

The Rory McDonagh Cross Border Leadership Project

"Exploring the role of sports in developing good relationship and leadership skills"



1. INTRODUCTION

Co-operation Ireland is the leading peace building charity on the island of Ireland. The charity creates opportunities for groups from the two main traditions within Northern Ireland and from both sides of the border to come together to help build a society based on tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity. Joint Patrons of Co-operation Ireland are Her Majesty the Queen and President of Ireland Michael D Higgins

The Rory McDonagh Cross Border Youth Leadership Programme was established to help build positive futures for young people who have the potential to be leaders in their community. Key outcomes include personal development, building pathways to further education/employment, and promoting belonging and participation in the wider community.

The current model has continued to develop and is delivered by Co-operation Ireland in partnership with the local sports partnership and is structured around the use of sport as a medium for developing leadership skills and building good relations, with participants sharing their learning during a cross-border exchange experience.

PROJECT AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the Youth Leadership Project is:

To build the capacity of young people to take on an active leadership role in their communities and to engage positively with others from different backgrounds, including cross-border

Specific objectives include:

- To promote positive personal development among participants, building confidence and life skills
- To enhance young people's knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the potential role of sport in developing good relations and leadership skills
- To nurture the young people's leadership potential, promoting their development as active and positive members of their communities
- To facilitate the young people to meet and work with peers from different backgrounds, locally and cross-border, developing positive relationships and deepening their respect and understanding for cultural diversity

RECRUITMENT

The project is designed for 15 – 16 year olds living in designated disadvantaged areas, who are vulnerable to becoming involved in anti-social and negative behaviour within their local communities. The recruitment is a targeted approach working in conjunction with the local partners to nominate young people who they believe would benefit most from involvement.

23 young people took part in the 2019 project with 11 from Terence MacSwiney College, 8 from Carrignafoy (Cobh) Community College and 4 from Bishopstown Foroige Group.

An information leaflet was circulated to interested young people, and information sessions were held in each centre where participants from previous years addressed the group, and spoke about their experience, what they gained, and the commitment needed. The local partners were given discretion to nominate young people who they believed would benefit most from involvement.

Majority of the group had not been to Northern Ireland before this project, 3 young people involved had visited Belfast previously on family trips. Although majority of the group were actively involved in the local youth services, they indicated a lack of awareness of how to impact change in the community and the role of young people could play to affect change.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

Group Formation: Bringing the groups together in Cork & Belfast for a series of team building and group formation exercises. Creating a sense of identity as a group and exploring expectations and fears.

The Young people in Belfast are part of our Fair Chance programme to build positive and lasting relationships between young people from different communities. The programme's objective is to increase participant's understanding and appreciation of diversity by encouraging young people to engage in positive dialogue with their peers from another community, as well as provide opportunities for young people to meet and engage with local influencers and decision makers.

The young people also take a lead in developing a community event in their local area to bring both sides of the greater community together, creating a this tangible example of how young people can be a positive force for change in their areas by helping unite communities divided along the lines of community background.

Similarly, in Cork the young people undertake a level 1 Sports Leadership Award Programme providing the young people with the opportunity to develop leadership skills for the delivery of sporting and recreational activities while contributing more generally to their personal development. Participants explore the qualities needed to be a leader and learn practical skills such as motivating a group and dealing with disruptive behaviour. Further sessions build the participants' capacity to deliver activities for health and well-being and explored the meaning of fair play and the role of officials in sport.

As part of their assessment the young people have to complete a reflective journal as well as undergoing a practical assessment of their leadership skills, by organising and delivering a one-hour sporting activity for younger children. The group working with sixth class students from St. Mary's on the Hill, National School, Knocknaheeny.

Cross Border Partnership:

Co-operation Ireland establishes a cross-border linkage between the Cork and Belfast groups involving participants from both the Catholic and Protestant communities. The cross-border partnership involves reciprocal exchanges, with the young people visiting each other's communities, learning from and about each other, with the opportunity to share learning in relation to their identity, community and leadership courses .

The first residential took place in the Republic of Ireland, when the Belfast group (26 Young People and 7 leaders) travelled to Cork to work with their partner group. The residential was held in Sunfort Language school in Liscarroll Co. Cork, from the 5th to the 7th April 2019 where the young people had the opportunity to participate in team building exercise, explore together perceptions held of each other and the role they had to play in building positive relationships cross border.

As it was the first meeting of the 2 groups, the focus was to give the young people the opportunity to get to know each other through a series of icebreakers and team-building exercises. This was followed by a Céile, where the young people had the opportunity to explore some of our musical traditions as well as participate in a number of dances.

On the Saturday morning the groups travelled together to Cork City for a welcome reception by the Lord Mayor where he spoke about the importance of building positive relationships across the border, now more than ever with the uncertainty that Brexit will bring. The young people spoke and shared their views on the role they can play in building relationships and making a positive impact on their communities.

They had the opportunity to tour Cork City before heading back to Ballyhass for a series of team-building and leadership challenges. The workshops on the Saturday evening and Sunday morning focused on the role of young people and the challenges they face.

Reflection exercises highlighted the friendships made, first steps taken by so many in crossing the border and the realisations that the young people's similarities far outweigh their differences.

