.
- A structure for exploring and getting answers about the conflict and the ways they were affected was identified as a need.
- Ownership of the project is important.

The young people went on to identify how these needs would best be met.

DROP-IN CENTRES

Two drop in centres, one in Letterkenny and the other in Derry, were identified as the preferred option. Separate groups were felt to be necessary at least at first. The drop-in space could be a room in a community centre or building such as Áras Mhig Raighne, but it would preferably be for the young people's exclusive use. It could also be a place where information on a range of issues affecting young people could be made available. Tea and coffee and entertainment facilities and a library were identified as important. Fundraising activities to equip the rooms with a stereo system or a TV would be a way of having the young people work together. The massage and yoga service offered by Tar Anall sounded good to at least one participant.

EXCHANGE TRIPS

Everybody liked the idea of exchange trips. Both the focus group and the second group expressed a willingness to organise exchange trips between Derry and Letterkenny. Some of the second group had contacts in exile in Buncrana and a formal link was suggested with that area. The group of exiled young people in Dundalk, and the young people in Belfast are obvious choices for exchange trips further afield.

PEER EDUCATION

None of the participants in the focus group felt ready to commit to the idea of peer education training or work. The second group however, was very much in favour of the idea of peer education and training.

ADVOCACY WORK

Interest was expressed in having an input into discussions around issues arising from the

conflict such as new policing structures. In principle, the focus groups are interested in making submissions to the human rights commission, and other bodies as appropriate.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

The second group in particular focused on how to facilitate dialogue in a structured way between themselves and adults as a constructive way to explore issues related to the conflict and its affect on them.

One concrete suggestion along these lines was a meeting with a representative of the Republican Movement to put a number of questions to them regarding the conflict and issues around social justice.

OWNERSHIP OF PROJECT

All the young people expressed a need to have ownership of the project. They felt that this could be met if they had membership of the Management committee, were part of the selection process in choosing who would be on the project and were part of the interview panel for the facilitator.

ANALYSIS OF NEEDS & HOW THEY SHOULD BE MET

In focusing on how their needs would best be met, the young people were encouraged to identify their ideal scenario, bearing in mind that might not be achievable. They are conscious of the difficulties involved in trying to deliver on two drop in centres and are quite prepared to be flexible. A process of negotiation with them around what is realistic would be necessary before final decisions are made. This process would be facilitated by inviting young people on the management committee, thereby simultaneously meeting the need to have ownership of the project.

Two drop-in centres rather than one was seen as preferable, given the distance between Donegal and Derry and the young people's lack of access to transport. It would not be fair to expect one group to travel all the time. Some of the issues raised are different for Donegal and Derry participants and could usefully be explored separately as well as together. The importance given the drop-in centre option by the Donegal participants, along with their added experience of isolation and marginalisation within the republican family, may indicate they have particular need to have their own space to explore their own issues.

A drop-in centre or space is a big undertaking and requires a high level of responsibility and commitment from the young people. Consultation with a wider group may be necessary to gauge how realistic this option is at this stage.

The value of the exchange trips would be in allowing the young people the exchange and explore their own and others experiences. All will be coming from different backgrounds and geographical locations and so might have very different experiences to offer. More issues may well emerge at different times and places. It may be worth considering bringing Buncrana young people into the project, particularly if numbers from the Letterkenny region are small.

The differences between the focus and second group in relation to peer education and training do not mean this option has to be sidelined. The Peer Education Project (see Meetings with Groups) has 35 participants, just eight of whom are formally training as peer educators. These eight young women made their commitment in their second year of the project. The level of

interest shown in this option at this early stage suggests there will be sufficient commitment to introduce peer education training. Care should be taken not to give it more value than the other options identified.

Developing an advocacy focus and setting up channels of communication with parents, other adults and organisations would allow for further exploration of the issues affecting the young people, enhance their awareness of the conflict situation and give them a pro-active role in shaping a new society. This aspect of the project would have a specifically outward focus and has great potential for the young people making a visible, tangible contribution to the conflict resolution process at a cross-border level in particular.

STRUCTURES

It could well be the case that number of options would need to be run in tandem so as to meet the varying needs of all the young people involved. A way would need to be found of making sure that those not involved in some elements of the project but not others still felt that they were part of the overall process. Ownership of the project is an important factor in this regard.

The present Management Committee would need to seriously consider the balance of power on the Committee. Working towards a majority of young people might require a long-term development process. In this case, the Nucleus have an successful model (see next section) that could be adapted. This also might require different ways of working and scheduling meetings than in the past.

The young people may need some training if they are to be involved in interviewing for the post of facilitator. They would need to be trained in the techniques involved in interviewing and the legal requirements around interviews. The criteria for selection of participants will partly depend on the programme options chosen and would need careful discussion.

If the ownership of this project is very clearly seen to lie with the young people then that will act as an attraction and help maintain the young people's involvement over a protracted period of time.

Therefore there needs to be a degree of flexibility with the project. Given the pioneering nature of the process then it could well be that expectations change as things develop and more young people become involved. This process can be seen as a positive challenge for all concerned.

