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**EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMME**

REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The IFI's Community Leadership Programme (CLP), delivered by NICVA, is aimed at building leadership and management capacity, facilitating groups to have a positive social, economic and community relations impact, and encouraging locally based community development activities. The Programme is targeted at community organisations in Northern Ireland and the Southern border counties and, in particular, in areas of weak community infrastructure and disadvantage.

In this evaluation, NICVA wished to add depth to their current understanding of the effectiveness of the CLP by complementing its existing data with reliable qualitative information that can help to establish which inputs and methodologies most contribute to positive longer-term outcomes for the groups and their communities.

Methodology

The main objective of the methodology was to add richness, depth and understanding to existing information, particularly in assessing what approaches have worked best and which inputs are most likely to contribute to increasing effective collaborative working for organisations.

Desk review was undertaken of monitoring returns and other programme information supplied by NICVA. This was used to help inform the selection of participants in the evaluation, guide the content of the evaluation instruments and provide background and understanding for the discussion of the findings.

Twenty telephone interviews were carried out with participants in the Community Leadership programme.

Six further group interviews were carried out with organisations to drill down more deeply into specific experiences and programme outputs. The material from these interviews have been used to create 6 case studies.

Five interviews with undertaken with CLP facilitators to gauge impact and process from their point of view.

Five interviews were also undertaken with project staff, partners and stakeholders to assess the working of the programme, its processes, reach and development.

IMPACTS ON ORGANISATIONS

Some of the groups joining the CLP were at a crisis point in their development. Typically these groups had dysfunctional committees and governance arrangements that bound them in to current committee structures and membership. Other groups were at a crisis point because they had lost their way or had just formed and were without any clear strategy. The CLP gave substantial support to these groups in crisis, helping them to move out of current impasses and power stalemates by setting out new and clear governance arrangements and clearer guidance on roles and responsibilities.

Groups joining CLP with the lowest capacity usually lacked team working and individuals had a low level of understanding about each others abilities. The impact of CLP on these human issues has been substantial. CLP assisted these groups to become better organised, more open with each other and more appreciative of each others abilities. Personal and organisational confidence grew and a number of groups became much more comfortable with delegating work to other staff and to volunteers, thereby releasing the energies of key staff to further develop the organisation.

These lower capacity groups often had staff, volunteers or committee members who had great enthusiasm and commitment, but who had little or no

idea of how to run an organisation. For these organisations, the CLP programme was a godsend. It gave a rare opportunity for facilitators to work with groups across an extensive period of time, to get to know them and build a strong, supportive relationship which led to the development of better leadership, clearer strategic thinking and better organisational structures and processes.

The majority of the organisations in the evaluation had benefitted substantially from the governance reviews. This, along with the close support from facilitators, led to groups becoming more appropriately and professionally structured. Within these structures, roles and responsibilities were more clearly set out and the processes by which the organisations undertook their work were much clearer.

It is clear that many of these groups would have foundered had it not been for the programme and its support, and many more would have struggled on with inappropriate governance arrangements, low confidence, low skill levels and a lack of vision.

IMPACTS ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

One of the outcomes of CLP is a greater connection between fledgling community organisations and the communities that they serve. The Action Learning Projects and community audits in particular resulted in a number of projects becoming much more widely known within their communities. In a number of cases, the rise in profile resulted in increased membership at committee level, a greater number of volunteers, fuller participation in activities and a wider usage of facilities. Greater connectedness to their communities also resulted in a closer alignment between activities and community needs and better communication between local people and their community group.

With CLP helping organisations to increase their profile, to become more grounded within their communities and to have stronger governance arrangements, some groups have become more recognised and trusted by outside agencies. This has led to some organisations that participated in the CLP being invited to become members of other committees. This has improved their standing generally with potential partners and funders.

Unionist and Nationalist groups have also come together across the community divide by visiting each others communities and through action learning projects improve empathy and understanding.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER COURSE: Certificate in Management Practice

For many of those who took part, the qualification opened doors in their own development and played a key role in their organisations becoming more recognised and trusted by funders and outside agencies. The course also stretched some participants in a way that was personally fulfilling. Although a number commented that the course was “hard work” or that they weren’t sure if they could do it, pushing through and being successful was a matter of great pride for some of those whom we interviewed.

Although the course was not primarily aimed at networking, being with others from community development, discussing issues and becoming aware of each other’s methods of working helped to form relationships between participants that have continued well beyond the end of the course.

We encountered some who had dropped out because they found the course too challenging. Clearly the course is not for everyone, but that is not surprising given the starting position of many of those who took up the CLP. Many of the participants had been out of education for a long time or had little academic background and these students tended to struggle more with the course.

SUSTAINABILITY

Our view is that the CLP has contributed substantially to the sustainability of the organisations that took part. Stronger links between organisations and communities have resulted in a bigger pool of volunteers. Better governance arrangements and greater professionalism have helped a number of groups to bid successfully for funding. There are also good examples of an increased business focus and a greater emphasis on self sustainability. Better strategic and business planning have resulted in more effective fundraising activities.

LEGACY

It is clear from the evaluation, that the objectives of the Community Leadership Programme have been met. The legacy of the programme is a substantial one. A whole cadre of community groups at different stages of development and at different levels of capacity have become stronger, more sustainable, more focused, better managed and better able to serve the needs of their communities.

There has also been a great deal of self development amongst individuals who participated. People who lacked the confidence to speak out, who lacked confidence in their own abilities and who were under-achieving, have been empowered and enabled by the programme to grow as individuals and to make considerable contributions to their local communities.

Many of the success stories that we identified in the evaluation may well have been stories of demise had it not been for CLP. The fledgling groups who grew in confidence, the crisis point groups who were reaching the stage of disbanding, the groups with inefficient processes and poor governance, were mostly groups without the financial resources to seek help. CLP provided a unique opportunity for these groups to re-establish themselves and move forward, an opportunity that was not readily accessible elsewhere.

Perhaps the greatest legacy of CLP is that the participant groups are now confident that they can focus on their future. With enhanced leadership abilities, stronger community links, better governance and more effective planning, many of the groups have moved away from introspecting on their own difficulties and have developed a strong outward looking focus on the future.

We have no doubt in concluding that the CLP has made a substantial and unique impact on the people and organisations who deliver community development in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties and has left a legacy of empowerment, increased capacity, stronger leadership, better governance and improved sustainability.

FUTURE

This report recommends the development of a future programme largely similar to the one reviewed here, taking on board the lessons learned during the first 3 years of the CLP and the findings of this evaluation. There is clearly a need both for ongoing support to those who took part in the CLP and for leadership and organisational development for community groups who have low capacity or who are at a crisis point.

NICVA and its partners have clearly grasped the CLP remit comprehensively and now have considerable experience in its delivery. NICVA should consider taking the lead in developing a new programme and seeking new funding, perhaps from mainstream sources such as the Department of Social Development under its remit to “support community development”.

1 INTRODUCTION

THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

1.1. The IFI's Community Leadership Programme (CLP), delivered by NICVA, is aimed at building leadership and management capacity, facilitating groups to have a positive social, economic and community relations impact, and encouraging locally based community development activities. The Programme is targeted at community organisations in Northern Ireland and the Southern border counties and, in particular, in areas of weak community infrastructure and disadvantage. The objectives of the programme include:

- To identify, motivate and assist local community organisations by facilitating their participation in a range of activities designed to have a positive impact on the social, economic and community relations environment of their communities
- To encourage the development of local community-based projects and the initiation of specific actions at local level.
- To assist the development of leadership, management and capacity building skills at local level for community organisations at different stages of development

1.2. The programme has been running for 3 years and has been aimed at groups that:

- Have community development as their main focus and are working at grass-roots level
- Have not previously had the opportunity for development
- Were not currently in receipt of IFI revenue funding
- Work with their local community, not single issue groups, and
- Work directly with the community not via support to another group

PROGRESS THUS FAR

- 1.3. Participants were asked to commit to learning, to be motivated throughout and to be willing to apply the lessons learned from the Programme. The programme has involved:
- ten half day or evening action learning sessions with a trained facilitator
 - Attendance and networking at three roundtable events in the course of a year
 - Access to specialised governance support and advice
 - On-going support and advice from NICVA specialists e.g. in fundraising
 - Action learning project with bursary of £2,500 or 2,750 euro
- 1.4. Participants had the opportunity to achieve individual accreditation for management and leadership skills through the Institute of Leadership and Management level 3 award, and the University of Ulster Certificate in Management Practice .
- 1.5. In addition to the original Programme activities, participants have had opportunities to undertake a number of other activities including, for example:
- Production of promotional videos, showcasing participants work and achievements
 - Networking via dedicated Website and Facebook page
 - Attendance at training on financial management and information management
- 1.6. In the first year of the Programme, 27 groups participated and 209 training or workshop events were held with 1,329 participants. Across the three years 2009 to 2011, there have been 69 participant groups from Northern Ireland and 28 from the Southern border counties.

THE NEED FOR EVALUATION AT THIS POINT

1.7. NICVA already collects a range of information from ongoing evaluation forms, monitoring inputs and outputs and annual reporting of qualitative outcomes. In this evaluation, NICVA wished to add depth to their current understanding of the effectiveness of the CLP by complementing this existing data with reliable qualitative information that can help to establish which inputs and methodologies most contribute to positive longer-term outcomes for the groups and their communities.