Participant Feedback

I get on great with everyone and we all are positive and everyone helps one another. I have gained a lot of new friends too

Participant Feedback

I think it's good to have a good relationship between the two, especially with the whole Brexit thing coming up, it's good to have a good relationship with the people up there...the people up there are just like us, it's just religion is a bigger thing up there, but without that they're exactly like us and easy to get along with

It shows people that youse aren't different...there isn't such a big gap between ye, like ye aren't one thing then another thing, ye are a mix of things that ye can all relate and be part of a group together

Participant Feedback

I am able to handle a lot more situations and I'm more confident to speak up and voice my opinion

It just gives you more confidence and it's easier to speak in front of people and to get along with more people

If I ever wanted to go for job interviews or if I ever had to speak in front of a class, or anything like that, it just means I have more confidence in me to know I've done it before and I know what to do

The Second Residential was held in Northern Ireland in Greenhills Activity Centre in Newcastle, Co Down from the 22th to the 24th November. 22 Young people from Cork and their leaders participated on the residential. On the Friday evening the young people shared their identity and community profiles, highlighting the similarities and differences, identifying how they could contribute to building positive relations across their own communities as well as cross border.

On the Saturday, the Belfast group took their partners for a tour of the peace walls, outlining the impact these have on their lives and the communities divided by the walls. The Cork group had the opportunity to visit the youth club in short Strand providing a real insight into life as a young person in Belfast.

That evening they participated in a workshop facilitated by Peace Players, exploring how sports can be a medium to unite and sometimes divide communities. From these discussions the group identified key issues affecting their lives as young people, brainstorming strategies to address these issues.

Reflections and review focused on the learning gained, perceptions challenged and plans for future action to make a change within their own communities

Sample of some of the feedback from the Group.

What I enjoyed	What I learned	What I learned about my partner group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going to Belfast and seeing the Peace Walls • Meeting our partner group again • Making new friends • Everything 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are all so similar • Titanic was made in belfast and left Ireland from Cork • The Peace Walls were built over time, the last built in 2011 • About the Troubles and the divisions in NI • They have the same problems in their community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cork group say boy in every sentence • The Belfast group are competitive • It was easier to talk about things with the Cork group • Their community • We are all the same with different accents



VOLUNTEERING AS A GROUP

1. On Saturday January 12th, 2019 the Leadership group volunteered on the WellComm (the well community festival) in conjunction with Cork Sports Partnership which took place in Terence McSwiney Community College, Knocknaheeny. It was run in conjunction with the Operation Transformation Walk the event attracted over 300 participants.



2. Our youth leaders participating in a 5 day leadership training programme with Sail training Ireland



APPENDICES

Co-operation Ireland Youth Leadership Cork/Belfast exchange 5 - 7 April 2019 Sunfort Language School, Liscarroll, Cork

Draft Agenda

FRIDAY 5 APRIL 2019

5.30 pm:	Arrival of Cork & Belfast Groups
6.30 pm	Dinner in Sunfort and Welcome from Sunfort Staff and rules etc
7.30 pm	Ice-breakers and contract for residential
8.15 pm:	Ceile

SATURDAY 6 APRIL 2019

9	Breakfast
10.00	Transfer to Cork
11.00 am	Welcome reception by Cork City Council
12 - 2pm	Lunch in town and free time to tour the city in mixed groups
3.30 pm	Transfer to Ballyhass
4.15 pm	Team building Activity
6.30 pm	Dinner in Sunfort
7.15 m	Workshop - Identity and Community Sharing
8.30 pm-9.45 pm:	Social activity possibly bonfire depending on weather
10 pm-11.30pm	Quiz/ game/concert

SUNDAY 7 APRIL 2019

8.45 – 9.30	Breakfast
9.30 am	Check out and clean up
10.15 am	Working in partnership
11.30	Reflection and debrief

Co-operation Ireland Youth Leadership Cork/Belfast exchange 22-24 Nov 2019
Greenhill YMCA residential Centre

Draft agenda

FRIDAY 22th November

9.30 am:	Depart from Kent Station, Cork
5.30pm:	Arrive at Greenhills
5.30pm-6.30pm:	Settle in/Dinner
7.	Transfer to hotel
7.15pm-8.15 pm:	Icebreakers/ teambuilding games
8.30pm-9.15pm:	Me and my community profiles
9.30 -10.30pm:	Social Activity

SATURDAY 23th November

9 am	breakfast
10 am:	Depart for Belfast
11 noon:	Tour of Short Strand and the Peace Walls facilitated by the Belfast Leaders, with free time before lunch
2pm:	Lunch in Cosmo Belfast
3-4.30	Free Time in Belfast and visit to Doyle's Youth Club in the short Strand
4.30 pm	Travel Back to Greenhills for dinner
5.30.pm	Dinner in Greenhills
7 pm	Transfer to Hotel
7.15	Workshop Activities
	Team building activities at the hotel with Peace Player
	Issues affecting Young People
10 pm-11.30pm	Game of Charades

SUNDAY 24th November

9 am:	Breakfast
10:	Evaluation/ reflection
10.30 am	Goodbyes and Depart Greenhill
Drop in Cork & Cobh	