FACILITATION

SKILLS, ATTITUDE & KNOWLEDGE

In our discussions all the young people involved agreed there were a number of requirements that a facilitator would need if s/he were to be able to work successfully with them. The essential criteria they set out were, in no particular order:

- Someone who was capable of facilitating discussion.
- Someone who was open to criticism from the group if they felt that his or her behaviour was inappropriate.
- Someone who was committed to them as a group, rather than simply taking on the post as another job.
- Someone who was easygoing. They did not feel that any sort of authoritarian figure would be appropriate.
- Someone who was unassuming, it that they would not assume things about the group and its needs but rather would be open to listening and learning.
- Someone from a republican background or someone who had a background in youth work. The reasoning behind this approach was their belief that what was required was political sensitivity. This they defined as being someone who had been through similar experiences as themselves or someone who would be willing to learn and gain an insight in their experiences.
- The group also felt that it would be desirable if the facilitator was in his or her early 20s.

ANALYSIS

From our discussion with the young people in both groups, we would say that it is vital that any facilitator either comes from a republican background or has experience in youth work. The young people were very clear in identifying their need for someone that can relate to their situation and a republican background would be important in this regard, though not without appropriate listening skills and a sympathetic attitude. Youth work experience would be very valuable as there is more to the young people than the focus taken by this project; and other issues specific to their age group will likely arise during the course of the project.

This list is not exhaustive as a number of decisions regarding the project need to be made before appointing a facilitator. If administrative responsibility is to lie with the facilitator, for example, administrative skills would be at least desirable. The successful candidate might also have to be able to drive and have use of a car, depending on the likelihood of evening work in both areas. An awareness of the differences between development work in rural and urban areas would be useful. It would need to be decided whether the facilitator should have responsibility for designing the programme in addition to implementing it. It may prove difficult to find a candidate with this range of skills and experience in their early 20s, though every effort should be made to do so.

As part of our research and discussions with other groups it became clear to us that whoever is appointed as facilitator will also need direct supervision with the Management Committee. This was identified as very important by one facilitator who commented that you need to be *“able to off load at times if you want to stay sane”*. Support structures for the facilitator are crucial as her or his role will be key to the project being successful.

MEETINGS WITH GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

We identified a number of groups which would be useful to meet, one in Belfast and the rest in Derry. The lack of visits to relevant projects in Letterkenny was because of time constraints and a lack of contacts. There is at least one youth drop-in and advice centre for young people in Letterkenny which could be visited in the longer-term development of Déagóirí Le Chéile.

A proposed meeting with Foyle Women's Aid could not be arranged due to holidays. This visit would still be useful as - without equating parent's political involvement with domestic violence in any way - their youth group comprises young people who may have been displaced from their homes, had a parent removed for a period, seen the remaining parent under prolonged strain and experienced state structures as unhelpful and hostile. They are also a dispersed group who may be difficult to track down and bring together.

Una McCartney joined in on the visits to Tar Anall and Youthfirst.

TAR ANALL

This project is based in Belfast and functions as a drop-in and project centre for political prisoners and their families. The young people's project is called Ag Teacht le Cheile (Coming Together). A counselling service provided in 1997 was not availed of very much and subsequently groups of ex-prisoners, partners of prisoners and children met separately to identify their needs.

The young people identified a need for a befriending / listening service. One year of training in listening skills – not counselling – was provided, with skills such as First Aid also being included. The facilitator / support worker for this project has a background in counselling. The group policy and procedures for this service are seen as very important and written permission is sought from parents for residentials or trips away. This documentation is available as a resource.

The young people meet once a week – this is felt to be enough considering work, social and study commitments. The age group is 14 – 19 and this has worked well. Responsibility for funding the project (they get paid 10 pounds a week) has now been handed over to the young people.

One initiative undertaken by the group was to write a document to the prisoners describing their experience of having a parent inside. They got a detailed response and it is planned to publish the two documents together. They have a massage and yoga service. They participated in an exchange with a group of exiled young people in Dundalk.

The project facilitator is always available to the young people. Roisin Kelly, the project worker felt it important that the young people do not have to wait perhaps a couple of days to discuss any concerns or worries because of adult / office hours. She reported that the young people take confidentiality very seriously. She felt that for young people to participate as befrienders, they would need to already have done some work on issues they had around their parent's imprisonment or family exile.

Referrals have gone through the jails. A parent expresses concern about their daughter or son to the project and contact is then made by a befriender. As all political prisoners should be out next year this referral system is less and less applicable. Another consideration with this system is the initiative is not necessarily taken by young people.

THE NUCLEUS

Stephen Quigley, co-ordinator of the Nucleus, gave us a tour around the premises. Facilities include a cafe, performance space, a health advice room with a worker and a legal rights room staffed by a worker with a youth advocacy focus. The cafe is run by young people and prices are kept low. People who use the cafe are consulted about any proposed changes.

The Nucleus offers a range of facilities to outside agencies, including tailor made peer education courses of varying length and use of the performance space for groups and bands. They are designing an NVQ in peer education. A homework club is being set up.

Now in its third year, the management committee is ahead of schedule in bringing mostly young people on to the committee. 21 out of 29 places are reserved for young people, with the remainder being filled by relevant professionals. A shadowing system is ensuring the young people are skilled up to take on roles such as chairperson and secretary. All the workers are getting further training. Due to funding running out, the Nucleus lost six peer education workers out of seven they had trained themselves. All of these young people have found employment. Otherwise, the Nucleus has been successful in securing funding from a wide range of sources.

This project is working towards equal participation for young people and has much to offer Déagóirí Le Chéile in terms of advice and possibly in designing a peer education course. The balance of power on the management committee is an option Déagóirí Le Chéile should consider.