1.8. The key objectives of the evaluation are:

Identifying the factors contributing to positive outcomes for the beneficiary organisations:

- (a) identify increased capacities of beneficiary organisations in the period since commencing the programme
- (b) assess to what extent they are attributable to CLP inputs
- (c) identify which elements and approaches of the CLP package contributed to these increased capacities
- (d) consider how the CLP outputs contribute to the programme and strategic objectives of the Fund

Assessing the benefits to communities of more effective community organisations:

- (a) identify concrete economic, social and community relations developments for communities which are directly or indirectly attributable to the activities and development of CLP groups
- (b) assess the sustainability of these developments in the medium and longer term

Make recommendations for future services and interventions to build the capacity of community organisations to deliver sustainable economic, social and good relations development for their communities.

1.9. Methodology.

The main objective of the methodology was to add richness, depth and understanding to existing information, particularly in assessing what approaches have worked best and which inputs are most likely to contribute to increasing effective collaborative working for organisations.

Desk review was undertaken of monitoring returns and other programme information supplied by NICVA. This was used to help inform the selection of participants in the evaluation, guide the content of the evaluation instruments and provide background and understanding for the discussion of the findings.

Twenty telephone interviews were carried out with participants in the Community Leadership programme. Interviewees:

- Ann Marie McPhilips, Drumavaddy Social and Development Association
- Bernie Brady, Teach Oscail FRC Project Ltd
- Bob Loade, Glenfield Castlemara PAKT
- Bronagh Treanor, Truagh Development Association
- Christine Canning, Drumbeg North and South Residents' Association
- Fred Gallagher, Comhlacht Forbartha an Tearmainn
- Ian Shanks, Braniel Community Association
- Jackie Warnock, Ballintrillick Environmental group Ltd.
- Kate Laverty, Centre for Health and Wellbeing
- Louise McLoughlin, West End Partnership
- Maria McCafferty, Star Neighbourhood Centre
- Nikki Girvan, Greater Cloughreagh Community Association
- Nora Breslin, Rosses CDP
- Orla McAlister, Newlodge Schools Cluster
- Sadie Reid, Newhill Community Project
- Sheila McWilliams, Coolestan Community Association
- Siobhan Irwin, Ballybogey Community Association
- Tina McLoughlin. Mohill Family Support Centre

- Tracey Hutchinson, Wishing Well Family Centre
- Ursula McKenna, Dochas for Women Ltd

Further interviews were carried out were carried out with 6 organisations to drill down more deeply into specific experiences and programme outputs.

The material from these interviews have been used to create **6 case studies**.

The organisations for case study were:

- Centre for Health and Wellbeing
- Crossfire Trust
- Dochas
- Donegal Family Resource Centre
- Mallusk Community Action Group
- Peace Factory

Five interviews were undertaken with CLP facilitators to gauge impact and process from their point of view. Those interviewed were:

- Frank McGlone
- Janie Crone
- Martin Kennedy
- Helen McLaughlin
- Wendy Robinson

Five interviews were also undertaken with project staff, partners and stakeholders to assess the working of the programme, its processes, reach and development. Interviewees:

- Dr Anita McNab, University of Ulster
- Jimmy Lavery, NICVA
- Janet Mullan, NICVA
- Richard O’Rawe, Stellar Leadership
- Sandra Bailie, NICVA

2 FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS WITH 20 PARTICIPANT ORGANISATIONS

2.1. INTRODUCTION

2.1.1. Telephone interviews were undertaken with 20 individuals who had taken part in the CLP programme across its three years of implementation. This section of the report details the findings of those interviews. Under most of the headings we have let the interviewees experiences of CLP speak for themselves in their own words, restricting analysis to organising the findings under themes.

2.2. DECIDING TO ENROL IN THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

2.2.1. Each of the individuals interviewed had their own specific reasons for seeking help and support from CLP and many had multiple reasons for doing so. Amongst the recurrent reasons for joining the programme were:

- the organisation had reached a hiatus,
- the need to increase capacity and skills and
- wanting to be better equipped to take on a particular project.

Loss of focus/ at a change point.

2.2.2. Some joined CLP because they or their organisations were at a crisis point or had reached a stage in their development where they needed to stand back and look at themselves. For some, this was a matter of becoming re-energised and motivated, for others it was about finding direction again.

Our Community Association had been running for some years but we had lost our focus. (Nikki Girvan)

We Needed something to revitalise our group and to get us all re-motivated. (Bernie Brady)

Our committee had been through a bit of an upheaval and governance was an issue. It was a good opportunity begin anew and CLP was just what we needed at that time. (Maria McCafferty)

Newhill community group needed to look at where we were – we had no strategy and we needed guidance on governance. (Sadie Reid)

The Wishing Well Family Centre had hit a plateau and we needed to re-engage with the community (Tracey Hutchinson)

Needed leadership skills to build capacity in the committee

- 2.2.3. Some joined CLP because they were new to committee working or came from organisations where the whole committee or management board was new. Some were coming from quite a low base and needed to develop basic skills in running an organisation or project.

We are a new group. We needed to learn how to conduct meetings, basic stuff about running an organisation and making it sustainable. (Ian Shanks)

We were all new members of the group so we needed to enhance our skills. (Bronagh Treanor)

Our committee was just newly elected. It was a perfect opportunity to learn some leadership skills and to learn how to work together as a team. (Nikki Girvan)

We thought it would be a good way to get the committee skills increased and boost the confidence of committee members. (Bob Loade)

Wanted to be better equipped to take on a specific project

- 2.2.4. There were specific projects that some of those who joined CLP wanted to undertake. To do so, they felt that they needed to upgrade their skills or to bring members of the management committee all up to the same level of ability.

We had taken on a project to develop a whole community centre but even though I had qualifications in community development the rest of the group had not and we felt that it would be better if more of us were trained. (Fred Gallagher)

We wanted to encourage the 3 estates in the West End Partnership to work together and we thought that the CLP would help to give us the skills we needed to achieve that. (Louise McLoughlin)

2.3. IMPACTS ON PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR ORGANISATIONS

Bonded us as a group or team

2.3.1. A number of those interviewed said that their team members grew closer and learned how to work better to each others strengths as a result of the CLP.

All of our group who took part in CLP came from different levels in community development and we all learned and grew together. This really bonded us as a group. (Nikki Girvan)

The CLP really bonded us as a group. We learned how to value everyone's opinion. We all developed as individuals and learned how to relate our individual skills to the project. (Fred Gallagher)

We work much better now as a team. We learned on CLP how to recognise and work to each other's strengths and weaknesses. (Jackie Warnock)

Improved our confidence

2.3.2. One of the most frequently reported impacts of CLP was an increase in confidence both at an individual level and as a group or team. Many of the groups were coming from a low base or were just starting out and

lacked confidence in their ability to achieve their goals. Amongst the recently formed groups, in particular, there were individuals who had little experience and a lack of confidence in speaking at meetings or representing their organisations more widely.

2.3.3. Some expressed the impact as a personal one.

Personally, my confidence has grown enormously (Ian Shanks)

Some of our committee would not have much confidence. One woman barely spoke before and got embarrassed. Since CLP she has come on leaps and bounds. It's made a big difference to her personally. (Bernie Brady)

2.3.4. For others, the increase in confidence related to their ability to do things more effectively.

Before the programme some of our girls would not have had much confidence in their own abilities. It has helped to reinforce that they can do all sorts of things (Nikki Girvan)

Without doubt it has increased our confidence 100%. Through CLP we organised an event "A Taste of True" and it has given us confidence to do that again. (Bronagh Treanor)

The CLP facilitator made things very clear for us . Anything is possible if you get off your backside and do it! (Ann-Marie McPhilips)

2.3.5. For those who had little experience in speaking at meetings or who felt that their views were not worthy of voicing, CLP helped to build confidence in expressing their opinions, both within their own group and at meetings with outside interests.

All of our group have more self confidence and they speak out in meetings where they wouldn't have done before the CLP (Christine Canning)

CLP definitely helped us to become more vocal and not be afraid of expressing our opinions. (Bronagh Treanor)

Confidence was one of the most important things that we got from CLP. Before the programme, some of our members would have had difficulty in getting up to talk at their own dinner table. Now some of them are chairing sub-groups. (Ian Shanks)

CLP helped to show members of our group that they were doing a lot of things right. It's given them a lot of confidence when they talk to local council or NIHE. (Bob Loade)

2.3.6. A final way in which CLP improved confidence was in helping people to let go and not try to do everything themselves. Gaining the confidence to delegate has also had spin off impacts; those who are delegated to are able to build their own skills and confidence within the organisation.

It (CLP) really improved my confidence and ability to delegate. (Bernie Brady)

I am much better at delegating now and this helps to build capacity amongst staff (Jackie Warnock)

Because we delegate much more now, it is building the capacity of our volunteers (Maria McCafferty)

We now have much better structures in place.

2.3.7. As a result of the governance reviews and the work of the facilitators, many of those interviewed said that their organisations now had much better structures in place. Having better structures has increased efficiency by helping to organise workload more effectively.