PEER EDUCATION PROJECT

The Peer education Project in Dove House is for girls from 12-17 from the Bogside and Brandywell areas. It is a three-year programme in its second year. It has 35 participants with five more to join in September. Four groups are divided into the age brackets 12-14 and 15-17 as the issues are too different for girls at either limit. The project has use of a comfortable room with a stereo.

The young women identify issues they would like to explore and use a variety of media to do so, including group-work, quizzes, collage and drama. Outside agencies such as the Family Planning Association and the Nucleus are brought in where appropriate. Eight young women over 15 were successfully interviewed for places on an Open College Network accredited peer education course. The plan is these young women will train other young women in their own area and beyond.

The project is very much based on group work and discussion which has consistently held the young women's interest. Debbie, the project co-ordinator, identified understanding, empathy and a non-authoritarian approach as crucial to the successful facilitation of the Peer Education Project. These are all essential attributes identified by the focus group.

YOUTHFIRST

We met with Charles Lamberton, ex-youth worker with Youthfirst in Dove House. Youthfirst is a drop-in centre offering a wide range of activities including sport, drama, and trips away. Amongst other things, the young people have organised and fundraised for their own fashion show. In our discussion with Charles he emphasised to us the need for avoiding a purely talking shop approach and that the best way to help maintain young peoples interest is with a mixture of the latter combined with outdoor activities.

He warned against making assumptions about the level of young people's literacy skills – in his youth work experience some can be quite poor and this would need to be identified quickly as disruptive behaviour can otherwise result. He reported that some young people from prisoner's families in the area appear to be heading towards or are already involved in anti-social behaviour (see Divert below).

Charles is now manager of Dove House and also a Powerhouse management committee member. He welcomed the Déagóirí Le Chéile project and offered the support of both organisations.

DIVERT

Divert is a new project based in Dove House developed to cater for young people in the Bogside and Brandywell areas who have been barred from existing youth provision or are considered to be at risk of anti-social behaviour. For its first years programme it has identified over thirty male participants who will devise their own programme during a residential weekend. It is anticipated the programme will involve a mixture of sporting / physical and social activities in addition to group-work.

John, the project worker, mentioned how the infrastructure of facilities for youth in the area makes his job much easier than the 'Off the Streets' worker in Shantallow, where no facilities exist. He intends to utilise existing facilities as much as possible.

NIACRO

A telephone call with Ann Simpson from NIACRO in Derry revealed the existence five years ago of a project for prisoner's children, run in conjunction with Probation. This folded after six months. This was in part because the age range was too wide; 11-16 year olds. Some of the younger children being disruptive was a problem. NIACRO have not treated children of political prisoners separately.

ASSESSMENT OF USEFULNESS OF GROUP VISITS

The visits to the various groups and projects offered us the chance to learn at first hand about good work practices with young people and the problems that any project might face. In their different ways all the projects have something to offer any project that might be set up under the auspices of Déagóirí Le Chéile.

Tar Anall	Befriender training, documentation, counselling policy, exchange group
Dove House	IT suite and training, meeting space, youth club activities
The Powerhouse	IT suite (including photoshop) and training, video making facilities, decks
The Nucleus	Peer Education training, model for youth participation in

	management of project, health advice and youth advocacy experience
Peer Education Project	Peer Education training pack
Divert	Possible link with eligible participants for Déagóirí Le Chéile
NIACRO	Past experience working with children of prisoners

The highly developed infrastructure of youth provision in the Bogside and Brandywell areas probably contrasts with facilities in Donegal, particularly in rural areas. While this is an advantage, care would need to be taken that Donegal & Derry development of Déagóirí Le Chéile does not become uneven because of utilising these resources.

A number of the projects, Youthfirst, the Peer Education Project and Nucleus would not only offer space but also their experiences in running particular classes which the young people might be interested in. We feel, in particular, that any project set up could learn invaluable lessons from the approach of the Nucleus when it comes to making sure that young people are in control of any project. The Tar Anall project, which is the only one comparable with what Cúnamh and the other groups involved would like to see achieved, offers very clearly a model for the young people, coming from the background that they do, the opportunity of meeting up to talk about their experiences. Unfortunately, again due to the holiday period, we did not get to meet the young people in the Ag Teacht le Cheile project.

From the Divert project we feel that the Déagóirí Le Chéile project could learn the benefits of using a residential weekend to devise a programme involving a mixture of group work, social activities and sporting / physical activities. All of the above we feel would allow the young people to not only explore their experiences, which is part of the Aims and Objectives but would also provide the project with a way of attracting the young people and keeping them motivated throughout the life of the project.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE

Throughout our research we have been conscious that the first, and the second, focus group may not provide a truly representative picture of the young people eligible for this project. An overlap has been identified with young men from prisoners families who are getting involved in 'anti-social' behaviour. It would be a challenge to try and follow up whether there are young women from prisoners families who feel they do not have a stake in society at present and make Déagóirí Le Chéile attractive to them.

Déagóirí Le Chéile proposes bringing together a group of young people that, despite their experiences in common, is otherwise diverse. Some young people are from rural areas, others inner city estates. Some are at university, others may have left school before gaining any qualifications. It is possible some may be parents. Our focus groups were comprised of young people all still involved in education, all of whom had already given some thought to their experience as exiles or children of political prisoners, and it is possible the project options they identified may not attract other eligible young people.

Ag Teacht le Cheile, with its aim of training befrienders, identified as participants young people who had already explored their unique identity as children of prisoners. Déagóirí Le Chéile then, will have to decide how it wants to pitch the project in terms of attracting eligible young people who may not have given any importance to the fact they are exiled or have had a parent in prison.

The experience of Youthfirst, which is mixed, is that a mixture of group work and sporting activities and outings best keep the young people's interest. John, the Divert worker, is clear that sporting and physical activities will be necessary for his all male project. The Peer Education Project – all female – has found that group work alone holds the young women's interest. Debbie speculated that some overlapping membership with Youthfirst may help account for this.

The balance and range of activities in the Déagóirí Le Chéile programme will have to take into account the gender make-up of the group and possibly whether participants have any history of disruptive behaviour.

THE WAY FORWARD

Our recommendation is that the project should aim at the start to include as wide a range of eligible participants as possible. Compiling a database of eligible participants is essential to this and should be given priority. Selection of participants interested in training opportunities can come at a later stage, in the second year of the project. In order to cater for the diverse preferences and interests, the project will need a built in flexibility enabling it to deliver a wide range of options simultaneously.

We can only conclude that the need for the project is very real. Already there is a core group of committed and interested young people who are keen to get started as soon as possible.

SUMMARY

LITERATURE REVIEW

One difficulty with the literature review was that our research was taking place at a time when many people were either away on holiday or were preparing to go. This meant that sources of material were either closed off to us or that material promised was not sent on.

More sources of information are there to be followed up during the next phase of the project.

Given the variance between the results of other studies and what we found it would be unwise to depend on such results as a guide to how to develop any project with the young people here. As we pointed out, most psychological studies have tended to focus on one area at the cost of having an overall picture. The young people in our focus or second group may not be unique but perhaps the context bound nature of the conflict here is and thus has not been replicated elsewhere. Throughout our research with the young people we were struck by how what is an abnormal situation had become normal to them.

Community based action research into young people's experience of the conflict here is needed. Such research should have a cross-border and both a rural and urban focus. It should not treat the impact of social policies on young people and their environment separately from 'traumatic' events.

FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS & ISSUES

This process proved important and rewarding. It has led to the previously unheard views of the young people being aired and the beginning of a dialogue between young people and adults and young people on a cross border basis. The focus group meetings were only the beginning of this process; it now needs to be developed.

Attendance was an issue with so many meetings in such a short time. Sickness, holidays and difficulty hitching in rural Donegal all contributed to this though both Donegal participants made a big effort to attend the Derry sessions.

A lot of thought needs to go into ensuring that balance is maintained with the cross-border aspect of the project, so that it holds enough attraction to keep everyone enthused.

Part of the answer to this may lie in our recommendations relating to ownership of the project and activities that the young people could be involved in.

MEETING NEEDS

A process of negotiation could allow for a satisfactory outcome between the needs identified by the young people and the practical problems of delivering on them. Participation and the sense of ownership would go a long way in helping to overcome problems. Throughout the life of the project a degree of flexibility, with perhaps a number of projects running at the same time, will help to ensure the overall success of the process.

Exchange trips will allow the young people to not only share and learn about the experience of

having a parent in jail or in exile but the travelling aspect might also serve to hold their interest.

The young people need to be given more ownership at this stage of the project.

The advisory group might think about drawing in more young people on to the committee at this stage of the project.

A weekend away, with a facilitator meeting their criteria, would be a good basis for drawing out the young people to develop the project.

FACILITATOR

The facilitator will need to either come from a republican background or be able to relate to the young people involved in the project. By relate we mean that s/he must be able to understand where they are coming from. The facilitator will need help and support throughout the life of the project.

MEETINGS WITH GROUPS

All of our meetings with the different groups were useful in different ways and they all have something to offer any project that is set up. We were unable to visit a number of groups, particularly in Letterkenny, and we would not rule out that other groups may have things to offer this project.

Contact should be built and maintained and the young people should be facilitated, if they wish, to visit other youth projects.

The Management Committee should visit and learn from the local examples of good work practice with young people.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE

It should be a matter of urgency that a database is established identifying those eligible to be involved in the project and any difficulties that they might be facing.

REPORT CONCLUSION

Despite the difficulties that we encountered, in relation of trying to get the young people together, we strongly believe that there is the interest there to see a project developed. We feel that any project, so long as the young people are actively involved in running it and feel that they have ownership of it, can be successful. Part of our thinking is premised on the belief that all the people involved understand the nature of the pioneering work that they are involved in and do not restrict their thinking to the convention, to what has been done before and can thus be quantified. We hope that the lessons reflected in our literature review will bear out the need to break new ground, to be bold and to lead the way where others might fear to tread. The pioneering spirit of this project holds out to the children of ex-prisoners or those who had to go into exile across the border because of parental political involvement the chance to have their say and to be reconciled to the new political situation that exists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout our research we were afforded great assistance when looking for examples of good practice when working with young people and we would like to thank the following, Roisin Kelly from Tar Anall, Stephen Quigley from the Nucleus, Deborah O Hagan from the Peer Education Project, Charles Lamberton from Dove House, John McBride from the Divert project and Úna McCartney. For the help and assistance we received in carrying out our literature review we are indebted to Rosie McDonnell at the Save The Children Fund library in Belfast, and Simona Sharoni in Washington for providing us with written material. In providing us with transport and the space to have some meetings we would like to acknowledge and thank Declan Kearney, Sean McMonagle, Raymond McCartney and Marian Kelly.