Our monthly meetings are much better structured now. (Christine Canning)

As a result of the CLP we now have 3 sub groups working in different areas. This means that we are not bogged down in small issues at committee meetings. (Ian Shanks)

Whereas 3 or 4 people used to do everything now we have several small groups that are allocated tasks – it has eased and spread the burden. (Christine Canning)

With the help of CLP, we were able to put proper structures in place in the Centre and that helped us in turn to look at ourselves and work out how to move forward (Sadie Reid)

Our processes are now much better.

2.3.8. Whilst having the correct structures in place has helped many organisations, others said that their processes have also improved as a result of CLP. This has led to greater professionalism and better communication. The processes involved in planning workload also improved after CLP so that workloads are now better and more easily managed.

CLP contributed a great deal to our professionalism. We now have much better procedures and processes in place. For example we have performance appraisals where we never had before. (Maria McCafferty)

Since CLP we have introduced performance appraisals – we never had any formal supervision previously. And our processes are so much more efficient now that we have learned about time management. (Sadie Reid)

Now that we do planning better, we know that we can achieve things if we break things down into stages. Complicated projects don't overwhelm us any more (Ann-Marie McPhilips)

We know how to plan and organise an event now and how to monitor and evaluate it. (Bronagh Treanor)

Better understanding and allocation of roles and responsibilities

2.3.9. Governance reviews also encouraged groups to identify roles and responsibilities. This has improved communication and accountability.

CLP helped us to have a clearer idea of roles and responsibilities within our organisation. (Bronagh Treanor)

Now we present financial statements and keep everyone up to date. We allocate roles for each project and identify who is accountable for what (Christine Canning)

Our governance health check helped us to clarify what is expected from committee members. Now everyone is more aware of their roles and responsibilities (Maria McCafferty)

More effective delegation

2.3.10. We discussed, above, the greater confidence that participants felt to delegate authority to others within their organisation. Better delegation is also an identifiable impact in its own right. Greater delegation has led to better productivity, personal growth and a decrease in time-consuming micro-management.

We are so much better at delegation since CLP. It helped us with some staff who were resistant to change, but the acceptance of delegation has led to a lot of personal growth (Jackie Warnock)

Delegation, we had never tried that before but now we delegate all the time (Bernie Brady)

While I was doing the CLP, I realised that I had been micro managing. Now I delegate much more. It reduces my own burden and gives other people good experience and motivation. Since we started to delegate more, sickness levels have dropped. (Sadie Reid)

I learned from CLP how to use our volunteers and members to the best of their ability and to get the best from them to benefit us. It made me realise that I could actually trust people with other jobs rather than doing it myself. I just had to ask them". (Siobhan Irwin)

More effective networking

2.3.11. The networking opportunities provided by round tables and by visits between projects helped information exchange and mutual support, both at the time and on an on-going basis. This has led to some groups teaming up on joint projects and plans for further joint working on a cross-border basis. Some groups feel confident about calling on others for help and there are examples of groups working together on joint funding bids. Better networking capacity is clearly one of the legacies of the CLP.

The networking with other groups and learning from them was one of the best aspects of CLP. We got a lot of ideas from other groups and I think were able to help them too - a sharing of problems and sharing of experience. (Ann-Marie McPhilips)

The networking was fantastic. We shared experiences and got a lot of ideas about fundraising (Bernie Brady)

It was good to network at the roundtable events –I know that I can lift the phone and discuss issues with them at any time. (Fred Gallagher)

The round table events were great. We have established contacts with five other groups in Portadown and we are planning to do a field trip together (Bronagh Treanor)

We've formed a relationship with a group in Derry since the roundtables and we swap ideas and experiences with them (Christina Canning)

We are making plans to visit a group in Sligo to see what they have done and learn from their experience. And we would like to follow up with youth groups in the North to have disabled young people stay with them (Jackie Warnock)

2.4. **IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

2.4.1. So far, we have discussed the impacts upon individual participants and their organisations. The learning from the CLP has also impacted upon

the communities that participants and their organisations serve. Community consultations, action learning projects and publicity drives that resulted from CLP have all helped to strengthen relationships between organisations and their local communities, have made them more tuned in to local needs and more responsive towards them. There is also evidence that there is greater participation from the local community in CLP supported groups and a greater number of projects aimed at specific community issues, such as anti-social behaviour.

Greater consultation and communication with the local community

2.4.2. There is evidence that the CLP has brought participant groups into closer communication with their local communities, both in helping groups to raise their profile and helping them to be more aware of community needs.

Now we always do a needs assessment with the community to involve them. This means that we are now very visible so the community is more aware of what we do. (Jackie Warnock)

With the help from CLP, we now have a website. This has brought in the community a lot. We also have a community newsletter now and people are aware of what is going on (Ann-Marie McPhilips)

Our Action Learning project brought in the churches and the school to what we are doing for the first time. It connected us with the rest of the community. (Ian Shanks)

Greater participation in and from the local community

2.4.3. Having a higher profile in the local community and trying to involve them in local projects has led to greater community participation in groups that were part of CLP.

Our action learning project was "Paint my Portacabin". The young people that were socially excluded and who were involved in anti-social

behaviour were invited to work alongside tradesman to repair it and at the end they claimed it as their own special place (Sadie Reid)

Before the CLP we had very few people attending the centre but now it's buzzing. There are activities on every night. We had a family fun day and despite the rain the turnout was amazing. All this activity is due to what we learned on the CLP about marketing and communication with the community (Nikki Girvan)

Definitely more of an interest (since CLP) in what we do. The events that we put on as part of our CLP learning have helped there. There has been an increase in those taking courses (Bronagh Treanor)

Our Action Learning Project encouraged the local community to become involved. It has changed the way we work, now we have a more collaborative approach (Orla McAlister)

The Action Learning project was fantastic for our community – It brought everyone together. We had our AGM on the back of it and we had the best turnout ever. We were able to recruit new members for our committee and volunteers from that. (Sheila McWilliams)

It has improved our standing/ people take us more seriously now.

2.4.4. Increased profile as a result of Action Learning Projects and other work within local communities has helped some groups that participated in CLP to become more recognised and trusted.

Our Action Learning Project was unique – it helped people in Braniel to take us more seriously as a proper community group (Ian Shanks)

We wanted to put Cooleston on the map and we wanted people to help us. Statutory agencies now take us seriously (Sheila McWilliams)

Our Action Learning Project was a community fun day – it definitely brought our existence to the community's attention (Nora Breslin)

We now have much more involvement from the community – with the churches and the school. The school wanted community representation on the board of governors and asked one of our group – this would never have happened before CLP. (Ian Shanks)

More able to address antisocial behaviour

2.4.5. The training and development that groups received from CLP has enabled some to build community links to a level where they are able to address substantive local issues such as anti-social behaviour and risky behaviour.

We have a problem around here with alcohol and we are raising awareness about the health and safety issues around it. With our profile being raised now, people look to us and trust us (Tina McLaughlin)

One of the young lads from the group committed suicide and we were worried it might spread. The young people signed a pact stating that they would never commit suicide. They felt great support from each other. One young lad said just last week “I just want to say that if the portacabin hadn’t been here I would have been where “x” is today but instead I had the group to turn to and a place to go with them.” (Sadie Reid)

Now that CLP has helped us to be more connected to the community, we have identified the need for facilities for teenagers. We have rented a community centre from the church and will provide facilities for teenagers like a computer room. We are much more able now to see what is lacking in the community and to do something about it (Ann-Marie McPhilips)

Since we were on the CLP, we have the confidence to work with a local group, and they have the confidence to work with us, to have graffiti

removed and replaced with billboards. We have also started a boxing club. It keeps the young people off the streets and there is a separate committee for that and they are doing their own fund raising (Christine Canning).

Better able to undertake cross-community and community relations work

2.4.6. Some of the projects that groups took part in through CLP have encouraged and enabled them to have greater contact and dialogue with groups from the “other” (Unionist or Nationalist) community. In one case this was through dialogue on the past, how different perceptions of history can colour our views and how greater empathy can be built about the “others” perceptions and beliefs.

One of our projects for CLP was organising Irish history courses for the local community. If people could look at history in a true/factual way then it might help overcome sectarianism and get an understanding of how we got to the place we are now. (Orla McAlister)

2.4.7. Another example shows how the CLP enabled groups in County Fermanagh to begin the process of “discovering” each other through contact and visiting each other’s communities. The group specifically looked to CLP for the skills and methods that would help them encourage residents from 3 estates (Nationalist and Unionist) to break down the barriers between them.

Since CLP we have got the three groups working together – a mixture of Catholic and Protestant , it’s a great achievement as they had never even been in each others estates before. (Louise McLoughlin)

2.5. SUSTAINABILITY

2.5.1. Many of those interviewed commented on ways in which their participation in CLP contributed to the sustainability of their group. One of the most mentioned was an increase in the way that groups find and

utilise volunteers. There are also good examples of an increased business focus and a greater emphasis on self sustainability.

Better use of volunteers

2.5.2. Better planning and a greater willingness to delegate as a result of CLP has helped some organisations to use volunteers more effectively.