On a personal level we would like to thank Cathy Nelis, Cúnamh's facilitator and Ann Elliot, Director North West Save The Children Fund for their invaluable guidance and support throughout our research.

Finally none of this process could have been achieved without the participation, commitment and insight of the young people in the focus group. We wish them well with whatever project they devise and for the future.

Helen Harris

Paul Kavanagh

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APPENDIX A:

PROPOSED PLANNED WORK PROGRAM WITH FOCUS GROUP.

Given the time scale involved and the degree of work that needs to be carried out in order to meet the deadline of 23rd August then we are proposing a series of six meetings, five 2 hour sessions and one 4 hour session, with the young people. We are aiming to hold two meetings during the week starting the 19th of July, two during the week starting the 26th July and two during the week starting the 9th August. For the first meeting we intend to meet the Derry and Letterkenny groups separately

The proposed content structure of the meetings is as follows.

SESSION 1:

We expect Session 1 to last about two hours and will be broken down into a number of sections basically under the headings of Introduction, Outline of project and our role in it, Proposed program of work, Ground rules and Planning for next meeting.

INTRODUCTION

We will introduce and give a bit of detail about ourselves. We will also explain our interest in the project. We will then ask the group members to introduce themselves and give as much or as little detail as they feel comfortable with. We will be careful to stress that we are not there as counsellors but that support is available for anyone who feels that they need it.

OUTLINE OF PROJECT AND RESEARCHERS ROLE

We will explain the role of Cunámh in the project and outline our role in it. We will make it clear that we have been brought in to consult the young people about the issues that they feel are relevant to them and through them develop a project program. We will make it clear that we have deadline of 23rd August to produce our report and tell them of our expectations from them; that they can commit to the group and see the consultation process through to the end. We will also make it clear that they will have the opportunity to read our report and to make changes where they feel that we have not adequately reflected their views or where they feel that they would prefer that something they said to us remain private and not appear in the report.

PROPOSED PROGRAM OF WORK

At this stage we will outline our proposed work program in relation to the number of meetings that we hope that they will be able to attend. We will also explain that there is a parallel group who we hope that they will be able to come together and work together with. We will then give the young people the chance to ask any questions that they might have in relation to what has been outlined to them so far.

GROUND RULES

At this stage we will negotiate ground rules for further involvement in the project and we will explain our thinking behind the ones that we propose. At this moment in time there are a number of ground rules that we are agreed we would like to negotiate:

- These are that there can be no abuse of any kind; physical mental or verbal, this applies both to the actual focus group meetings themselves and also to contact outside of the

group.

- That there has to be confidentiality about what is discussed at the sessions.
- That people have to be allowed time to speak and express themselves, even if others think that they are taking a long time getting to the point.
- That we need to respect what people have to say even if we do not agree with it.
- No one can attend the sessions under the influence of drink or drugs.
- That the sessions have to be smoke free.

For ourselves, we feel that the need for confidentiality and respect are paramount if we are to create an environment where the young people can feel confident in opening up honestly to what they see are the issues affecting them. This is particularly so where they might want to discuss things that are very personal to them.

We will ask the focus groups what other ground rules they feel that they need in order to feel safe and confident that they can speak freely. We will also ask what sanctions they feel would be appropriate to impose on anyone continuously breaking the ground rules. It will be made clear to the young people that the ground rules apply to us (the researchers) just as much as they apply to them. In that light we will invite everyone to refer back to the ground rules at any time if they feel that they are being ignored by anyone involved in the sessions. We will negotiate smoking breaks if the young people feel that that is appropriate.

At this stage we would also propose to ask the young people if they would have any objections to our taping the sessions. We do not expect an immediate answer there and then but rather we want them to have time to think about it. We will explain our thinking behind this request. We would wish to tape the sessions in order not only to ensure that we accurately reflect all that is said to us but we are conscious that if one of us has to take notes throughout the meetings then really that person will not be fully plugged into what is going on and thus not a full participant. We will give the young people assurances about confidentiality.

PREPARATION FOR MEETINGS

As part of the winding down process we will take a bit of time to discuss planned dates for further meetings. We will outline our thinking on the areas that we would like to look at the next time there is a meeting. We will also take a bit of time making sure that all will have the chance to attend and establishing contact numbers where everyone can be reached in the event of a change of plans or circumstances in anyone's case.

SESSION 2:

Session two we expect to last about 4 hours and will be a social occasion. We want to use this session to introduce the two groups to each other and by using a social activity, e.g. bowls, help gel the two groups creating a bond between all concerned, the focus group as a whole plus the researchers.

SESSION 3:

Session three will be a two-hour session. At the start of the session we will revisit the ground rules so as to set the scene for what we hope to get out of this session. We will outline what we hope to achieve at that meeting and we will again remind the young people that support is there for them if they feel that they need it.

It is at this point that we hope to start exploring with the young people what their individual experiences were as the result of having a parent either in prison or in exile because of their involvement in the Republican Movement. We will compile a list of questions which we feel will help guide the session and to keep the process flowing. Ideally we want the young people to be taking the lead in this discussion but if necessary we will use material, gleaned from other sources, to help prompt the session. If we have to have recourse to this approach we will have the material on a flip chart and explain that these are the key categories identified by other young people, in very similar circumstances, and ask if any are relevant to our focus group.

As part of the winding down of the session we will review the ground covered and talk about the agenda for the next session. We intend that it should be about common experiences shared by many of their peers as well as themselves. We will also take the opportunity to ask the young people what they feel about how the process is working and about the structure and course of the sessions. We will also use this time to sort out travel arrangements for our next meeting

SESSION 4:

It is anticipated that session 4 like session 3 will last for two hours. As in session 3 we will revisit the ground rules and remind the young people about available support. We will ask the young people if there is anything that they want to raise with us as a result of the last session. Once we have dealt with anything that arises we will then seek to move on.

In this session it will be our intention to look at common themes that have cropped up. After session 3 we will go through the material and see what common themes have been coming up. We will flag up, using a flip chart, what we see are the common themes that they have related to us. We will seek discussion on these and any others that the young people feel we have missed but which they feel are relevant to them. We will be careful to pay attention to different themes possibly arising because of different geographical locations.

Again as part of the winding down process we will use a period of time near the end of the session to review the areas covered and talk about the agenda for the next session. We intend to use the fifth session to explore what the young people feel is the menu of needs that need to be addressed. The young people again will be given the opportunity to express their views about how they feel that the work is progressing. Lastly we will make arrangements for the next session.

SESSION 5:

Session 5 will be a two-hour session. As with the other sessions we will again revisit the ground rules and remind the young people about support mechanisms. The young people will be given the chance to raise with us anything they still want to cover arising out of the last session. Once we have dealt with anything that arises we will then seek to move on.

By this time we hope that the group members will have built up enough confidence in themselves and will be able to lead the discussion, outlining to us just what needs they feel have to be addressed if the ensuing project has to have any validity for them. Prior to this meeting we will have reviewed the material again and will be prepared to prompt the discussion by reminding them of the issues that they told us affected them. We are unclear at this stage, because we cannot second guess just what stage the focus group will be at, but it is

possible at this stage that we might also be able to start drawing out from the group ideas about project design.

Like the other sessions we will use a period near the end of the session to review the areas covered and outline the agenda for the next session. If we have not already started the discussion on project design then that will be the area that we outline for session 6. As with the other sessions the young people again will be given the opportunity to express their views about how they feel that the work is progressing and arrangements for the next session will be sorted out.

SESSION 6:

Session 6 will be a two-hour session. As with sessions 3, 4 and 5 we will review the ground rules and remind the focus group about support mechanisms. We will deal with anything carried over from the last session and then move on to the agenda for this one.

If we have not already made a start on it in session 5 then we will be looking firstly a project design to meet the needs of young people. If necessary we will draw upon material uncovered during our research of other groups and practices to help this discussion along. We will also be asking the young people just what kind of skills, attitudes and knowledge they feel that the facilitators of any project should have. Again if necessary we will draw upon our own research to help guide this discussion along.

This is intended to be our last meeting with the focus group and as part of the winding down process we will ask there evaluation of the process. We will take the chance to offer our thanks for the commitment that they have shown, to remind them about the confidentiality of the process by all concerned and to take them for a coffee.

APPENDIX B

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Some of these were not used in the event as they were felt to be leading questions.

Did you have anyone that you felt that you could talk to about your feelings? Anger, helplessness, resentment, pride, shame, fear, anxiety, whatever?

Was there a remaining parent that you were with? If not who did you live with when your parent was in jail? What was that experience like?

Given initial reactions were any of them further added to by the reaction of the remaining parent?

Did you feel that the parent outside shared any of the feelings that you had?

Where you able to talk to the parent outside about what was happening?

Did you feel a stigma attached to you because of having a parent in jail?

What was the reaction of friends and neighbours?

Did they provide any support either emotional or practical?

Was there any taunting by peer group or elders?

Did you suffer harassment as a result of the parent being in jail?

Where you able to maintain a relationship with the parent in jail?

How often was there contact with the parent in prison?

How did you feel about visiting conditions?

Where you able to have quality time with the parent in jail?

Did the parent outside become over protective or authoritarian?

How did you cope with your parent's release?

Did you have particular expectations and where they met?

Was there a major change in the way the house was run when your parent got out?

If your parents' relationship broke up how do you feel this affected you?

Were you born at the time that your family was forced into exile? If so were you old enough to remember how you felt at the time?

If you were born after the family went into exile do you feel that you identify with where you are living or do you identify the north as in some way being your home?

If the latter is the case how do you feel that your thinking has been shaped especially as you have not been living in the north?

Do you feel yourself to be a displaced person?

Did you have anyone that you felt that you could talk to about your feelings? Anger, helplessness, resentment, pride, shame, fear, anxiety, whatever?

Did you feel a stigma attached to you because of having a parent on the run?

What was the reaction of friends and neighbours?

Did they provide any support either emotional or practical?

Was there any taunting by peer group or elders?

Did you suffer harassment as a result of having a parent on the run?

If your parents' relationship broke up how do you feel this affected you?

APPENDIX C

REPORT FROM RESIDENTIAL IN BUNBEG, CO. DONEGAL, 16-17TH OCTOBER, 1999.