Because we are better able to plan and organise since CLP, we now have more volunteers as a result. We have 15 new members who would be regularly involved. (Bronagh Treanor)

From the CLP, we realised that we had to concentrate more on supporting the volunteers as they are a great resource. We now ensure that our volunteers are properly qualified and that they have all the support that they need. (Fred Gallagher)

Since the CLP we have helped our volunteers to become employees and our knowledge and skills base has really grown. (Orla McAlister)

We now have a pool of around 20 young people as volunteers and because of the CLP I feel much more able to delegate to them. (Bernie Brady)

Moving towards self sustainability

2.5.3. A number of groups are trying, as a result of their learning on CLP, to fundraise independently and to become more self sustaining.

We learned in CLP that our facility should really be run like a small business and be self sustaining by not depending on funding grants. It's difficult to move people away from the notion of going to a funder for everything, but we are trying hard to become self sustainable by doing a lot of fundraising ourselves (Fred Gallagher)

As a 90% funded group we realised that we were not sustainable so we are moving to have fundraising events, for example, our family fun

day. We realise now that it's the £ and 50p's that are important. (Bob Loade)

Our confidence in event management grew with CLP. This year we are going to run a computer course. It will help people become more IT literate and also aid our sustainability (Louise McLoughlin)

Sustainability through better forward planning

2.5.4. Finally, a number of interviewees commented that they were more sustainable since CLP because of their increased focus on forward planning and better organisation generally.

We now have a 3 year business plan that is aimed at increasing income generation and becoming more financially independent. (Bob Loade)

The ability to plan and represent ourselves to council and to funders has been a huge step forward for us and is down to CLP We are able to say what we want now, we have that confidence. (Louise McLoughlin)

We are much better planned now. We use the sustainability plan as a guide. We get some financial help from the Council and do fundraising ourselves. Now I know who can help with certain projects and who can't. (Ian Shanks).

3 CASE STUDY: DONEGAL FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

- 3.1. Donegal Family Resource centre came into being in 2005. It is situated in Donegal Town and is run by a voluntary management Board. Donegal FRC aims to combat disadvantage and improve the function of the family unit by identifying and tackling the issues facing local people. Donegal FRC also aims to create partnerships between voluntary and statutory agencies in the area. The FRC provides training, education, information, advice, support and a full office service including free internet access and meeting rooms.
- 3.2. Five members of Donegal Family Resource Centre took part in Year Three of the Community Leadership Programme. They included three of the directors, a volunteer and the FRC coordinator.
- 3.3. When the FRC joined the CLP programme, they were at a change point in their development with both long standing and newer committee members and differing views on the best direction for the future. Committee meetings were not effective at resolving differences, some members felt as if they were being attacked or put down and committee business was not being conducted effectively.

“Some members weren’t very nice to the rest, the meetings were horrendous, being knocked back all the time, it wasn’t a good place to be.”

The difficult meetings created stress amongst some members of the FRC and some thought about leaving. Clearly, the organization was at a tipping point.

“It was stressful going to the meetings, I would rather have been somewhere else, anywhere else”

“there were a couple of times I started to write a resignation letter”

The Community Leadership Programme was very timely for Donegal Family Resource Centre. The facilitator identified that the committee needed to work more effectively and directed effort quickly in that direction.

“CLP came at a very good time for us and gave us the confidence to tackle the problems we were having problems at the time, with all the conflict in the committee, we spent the first few sessions with the facilitator, just dealing with that”

The five members who took part in CLP were able, with the help of the facilitator, to stop and assess what the blockages were and to recognize that the dynamics of the committee were troublesome and that the rules of behaviour needed to be agreed and applied.

“the first thing that CLP helped us to understand was that we needed to introduce ground rules. We needed to learn how to speak at meetings, how to behave towards each other, how to speak up effectively and how to challenge inappropriate behaviour and be respectful to each other.”

The support of CLP helped Donegal Family Resource Centre to make committee meetings more constructive, effective and enjoyable.

“Now our meetings are more productive, they are more lighthearted, we are more at ease”

- 3.4. Donegal Family Resource Centre also benefitted greatly from the support given by the governance team. The team were able to advise on changes that were necessary to better reflect the FRC’s status and processes and which made the governance documents fit for purpose.

“We had some issues with our memoranda and articles of association. We were using a generic set and when the NICVA people went through them, they found quite a few discrepancies that didn’t reflect

the fact that we are a charity. We also needed to change things like the number for a quorum and the Term of Office for committee members. It helped us to enable best practice in these things”

3.5. The FRC is currently facing cuts in its funding and the CLP facilitation helped them address fund raising as part of their sustainability plan. As a result, the FRC staff and volunteers now feel much better equipped to identify the most appropriate funding sources and to write strong funding applications. They are also planning new fund raising events throughout the year.

3.6. As part of CLP supported sustainability planning, the FRC have also taken the decision to charge clients for services where appropriate. This has been a difficult decision, but reflects a more realistic approach to sustainability in the current funding climate

“We are going to try to charge more for our services. Some people aren’t able to pay, of course, but we try to help them to make some contribution. After all, we have to pay out for tutors and trainers and the cost has to be covered somewhere”

3.7. As a result of the networking opportunities provided by the CLP, Donegal Family Resource Centre staff and volunteers feel both inspired by the work of others and encouraged that they are on the right track themselves.

“It was good too to see that we are on the right track, that a lot of the things that other groups are doing, we are doing too in Donegal. We are all gearing towards the same things and that gives us confidence”

3.8. Donegal Family Resource centre clearly got a great deal out of the CLP. Their participation came at a crucial time in their development and enabled both staff and committee members to tackle issues that were threatening to disrupt their work.

“If we hadn’t taken part in the CLP programme, the committee would have been on their own to sort out their differences. I wouldn’t be here, that’s a definite and a number of other committee members would have gone too”

The facilitation helped those involved in the FRC to focus on the reasons why they were there and the needs that they wanted to serve. It helped them to structure their meetings more successfully and to interact in those meetings in a much more productive manner

“It really got us all focussed on who we are, what we have to offer and how we can all work together to do the things we want to do”

- 3.9. Now that they have got the fundamentals of the committee sorted out, and have created a more appropriate and fit for purpose set of governance documents the FRC are much more effective as a group. They have a greater eye on sustainability, can create stronger funding applications, feel better networked, and are inspired by the work of others as well as being assured that they are on the right track with their current work.

“The CLP was great, it came at just the right time, it has given us much better direction and great hope for the future”

4 CASE STUDY: MALLUSK COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

- 4.1. Mallusk Community Action (MCAG) group came into being in 2008 originally to tackle local traffic problems and issues relating to a local landfill site. Since that time, MCAG has broadened its outlook and now contributes to areas that include a focus on young people, sport, community events and historical events. MCAG's mission is to create a safe and pleasant environment for the people of Mallusk and Hydepark to live and bring up their families'. MCAG were part of the year one cohort of the Community Leadership Programme
- 4.2. MCAG had formed just prior to becoming part of the CLP. At the time of joining, they were looking for help in getting started, formulating their constitution and learning how translate the commitment of the individuals into a successful and effective group.
- 4.3. Three members from MCAG received support and training across a range of issues including management and leadership, governance, finance and funding. One member took the University of Ulster Certificate in Management Practice
- 4.4. With the help of CLP facilitation and training, MCAG have developed rapidly from a group narrowly focussed on the local traffic and landfill issues. Today they are what one member describes as "a more normal community group" offering support and developmental activities to all sections of the local community.

"When we joined CLP we'd just had three or four meetings and we didn't know what we were doing to be honest, some people had been on committees before but others had never been on anything like this in their lives before."

“There is no doubt that CLP got us really sorted out as a committee and helped us to get where we are now – we have a constitution, a proper mission statement and an action plan, and we are properly constituted as a company limited by guarantee.

- 4.5. One of the early successes of CLP support was in skilling members of MCAG to write effective funding applications. Two BIG Awards for All grants followed quickly

“We got those grants about half way through our CLP programme and the success of the applications is very much down to the help and training that we got from CLP in putting our case forward properly and structuring the applications in the right way”

- 4.6. With the development of an action plan and a growing confidence to make applications, MCAG now receive funding from a number of sources, including, for example, Newtownabbey Borough Council who fund MCAG facilities and events.

- 4.7. The skills gained on the UU Certificate of Management Practice has helped MCAG to apply professional standards of management to the work of the Group. Through meeting others on the course it has also provided significant avenues for networking allowing MCAG to meet and develop contacts with groups from a wide spectrum of interests and across the community divide.

“I met some great people who were heavily involved in their community groups and that gave us a great network to tap into and to build upon”

“there were people on the course from very varied backgrounds, from local community groups near us and also from places like Poleglass and Ardoyne”

“We now have ongoing contacts with groups from across the community divide, they invited us to their St Patrick’s Day event and we invited them to our Queen’s Jubilee event”

- 4.8. MCAG have made great use of all the networking opportunities provided by CLP. One example is their membership of the Sixmilewater Trust, which came about as a result of contacts made through CLP. The Trust is a group dedicated to the protection of the Sixmilewater river. Also on the committee of this organisation are two local authorities, two other community groups as well as a range of angling groups. Such memberships give MCAG a wide range of networking and learning opportunities.

“They (local authorities) are very experienced in their approach to managing projects and funding, so we have learned from their processes.”

- 4.9. MCAG’s action learning project, under CLP, was the development of a Heritage Trail with signage and leaflets that invite and inform visitors to follow the local landscape. The Trail was officially launched through an event attended by local people and local politicians.

- 4.10. The development of the Heritage Trail did not all go smoothly. Some local residents objected to signage and were unsure about the impact that the trail would have on the local area. As a result, MCAG had to sit back, with the help of CLP facilitation, and think about how to develop methods of consultation and listening that were truly effective. As a result, MCAG members learned a great deal from the project, learning that has transferred into other areas of MCAG work.

“It was a real learning curve - we really learned from the experience, how to consult with people and engage with those who have a different opinion”

- 4.11. One outcome of the consultation on the Heritage Trail was a wider understanding amongst local people as to the purpose and objectives of MCAG. This has resulted in a higher profile amongst the community and increased membership, including some of those who had raised objections to the Trail.

“The community now knows that we exist, they know us really well, we have a newsletter that goes out to 600 households”

“Some people who were against the heritage trail are now on our group, so going out and consulting really expanded our base and made MCAG more inclusive of all the range of local opinion”

- 4.12. CLP had a big impact on the confidence of MCAG members to organise activities and events. These are now firmly based on the needs of the local community and include clean up events around the river and other parts of the community, a Halloween party for children, summer fete, local history tours, museum trips, theatre trips and shopping trips.

“CLP gave me the confidence to go ahead and organise events, it gave me a push to go for it to try to meet people’s needs”

- 4.13. Some of the originating members no longer have the time to and run MCAG in its present form. They remain hugely committed and active in the Group, but their working hours mean that they are unable to give the time that is necessary to be effective in MCAG business. Had it not been for CLP, the original members fear that MCAG might have folded once they stood down. However, with the Group now more formally constituted, with governance and organisation now on a firm footing, thanks to CLP, the originating members feel able to hand the reins on to others.

“Three years ago, before we took part in CLP, it was a problem getting people to come onto the committee. Now it’s very different - we have a new chair and vice chair and a new treasurer as well as young people on the committee”

As one of the originating members put it:

“The fact that we have been able to step back shows that the organisation is now in good health, thanks to the commitment of the members and to the help we got from CLP”

- 4.14. MCAG got a huge amount from CLP. It has grown from a small organisation, formed around a single issue and relatively unorganised, into a thriving community group, properly constituted and organised and firmly engaged with the local community. CLP has given MCAG members skills, confidence and ideas that have empowered them and driven them forward to become a very successful and locally engaged group.

“We grew from small beginnings and we’ve had massive success over the last couple of years. An awful lot of our success is down to the help and support that we got from CLP. If it hadn’t been for the Programme, we might not be here today.”

5 CASE STUDY: CENTRE FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- 5.1. The Centre for Health and Wellbeing (CHWB) was formed in 2009. It aims to help the local community to be aware of personal health and well being. CHWBs mission is to improve health and community well-being by creating an awareness of complementary health.
- 5.2. Before joining the CLP, CHWBs Board of Directors had undertaken a skills audit and had identified areas for development. CHWB hoped that the CLP could help them to increase their capacity and improve management skills particularly around strategic leadership and vision. Five members of CHWB took part in the CLP programme. The Centre coordinator also took part in the University of Ulster Certificate in Management Practice.
- 5.3. CHWB has its origins in the Ballymurphy Women’s Centre and, at the time of joining the CLP, was considering how best to remain rooted in the community whilst grasping the need to have a business focus.

“When we started the CLP programme we were in a transition period. CHWB is, and always will be, community based and led by community need. But at the same time, we were ware of the need to be more business orientated.

- 5.4. With the help of the facilitator, the Centre quickly identified a number of areas where they would like to focus during the CLP. There was an immediate realisation that a business orientation could be developed that would sit comfortably with the existing strong community ethos.

“CLP helped us to realise that we could still have our community based ethos, but treat it more like a business”

- 5.5. CHWB had previously produced their mission, aims and policies, but with the period of transition, these needed to be revisited.

“there were new policies and procedures that were being enacted in the Centre and there was a new culture of how work was to be done”

- 5.6. With help from the CLP facilitator, CHWB reviewed their vision and mission reducing them to shorter and more memorable statements.

“Actually writing down our ideas and values and putting them into words made a big difference”

“Although we had some of those things in place already, the CLP helped us to hone them into something much more polished. Actually getting the strategy written for three years was a big thing, because suddenly we had a focus and we were able to link activity to it.”

- 5.7. From the strategy, the facilitator helped CHWB to write a business plan for the year ahead. Although the task of implementing the business plan seemed daunting at first, the existence of the plan helped CHWB to focus their energies and brought a very effective management discipline to the Centre Board and staff.

“The business plan, well, we knew it was a brilliant idea, but we wondered how we were ever going to get it to work, but when we forced ourselves to work to it we had a very high success rate”

- 5.8. Although the period of the first business plan has now ended, the legacy of the skills that the CLP facilitator passed on has remained. These skills enabled CHWB to develop their second annual business plan. The Centre is now working closely to the second plan and staff and management are confident that they will achieve everything that they set out to do.

- 5.9. The CHWB coordinator and staff continue to work closely together to ensure that activities and targets are appropriate and achievable. CLP helped CHWB to focus on how to include therapists in discussions

about how many therapies are to be delivered in a year and how much fundraising might need to be done to achieve their targets. A programme of activities for fundraising was drawn up and agreed with therapists that helped to fill the gap between the activities for which there was funding already in place and the gap to the targets that they had agreed upon.

- 5.10. CHWB is very aware of the need to be as self sustaining as possible. CLP helped the Centre to focus clearly on fundraising activity based around the sales of baskets containing essential oils and other health and wellbeing products. The first baskets went on sale over the Easter period and were a great success. Whilst the income generated is small, it is entirely owned by the Centre and can be used in whichever ways the Board and management see fit. Further development of this community enterprise is planned for the future.

“the income from these sales helped us to keep the Centre open for a week over Christmas when we would normally have to close”

“we are now working on a range of products that we can sell online”

- 5.11. Strengthening the capacity of the Board has been a big win for CHWB. Skill levels have improved, management ability has developed and there is greater awareness of the skills needed to run the organisation effectively. As well as the training that CLP delivered directly to Board members, for example, in finance and committee skills, the Programme helped CHWB to focus on where there were gaps in knowledge amongst Board members and to think about who could fill those gaps. The application form for Board membership now contains questions on the skills and values that the Board feels it needs for the future.

“The Board is now much stronger and more professional, which is important for all of us”

“We are a bit more focussed now about who we are inviting to come onto the Board – it’s about getting a variety of skills on the Board to run the organisation”

5.12. For their CLP Action Learning Project CHWB ran a number of “health days” in the community for local women, showcasing what the Centre could offer. As well as offering therapy sessions, CHWB also illustrated to those who came how they could use the products themselves in their own homes. In this way they were able to get local women from the therapy sessions in the community to come into the Centre where they could purchase products.

5.13. The Project also helped to raise the profile of CHWB in the community and to show what the Centre offered

“People wouldn’t really have been aware of what the Centre offered and the value of complementary therapies and so on, it lifted the whole profile”

5.14. CHWB visited Derry Well Women Centre as part of the CLP programme. The visit proved a great success and CHWB took a lot on board from the way that the Derry Centre ran some of their programmes, for example, their education programmes.

“It was fantastic the way they use education programmes and manage to raise funds from them too. We have since started that too”

5.15. One area which did not go so well for CHWB was the Centre coordinator’s experience of the University of Ulster course which did not add to coordinator’s the already strong set of skills. This aside, CHWBs experience of the facilitation and training provided by NICVA and its partners is a very positive one.

“The support we got was very tailored to our needs as an organisation, it was perfectly geared to us”

“the way the whole thing was focussed, I thought it was just a fantastic programme”

“I think the CLP programme helped us make very positive changes in the Centre”

6 CASE STUDY: CROSSFIRE TRUST

- 6.1. Crossfire Trust is an organisation set up in South Armagh almost 30 years ago (1984) by four Trustees, building on the experience of the current Director, Ian Bothwell, who had been working in the area since 1978. It is a faith based group, with the aim to “make God’s love real to all the people in South Armagh”, which primarily works “to address the major peace and reconciliation issues in South Armagh” (website). To this end it operates a wide range of programmes and activities including residential training, used goods, food banks, counselling, support for young people at risk, drug and alcohol awareness etc. In addition to a management board of 12, it has a staff team of 7 and 19 regular volunteers, plus those who come on a more ad hoc basis.
- 6.2. Crossfire joined the CLP for a variety of reasons including the need to raise its profile, its communication, to access up to date training in governance, management and finances (including grant application) and to ensure that as a team they were “*singing off the same hymn sheet*”. The fact that costs were covered and a University link was offered made the difference between going for this programme rather than the many others on offer. In addition Crossfire had very good experiences of NICVA training in the past and the joint nature of NICVA involvement, added to IFI (again Crossfire had previous links) added value for Crossfire. They also knew one tutor from a previous piece of work.
- 6.3. The involvement of Crossfire in CLP was made up of the Director, two (now ex) staff members, two current staff and one Board member. For the purposes of this case study, 4 people were interviewed, all of whom had been on the programme.
- 6.4. The organization had high expectations of the programme including facilitating Crossfire in developing a new/renewed vision, increasing

leadership skills and motivation, updated training in HR related matters, re-energising of staff/volunteers and the University certificate. The Director hoped that the latter would enhance the reputation of Crossfire staff/volunteers. In the main the expectations were met.