INTRODUCTION

The residential had two main aims; that group members get to know each other, and to discuss selecting a facilitator and developing a programme of work / activities for Deagoiri le Cheile. It also provided an opportunity to learn from the experiences of the Belfast group through meeting one of its participants as well as (very importantly) some socialising time.

The proposed programme for the weekend was

- Introductions
- Getting to know each other exercises
- Groundrules / Group Contract
- Presentation from Ag Teacht le Cheile, followed by questions
- Facilitator selection
- Mock facilitator interview
- Programme of work for Deagoiri le Cheile.

GROUND RULES

Ground rules were negotiated by the group and the reasons for and merits of each were discussed. They included:

- Everyone should turn up to and participate in all the workshops
- Confidentiality is essential
- Everyone should have an opportunity to speak
- Everyone should be listened to – no cutting across people
- No smoking during workshops – smoke breaks during sessions to be organised
- Everyone should keep an open mind about what others were saying, even if they strongly disagreed
- Any controversial opinions should be phrased carefully

These were agreed and in the event, we did not have to come back to them.

Ag Teacht le Cheile, Belfast

Conor Martin of the Ag Teacht le Cheile project explained the background to the group, outlined their activities and answered questions.

Two years ago, Tar Anall convened a group of young people whose parents had been or still were political prisoners. They decided to form their own group and became Ag Teacht le Cheile (Coming Together). Two facilitators, one female and one male, were brought in and delivered a range of training on First Aid, sexual health and child abuse, as well as facilitating the young people in discussing their experiences as children of political prisoners.

The members produced a document from these discussions outlining issues arising from their experiences and sent it to Long Kesh for a response from the prisoners. They received a detailed reply, the document having been circulated to every prisoner. Some participants

whose parents were in jail in England were facilitated in writing letters to their missing parent. This was very useful as there was no other possible contact, except maybe one visit a year. The young people have a visit planned to Long Kesh at the end of the month, which they are really looking forward to. They will give a presentation to the prisoners and will get a tour of the wings and cells.

In the first year some participants left and new people joined. A year into the project a number of participants did peer education training. Conor found this a good experience and recommended it.

Residential trips were identified as important to the group getting to know each other as well as providing a break from discussion. The Belfast group went away to Carlingford and Monaghan on weekends away with lots of outdoor activities. They also had exchange trips with displaced young people in Dundalk and Clones. Conor described how his group found this a big eye opener.

The young people in Belfast chose their own name - Ag Teacht le Cheile - which Conor felt was important. However this did not seem to be an issue for the Donegal and Derry participants.

Conor also described how he had benefited personally from being a member of Ag Teacht le Cheile. For example, he has developed the confidence over the last couple of years to be able to give a presentation to Deagóirí le Cheile, something he would never have done before.

THE FACILITATOR

Selection of a facilitator for the project was identified as a key issue in the consultation report with the following criteria being identified as essential:

- Youth work and/or republican background
- Listening and facilitation skills
- Commitment to the project
- Easygoing personality who is open to criticism

It was felt it would be good if the facilitator was in her / his early 20s. It was also felt it was important the young people have an input into their selection.

CRITERIA

Some participants felt the republican background should be essential regardless of youth work experience. After some discussion it was agreed having two facilitators would be a good idea if it wasn't possible to find someone who had both youth work experience and a republican background. Having two facilitators for the project would have other advantages; it would be more likely that all participants would get on well with at least one and one could be male and one female. Ag Teacht le Cheile finds having two facilitators works well for them.

INTERVIEW SET-UP

The group also discussed how they would design the set-up of an interview. It was agreed that the young people should have at least 50% representation on the interview panel. A formal situation where the candidate was confronted by four interviewers behind a desk was rejected. Instead it was felt an informal conversation, with everybody sitting in comfortable

chairs with cup of tea or coffee would be easier for the interviewee, making it more likely they would do themselves justice. A concern was expressed that however easy you make it for someone being interviewed, some people will still get nervous and you might miss the best candidate.

CHOOSING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

It was pointed out that some of the criteria, such as youth work qualifications, for example, would be clear from a CV. It was agreed that a CV should be required from people applying to be facilitators.

The group split into two groups of four to devise interview questions to find out about the candidates

- Republican background
- Youth work background and experience
- Attitude to young people

The two groups devised questions and back in the larger group, discussed the merits of each one and adapted them where necessary.

1. Republican background

The two questions from the smaller groups were:

Have you any first hand experience of this topic, eg family in prison? You will be working with young people aged 16-18 who have never had the chance to speak of their experience. How would you be sympathetic?

What are your views of the present political situation?

In discussion it was felt that just because somebody came from a republican background or had republican politics it might not mean that they would automatically be sympathetic to the young people. Also, asking someone their political views directly might not go with Fair Employment legislation. In the end it was felt a more general question *'Why should we give you this job?'* would allow candidates to reveal family experiences or political views and background if they wished and give them an opportunity to show how they would be sympathetic to the young people's unique experience.

2) Youth work background and experience

This was easy! Both groups asked:

Have you previous experience in youth work?

3) Attitude to young people

Both groups decided to present the candidate with a scenario.

If someone in the group is constantly talking over the top of you how would you handle the situation?

How would you resolve a disagreement between two people in the group if you strongly disagreed with one?

Following discussion the second option was agreed by consensus. The three questions agreed therefore are:

Why should we give you this job?

Have you previous experience in youth work?

How would you resolve a disagreement between two people in the group if you strongly disagreed with one?