6.5. The group felt that the learning was

“more practical and more real than many other events/programmes which [they] had attended previously”.

6.6. The main learning outcomes were, in terms of management responsibility, the need to have clear HR procedures and policies, legislation relating to charities and care for staff and volunteers. In terms of board learning, in addition to a challenge regarding the lack of knowledge on charity law, it related to the key differences between strategic leadership and operational responsibilities and staff care.

6.7. During the interviews individual participants listed the ways in which they felt they evidenced their learning. This included

“I understood more about the need for sustainability”

“I understood the need to have a robust child protection procedure”

“The need to understand administration including the retention of documents, the need to ensure signatures were obtained, the clarity around roles and responsibilities”

“the need to set up some new [HR] policies and procedures and to ensure that one person has oversight of this area of work as time goes on”.

6.8. In terms of changes for the organisation, the group were clear that the programme had enhanced the volunteer base (as one output, a Volunteer Fayre was held and more than 50 people turned up). In addition to raising the profile of Crossfire, two new regular volunteers

were recruited as a direct result. Armagh FE College has also now placed a Social Work student with Crossfire.

- 6.9. Crossfire also held an event celebrating past and present volunteers, including a Volunteer of the Year award, by way of acknowledging their input and significance. This was well received. The group consider that it has extended its partnership base since CLP to include more robust links with DSD as well as other local Voluntary and Community groups, for example, in delivering used clothing to the local communities. It has also been able to establish stronger links with the statutory sector including local Council, local Health Trust (Disability team), Health practitioners, PIPs (suicide prevention group), Volunteer Now, NI Housing Executive and PSNI. A cross border link has been created in Cloghrea as a result of the CLP round table event in Co Cavan.
- 6.10. As a result of the CLP, the staff felt more confident in making applications to external funders and two such bids were made to CRC and CVS, in which involvement in the CLP formed one element of the supporting documentation.
- 6.11. Staff and volunteers are clear that they are now more confident in event organization and planning as a result of the training received. This was evidenced through a series of local events which Crossfire organized and delivered including a Tourism event called “Making Armagh work” and several smaller local seminars. In addition the group hosted the Peace factory (another CLP participant group) for a local visit.
- 6.12. Sustainability and updating of the new competences and skills was discussed and it was clear that the group’s intention was to ensure this was a continuing focus on the operational plan.
- 6.13. The two people who took part in the UU element of the CLP were selected through an assessment of organizational and staff needs, as well as availability/time. The group is of the view that the Jordanstown

course added significant value, both to the individuals who attended and to the organization as a whole. Those who took part felt:

“more confident, more able to do things with confidence, for example I now can use statistics better than before and feel I could write an application for funding much better now”.

6.14. Although the group considered CLP to have been extremely useful, when asked about barriers to learning, they reflected on balance, that perhaps the training agenda could have taken greater account past learning. That said the group was unanimous in confirming that there were good learning experiences in the theory as well and that maybe this reflection was more about expectations than delivery.

6.15. The members were unanimous that the final round table had been excellently facilitated and had been the best single experience of the whole programme as it had

“allowed for group to group contact, sharing of experiences and good practice and had offered potential for future relationships to develop”.

6.16. Overall the group had high praise for the NICVA staff, particularly *“Neil who assisted with Grant Tracker”* and Grainne as overall contact and co-ordinator.

6.17. The suggestions for improvement and change included consideration being given to *“more classes over a longer period of time”*, *“maybe not so much aimed at employers’ needs and more inclusive of volunteer and staff needs”*, *“more flexibility in the timing of the Jordanstown course”*.

7 CASE STUDY: PEACE FACTORY

- 7.1. The Peace Factory Project is a not for profit charity, set up in a detached building, Sunnyside's House, one mile outside Dungannon in 2006. Although established to work with those affected by the conflict in the South Tyrone Area, the group indicates that it now reaches out to the whole of the wider community. The organisation operates a range of programmes and activities including Counselling, Complementary Therapies, Personal Development, Creative Workshops, Befriending, Trauma Recovery, Support to Employment, Social clubs/networking. There is a Director post three paid staff, some sessional staff (13) and a number of volunteers. The board is made up of 6 people.
- 7.2. Four members of The Peace Factory were interviewed, one staff member (the Director who attended the programme has now left) and three volunteers, including the Chair person.
- 7.3. The group joined the programme in an attempt to add value to members knowledge of governance, and organisational development. The members were attracted by the nature of the programme (it was more than a few days) and the fact that there was a mentor link which allowed for continuity. The UU qualification was a draw for the Treasurer who followed this route. The allocation of places was 2 paid staff members and 3 volunteers to the main course and 2 extra members for the UU course (neither completed).
- 7.4. There appeared to have been few high level expectations from those who attended apart from developing personal skills and learning from other groups. One participant had been a volunteer who had taken part in previous governance training and was using the opportunity to see where they might go from that place. The members who attended the course were chosen through pragmatism as there are few staff

members and board/volunteers self selected through availability.

- 7.5. In the main, the group rated the programme highly. Individuals seemed to draw a wide variety of experiences from the programme with the staff person having

learned a lot about connectedness and the links between governance and operational management”.

One of the board members also indicated that they had

“learned about the roles and responsibilities of the board and staff and my eyes were opened”

One board member reflected that:

“through the training I understood the importance of considering becoming a company limited by guarantee”

whilst another commented,

“our Mission statement was too narrow and needed to be reviewed”.

There was a general agreement that the group needed to re-consider the existing provision and perhaps review their programmes in the light of the new learning from CLP.

- 7.6. It was clear that the committee/board members attained new knowledge and understanding of board members roles and responsibilities and one member said:

“as a result of the training I am now in the office more regularly supporting the staff”.

During the interview it became clear that this role clarity was perhaps one of the most significant learning points of the programme. Another board member reflected that

“we soon learned that it was better to spend all your [grant] money during the year as it was possible that any underspend could be clawed back”.

- 7.7. It was clear that some of the learning had been embedded. The committee members were now significantly more involved in the organisational development and direction, avoiding hands on management. This has been extremely helpful as the Director had just left and the organisation was in an “inter regnum” period. The committee was now meeting bi-monthly with

“more reports and papers being tabled with more detail and rigour”.

The committee had developed more confidence and as a result

“the group had worked with CRC as a partner in a recent event in the Long Gallery Stormont, where [members] shared their work and programmes”.

- 7.8. The group was unanimous that the round tables delivered the most significant learning opportunity as it allowed some sharing of information (two way) as well as making new links and developing new relationships. The board members are also clearer now on their responsibilities on governance and as a whole the organisation is:

“more focused on networking and expanding the name and the reach of the Peace Factory and its work”.

7.9. The group is now signposted in other agency literature and have joined with other groups under the umbrella COSTA, the official Rural Support Network (RSN) for Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough. The group now claim to have 200/250 beneficiaries, an increase on before the programme started.

7.10. There was again unanimity on the fact that the group had now:

“more focused outcomes, more knowledge and was developing an exit strategy for when existing funding ceased”.

The members agree that

“communication is now better between staff and board members and amongst staff generally and that there is now more openness and transparency around”.

Committee members say that they are now

“better assured about outputs and outcomes and performance against targets” than before.

The group also display more self confidence since CLP, evidence for which was the fact that the group had participated as a part of a CRC Long Gallery event.

The members felt that

7.11.

“more networking is now in place, such as work with COSTA, and Crossfire Trust”.

The group have also maintained good local links with two community based organisations in Aughnacloy. This link has extended the work

with victims beyond Dungannon into South Tyrone more generally.

- 7.12. As a result of increased skills and competences, the group felt better able to:

“train befrienders, develop the victims service, including the transition programme as well as new intergenerational initiatives in schools”.

They are now confident that they can see a 3-5 year horizon for the work. It is perhaps in this area of sustainability that there was the most significant overall learning.

“We realise we have only one main funder at present and need to deal with this issue as a matter of priority. We need to see a life beyond the Peace funding”.

- 7.13. The participants saw no major barriers to learning for the main programme and considered NICVA to be extremely flexible in its approach and professionalism. The mentor/trainer was excellent and offered high class and tailored support. The fact that neither participant completed the UU course was due to individual personal circumstances and not any feature of the course.

- 7.14. In terms of recommendations, the participants would like *“more of the same”*, that is, fully funded, personalised support programmes. Maybe there could be more time for meeting up (such as the round tables delivered). In addition, some participants felt that they had to choose areas of study too early on in the process and that

“the choice might have been more robust had it take place after a few weeks of introductory training”.

7.15. Overall the participants felt that

“the mentoring was excellent, the training in governance was first class and the final round table was well delivered and excellent”.

8 CASE STUDY: DOCHAS

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- 8.1. Dochas is the latest incarnation of a support organisation for women which began its history in 1995 when the first organisation was established on a voluntary basis. Its aim was to offer support for women's health and well being and building capacity in the "women's sector". Following an injection of money from the Peace and Reconciliation Fund in 1997/8 which supported some running costs and activities, the organisation grew and developed a series of programmes and activities for women.
- 8.2. The current co-ordinator was employed during this period. In 1999 core funding was offered by the Department of Community and Rural affairs which covered the salary of a Co-ordinator and administrator, plus some programme costs.
- 8.3. As a result of changes in government policy and funding, Dochas now exists as a local branch of the National Collective of Community based women's network, and has an advisory group of 12/14 members, rather than the traditional management board. The National body has the normal board structure which covers all governance requirements. Apart from the advisory board, there are two staff and 3 volunteers. The group is a membership based organisation and claims membership of 300 individual women and approximately 30 groups.
- 8.4. Dochas joined the CLP programme for two main reasons, the timing and the content of the programme. The group was going through a huge change process, transforming from a stand-alone organisation to a branch of a national body. This required changes in the structure of the

board and the staff team. Dochas felt that they would benefit enormously from the content of the CLP programme and the year-long engagement, tied to focused facilitated support.

“The timing was perfect for us, we needed something to help us deal with the change we were facing”.

8.5. Four members of Dochas were interviewed for this case study, all of whom had been on the programme. The involvement of Dochas in total was made up of the Coordinator, the administrator and five members of the advisory group, although up to ten people took part in some of the CLP sessions

8.6. At the start, there was hope that the course would facilitate Dochas in developing their vision and rekindle the enthusiasm and that the University of Ulster Certificate in Management Practice would allow for deeper learning for those who took it on.

“we were looking for support to help us through the change process, there was no one else there who was able to support us since our national support body was taken from us in 2008”.

8.7. In the main the expectations of the CLP programme were met, with staff/volunteers rating the informal learning methodology, particularly the facilitation very highly.

“when we walked into the room in a facilitated session [the facilitator] could facilitate exactly what we needed She not only covered the content of the module but gave us space for our own issues to be discussed”,

8.8. The group felt that the learning on governance delivered by NICVA enabled a successful transition from the old Dochas management committee structure to the new oversight by an advisory body. The main

learning outcomes for this transition process were, greater clarity on management responsibility, the role of an advisory board in contrast to a full board, more clarity on roles and responsibilities and a clearer understanding of strategy.

- 8.9. The Dochas CLP participants listed the ways in which they felt they evidenced their learning. This included:

“I felt much more invigorated, more focused after the sessions”
(Volunteer),

“I understood more about my strengths and weaknesses” (staff member).

“I have a closer appreciation of how we need to address skills awareness and gaps and the clarity around roles and responsibilities”
(board member),

“the need to think again about the women we work with and to reconnect and refocus” (co-ordinator).

“As an employed person, the ethos and passion came back to me again” (staff member)

“the round tables helped us make great personal connections – we were able to discuss things with other groups and begin to form relationships with them” (staff member)

- 8.10. In terms of changes for the organisation, the group were clear that the CLP programme helped re-focus its strategy which has resulted in a reconnection with its members. As part of its participation in CLP, Dochas held a one night consultation event in a local hotel, attended by over 100 women, many of which were new to the group. The purpose

was to reconnect and advertise Dochas support programmes. As a result, Dochas now has a clearer understanding of local needs and has extended its membership base.

“with the help of CLP, we have been able to reconnect with members. Now we need to ensure we keep connected with the women we aim to support as we had lost touch a bit before the CLP came along.”

8.11. The members agreed that they are all clearer in their respective roles and responsibilities since taking part in CLP and that internal communication has improved as a result of the process.

“we now have permission to say that we don’t need a management committee like that any more, we are now in a different place”.

“we have started a conversation about our ethos which has been very interesting and important”.

8.12. The four people who took part in the University of Ulster Certificate of Management Practice were selected through an open call to all members. Two of the four completed with one of those two not submitting their last assignment due to timing issues. The group is of the view that the course did add significant value to the individuals who attended. Those who took part felt

“more passionate,more able to do approach my work with confidence invigorated and connected.”.

8.13. The members of Dochas who took part in CLP were clear that the programme had been excellent, well and targeted and met their needs. They had particular praise for the facilitation and ongoing support throughout the process.

“the facilitator just knew about our needs and if we came along with some issues she dealt with them. Nothing was too much trouble for her.”
“The fact that the process ran over a year allowed for the ups and downs of the group to be taken into account.”

8.14. Since taking part in CLP, Dochas is clearly more connected with its members and understands their needs better. Staff and volunteers are more confident in their own strengths and the members are now taking a more strategic view over a period of 3 to 5 years. It is clear that the confidence of all those who took part had been considerably enhanced and the impact of Dochas on its client group has been strengthened.

“we are now more intentional in outreach (resulting in) increased and renewed contact with women’s groups, particularly the most marginalized groups”.

“we now don’t do anything just for the sake of it since CLP. Nowadays, we seem to do twice as many things with half the money. We are now more cute about things”.

“committee meetings are better and more focused since CLP, the advisory role is stronger and better now”.

“perhaps we know ourselves and our women better now.”

“I don’t think we would have survived had it not been for the CLP process”.

9 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

- 9.1. This section summarises the findings from the 20 telephone interviews and the 6 case studies. It also informed by the interviews with stakeholders and CLP facilitators. Recommendations and suggestions for future consideration are set out at the end.
- 9.2. We should state at the outset our view that the objectives of the Community Leadership Programme have been fully met. The discussion that follows sets out the detail of its impacts and legacy.

IMPACTS OF THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

- 9.3. Some of the groups joining the CLP were organisations who were at a crisis point in their development. Typically these groups had dysfunctional committees and governance arrangements that bound them in to current committee structures and membership. Other groups falling into this category were at a crisis point because they had lost their way or had just formed and were without any clear strategy. The CLP gave substantial support to these groups in crisis, helping them to move out of current impasses and power stalemates by setting out new and clear governance arrangements and clearer guidance on roles and responsibilities. As a result a number of organisations, for example, Donegal Family Resource Centre, have entered a new lease of life where they might otherwise have failed.
- 9.4. Confidence amongst some of those who joined CLP was very low. As one of our interviewees said “*some would have had difficulty in getting up to talk at their own dinner table*” The confidence that many such individuals got from the CLP is remarkable and some have been empowered to speak out their ideas and views in a way that would

have been impossible for them before.

- 9.5. In addition to a lack of personal confidence, groups with the lowest capacity, usually had low levels of team working and had a low level of understanding about each others abilities. The impact of CLP on these human issues has been substantial. We found a number of instances where individuals had been uncomfortable in allowing others to take forward work and were holding too much to themselves. Sometimes this was because of ignorance of their colleagues abilities and sometimes because of ingrained ways of working. By opening up discussion on who does what, CLP assisted these groups to become better organised, more open with each other and more trusting about each others abilities. This has also had a knock on effect in terms of better delegation. By coming to understand each others abilities and having greater personal and organisational confidence, a number of groups became much more comfortable with delegating work to other staff and to volunteers, thereby releasing the energies of key staff to further develop the organisation.
- 9.6. These lower capacity groups often had staff, volunteers or committee members who had great enthusiasm and commitment, but who had little or no idea of how to run an organisation. For these organisations, the CLP programme was a godsend. It gave a rare opportunity for facilitators to work with groups across an extensive period of time, to get to know them and build a strong, supportive relationship. We met many examples of groups who had got to their feet primarily because of the CLP, some of whom, for example Mallusk Community Action Group, have gone on to become thriving community organisations, well founded and supported in, and by, their communities.
- 9.7. The Action Learning sessions appeared to provide the basis for much of this capacity and confidence building and was a crucial component of the CLP. A number of the facilitators gave help to groups outside of and beyond the formal sessions, help that was highly valued by

participants and which helped to further strengthen the relationships.

- 9.8. It is clear that many of these groups would have foundered had it not been for the programme and its support, and many more would have struggled on with inappropriate governance arrangements, low confidence, low skill levels and a lack of vision.
- 9.9. The majority of the organisations in the evaluation had benefitted substantially from the governance reviews. This, along with the close support from with facilitators, led to groups becoming more appropriately and professionally structured. Within these structures, roles and responsibilities were clearly set out and the processes by which the organisations undertook their work were much clearer. Whilst most successful organisations would take these matters for granted, the groups coming forward to CLP often had little idea of how to set up structures and systems. With the help of CLP to clarify governance arrangements and the increased confidence amongst staff and committee members to delegate work, these groups are now much more able to conduct their business efficiently and effectively, are more accountable to each other and to outside agencies and are more likely to be accepted as bona fide by potential funders.
- 9.10. There were mixed views about the networking opportunities provided under CLP. Many found that the round tables helped them to make new contacts, to gain confidence that they were on the right track, and to gain new ideas for projects and activities. We identified a number of examples where groups had continuing contact with those that they met at roundtables and mutual support networks were emerging.
- 9.11. Whilst the majority of those in the evaluation found the roundtables useful, some groups and facilitators commented that the geographical spread at roundtable events made it difficult for them to network effectively.