A proposed role play of an interview with a potential facilitator, giving an opportunity to evaluate both interview candidates and the adults on the interview panel, did not happen due to lack of time.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

Limited time was given to discussing this. However, a lot of interest was shown in Ag Teacht le Cheile's projects which involved making contact with the prisoners, and throughout the discussions the participants reflected on some of their experiences of having a parent in prison, including difficulty in maintaining the relationship and building one after the parent's release. Definite interest was expressed in discussing these issues further.

Places recommended for residentials by Ag Teacht Le Cheile include Carlingford and Monaghan, which offer a range of outdoor activities. Rock climbing, Paint-balling, Ice skating, Go-carting, Survival Courses, and Water Sports all appealed to the group. Some had experience of a 'Blind Trail' exercise promoting team trust and co-operation which they found useful. Everyone was keen on residentials which offered opportunities for outdoor activities.

CONCLUSION

The residential was useful and enjoyable. Some of the participants knew each other previously while others were new to the group, yet in a short time a sense of group cohesion and common purpose was achieved. The hotel facilities were excellent and we were very well looked after. Conor's presence gave the group a strong sense of what is possible through participation in Deagoiri le Cheile. This link with Ag Teacht le Cheile should be built on in the future.

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS SEPTEMBER 1999-JANUARY 2000

Introduction

In keeping with the ongoing commitment to document the process of developing the project, it has been agreed to appendix a summary of progress since the residential to the consultation report.

This summary draws on all the minutes of meetings held between September 28th 1999 and January 12th 2000 and documents in detail the interview process to select facilitators. Rather than list the developments of each meeting, developments are organised around the following themes:

- Programme development
- Process of facilitator selection
- Advisory group role

Finally, progress so far is briefly evaluated and measured against the key recommendations which came from the consultation report and the residential.

Programme Development

Following the residential with the young people, the main focus has been on appointing facilitators and ensuring the young people took the lead role in that process. During that process ideas were suggested for the long term programme; eg using the report or parts of it to engage with parents and family and launching the project. These and other activities will be developed with the facilitators.

Process of appointing facilitators

Interview questions devised by the young people at the residential were revised and finalised on 2/11/99. Much discussion went into the format of the actual interviews. The young people were agreed they wanted an informal atmosphere so each interviewee would be as relaxed as possible. It was decided to have a formal five person interview panel with four set questions and then an informal session where the applicant was asked to facilitate a discussion between all the young people.

Two adults from the management committee were appointed to the interview panel along with three young people, one from Letterkenny and two from Derry. An interview date of 22nd December was organised to fit in with all the young people's work commitments.

Management committee members' knowledge was drawn on in inviting youth workers to apply for a facilitator post. Three applicants sent in CVs, and one meeting was given over to looking through the CVs. It was decided to interview all three. In the event, two turned up for the interview and both were appointed.

For the actual interviews, the young people set up the room in line with what they thought would be most informal. Interviewees were welcomed at the door. The young person

chairing the interviews took responsibility for introductions, explaining the format and later, informing the interviewees they had been successful.

All the young people participated in the discussion following the interviews. The consensus was to appoint both interviewees, Dominic Bonner and Una Nic Chartnaigh.

Advisory group role

The advisory group role has evolved over the four months:

- Working in partnership with the young people in selecting facilitators through providing technical assistance and support, eg drafting a job description subsequently amended by the entire group
- Negotiating with the young people about the implementation of the report's recommendations and what is currently feasible and what can be worked towards, eg. Drop-in is as yet not feasible but regular meeting places in Tar Abhaile and Letterkenny have been set up

Following the appointments of Una and Dominic, two of the young people have been co-opted on to the committee. The advisory group's role now involves:

- Providing weekly supervision for the two facilitators
- Appointing one adult member to support the young people participating in the advisory group
- Retaining responsibility for fundraising, including making further funding applications and commissioning an independent evaluation of the project at the end of the first year
- Retaining responsibility for documenting the process as a model of good practice while leaving it to the young people to decide about possible publication, for example

As Cathy is now on maternity leave, a new representative from Cunamh is to be appointed to the management group. Sean of Tar Abhaile has taken over administering management meetings. Peter of the BBI is to administer the finances and has spent time with the young people explaining about budgeting and accounting as they will gradually be taking over the decision making in this regard.

Evaluation

The recommendations from the report and residential have either been fully or partially met. Now that the facilitators have been appointed, the long term objectives of the programme can be implemented, such as exploring the young people's issues in full and how they can contribute to conflict resolution.

- Facilitators have been appointed who fit all the criteria set by the young people.
- Flexibility has been shown around the young people's needs, eg in setting interview time and other meetings
- Young people are now on the advisory committee
- The young people have played the lead role in all decision making, with appropriate support from adults

- Good relationships have been established between the adults and young people over a series of meetings

Challenges

- The majority of meetings have been in Derry, making it more difficult for Donegal members to attend regularly. However, the young people plan to alternate meetings in Letterkenny and Derry from now on
- A couple of young people fell away during the facilitator selection process, but efforts to draw them back in are being made
- The database of all potential participants is not complete. However this is an ongoing project and efforts in particular to identify more Donegal participants are a priority

Having reached this stage of the project, it is timely to congratulate all involved on a job well done. Thanks are due in particular to Cathy, who has steered the project from the start and without whom there would be no Deagoiri le Cheile.