IMPACTS ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- 9.12. One of the outcomes of CLP is a greater connection between fledgling community organisations and the communities that they serve. The Action Learning Projects and community audits in particular resulted in a number of projects becoming much more widely known within their communities. In a number of cases, the rise in profile resulted in increased membership at committee level, a greater number of volunteers, fuller participation in activities and a wider usage of facilities. Greater connectedness to their communities also resulted in a closer alignment between activities and community needs and better communication between local people and their community group.
- 9.13. With CLP helping organisations to increase their profile, to become more grounded within their communities and to have stronger governance arrangements, some groups have become more recognised and trusted by outside agencies. This has led to some organisations being invited to become members of other committees and has improved their standing generally with potential partners and funders. Braniel Community Association and Mallusk Community Action Group are good examples of this.
- 9.14. The formation of partnerships in this way has led to community organisations, their communities and other agencies working together to address antisocial behaviour. Drumbeg North and South Residents Association and Drumavaddy Social and Development Association provided good examples of this and members of both organisations ascribe their success in addressing anti-social behaviour to the support and training that they received from CLP.
- 9.15. Groups have also come together across the community divide. In Fermanagh, for example, Unionist and Nationalist groups have come together and visited each others communities as a result of the CLP and there are other examples of empathy and understanding being

forged as a result of CLP action learning projects, for example, in the history projects run by the New Lodge Schools Cluster.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER COURSE: Certificate in Management Practice

- 9.16. Unsurprisingly, given the wide range of abilities and varied backgrounds of CLP participants, we received some mixed feedback about the UU Course. Many applauded the course and some, for example, Sadie Reid from Newhill Community Project described it as “the best part of CLP”. For many of those who took part, the qualification opened doors in their own development and played a key role in their organisations becoming more recognised and trusted by funders and outside agencies.
- 9.17. More experienced students were encouraged to share experiences with less experienced students and a number of participants found the UU course to be a good opportunity for networking. Being with others from community development, discussing issues and becoming aware of each other’s methods of working helped to form relationships that have continued well beyond the end of the course.
- 9.18. The course also stretched some participants in a way that was personally fulfilling. Although a number commented that the course was “hard work” or that they weren’t sure if they could do it, pushing through and being successful was a matter of great pride for some of those whom we interviewed.
- 9.19. We encountered others who had dropped out because they found the course too challenging and we interviewed one participant in our Centre for Health and Wellbeing case study who completed the course, but who said that she found it of little use to her. Clearly the course is not for everyone, but as we noted at the top of this section, that is not surprising given the starting position of many of those who took up the CLP. Many of the participants have been out of education

for a long time long and were not adept, for example, at using computers to search for information.

- 9.20. The course organisers are aware of the difficulties that some of the students face and have been responsive to the need for support. For example, training was given at the beginning of the programme and the assignments were all based on management practice which allowed students to draw on their experience as much as possible. Extra student support was also organised for the second module as students reported difficulty in doing the assignment. This was well received by the students who just needed reassurance that they were on the right track.

SUSTAINABILITY

- 9.21. Our view is that the CLP has contributed substantially to the sustainability of the organisations who took part. Stronger links between organisations and communities have resulted in a bigger pool of volunteers. Better governance arrangements and greater professionalism have helped a number of groups to bid successfully for funding.
- 9.22. There are also good examples of an increased business focus and a greater emphasis on self sustainability. Better strategic and business planning has resulted in more effective fundraising activities, and we identified examples where social enterprise was being developed as a result of CLP, for example, in the Centre for Health and Well Being.

LEGACY

- 9.23. The legacy of the programme is a substantial one. A whole cadre of community groups at different stages of development and at different levels of capacity have become stronger, more sustainable, more focused, better managed and better able to serve the needs of their communities.

- 9.24. There has also been a great deal of self development amongst individuals who participated. People who lacked the confidence to speak out, who lacked confidence in their own abilities and who were under-achieving, have been empowered and enabled by the programme to grow as individuals and to make considerable contributions to their local communities.
- 9.25. Many of the success stories that we identified in the evaluation may well have been stories of demise had it not been for CLP. The fledgling groups who grew in confidence, the crisis point groups who were reaching the stage of disbanding, the groups with inefficient processes and poor governance, were mostly groups without the financial resources to seek help. Some of them were not even sure of what kind of help they needed. CLP provided a unique opportunity for these groups to re-establish themselves and move forward, help that was not available elsewhere.
- 9.26. Perhaps the greatest legacy of CLP is that the participant groups are now confident that they can focus on their future. With enhanced leadership abilities, stronger community links, better governance and more effective planning, many of the groups have moved away from introspecting on their own difficulties and have developed a strong outward looking focus on the future.
- 9.27. We have no doubt in concluding that the CLP has made a substantial and unique impact on the people and organisations who deliver community development in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties and has left a legacy of empowerment, increased capacity, stronger leadership, better governance and improved sustainability.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1. Finally, we make the following observations and recommendations for any future programmes.
- 10.2. Firstly, a need was expressed amongst many of the CLP participants that we interviewed for ongoing support. Some of the organisations that have restructured or refocused are clearly moving forward in a slightly tentative fashion, aware that a new crisis of confidence or organisational disruption could happen again. There is a lack of confidence amongst some of these groups as to how they might respond in the face of a new crisis and they would welcome some “hand holding” from a facilitator as they move forward on their new path. This could be in the form of a 6 or 12 month review and reflection session or the facility to call for help should a crisis arise.
- 10.3. Other organisations have grown swiftly since their participation in CLP, have widened their networks, now have members sitting on outside committees and are expanding their activities. The need for ongoing support is different amongst these groups and is more focussed on mentoring, ongoing skill development and a rolling programme of strategic review. In many ways, these are the groups whose CLP legacy makes them most able to conduct these matters on their own. However, a light touch 6 or 12 month review from an objective outsider might help them to stay focused and on track and ensure that the CLP legacy remains strong. Ongoing support for these groups might usefully focus on committee chairs to help ensure strong and continuing strategic leadership.
- 10.4. Any future programmes would, of course, want to focus on groups who did not take part in the CLP, but who are at a similar crisis point or who have similar development issues to those who did. We were not able to undertake an audit of need as part of the evaluation, but it

would be worthwhile trying to assess what level of unmet need still exists amongst community development groups.

- 10.5. We encountered a number of groups who put their survival through crisis down to participation in CLP. We would recommend that any similar programme in the future should contain an element particularly directed at organisations who are at a crisis point in their development and who need support and guidance on finding their way forward.
- 10.6. Another group that benefitted greatly from CLP were those who had great enthusiasm, but who had very low capacity or experience in moving an organisations and its activities forward. It is difficult to ascertain how many groups remain in Northern Ireland who are at such a low starting point and who would benefit from similar support to get their group up and running, but any new programme should have at least some of its focus dedicated to those who have the lowest capacity of all.
- 10.7. The individual link between CLP participants and their facilitator was key to the success of the programme. It allowed for trust to be established and individual support to be maximised. The facilitator element should remain a key feature of any future programme.
- 10.8. Almost all the groups interviewed for this evaluation had very positive experiences of their facilitators. To maximise the value of facilitation, it may be worth considering some kind of matching process between group and facilitators in any future programme.
- 10.9. The action based learning component was well received and a great deal of learning came from the projects. Should funding be available, this should remain as an essential element to any future programme
- 10.10. The projects which worked best and achieved the most from CLP were those which linked the leadership skills and learning to real

experiences rather than applying some notion of generic leadership concepts to projects. This linking should remain a key element of facilitators' work with groups in any future programme.

- 10.11. We encountered a number of groups where key individuals who had taken part in the CLP programme had left. The learning is not necessarily lost if the individuals take their skills to other parts of the community development sector, but some of the learning is certainly lost to the organisation that the individual has left. Any future programme would wish to address this issue, perhaps by focussing on more corporate learning and on cascading the learning within organisations.
- 10.12. Whilst the roundtables provided excellent opportunities for groups to meet others of similar ilk, to share experiences and to start building networks, some commented on the wide and diverse nature of the groups attending. Roundtables elements of future programmes might be even more productive if consideration were given to splitting them into smaller geographical areas or theming them by type or purpose of organisation.
- 10.13. The University of Ulster Course "Certificate in Management Practice" worked excellently for some, but not for others. Those who had difficulties were often those who had no track record in academic work. If the Certificate were to form part of a future programme it may be worth considering some kind of assessment prior to participants joining the UU course, so that their capacity to undertake it can be identified and some training or support in basic skills can be delivered where necessary. This might help to decrease the drop out rate amongst those who may not have recent experience or skill in academic work.
- 10.14. Finally, we should return to the success of the CLP. We have set out above the impacts of the programme, its legacy amongst those who

took part in it and our view that the objectives have been fully met. Our final word is to recommend a future programme largely similar to the one reviewed here, taking on board the lessons learned during the first 3 years of the CLP and the findings of this evaluation. There is clearly a need both for ongoing support to those who took part in the CLP and for leadership and organisational development for community groups who have low capacity or who are at a crisis point.

- 10.15. NICVA and its partners have clearly grasped the CLP remit comprehensively and now have considerable experience in its delivery. NICVA should consider taking the lead in developing a new programme and seeking new funding, perhaps from mainstream sources such as the Department of Social Development under its remit to “support community development”.