



The Commission for Victims and Survivors
Response to the
Independent Review of Education

April 2022

Background

1. The Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland (the Commission) was established in June 2008 under the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, amended by the Commission for Victims and Survivors Act (2008). For the purposes of clarity in this response, the Commission's use of the term victims and survivors will principally relate to those who have become victims and survivors as a result of the activities associated directly and indirectly to the Troubles/Conflict.
2. The Commission is a Non-Departmental Public Body of the Executive Office (TEO). The principal aim of the Commission is to promote awareness of the interests of victims and survivors of the Northern Ireland Troubles/Conflict. It has several statutory duties that include:
 - *Promoting an awareness of matters relating to the interests of victims and survivors and of the need to safeguard those interests;*
 - *Keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice affecting the interests of victims and survivors;*
 - *Keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for the victims and survivors by bodies or persons;*
 - *Advising the Secretary of State, the Executive Committee of the Assembly and any Body or person providing services for victims and survivors on matters concerning the interests of victims and survivors;*
 - *Ensuring that the views of victims and survivors are sought concerning the exercise of the Commission's functions; and*
 - *Making arrangements for a forum of consultation and discussion with victims and survivors.*¹

¹ The functions of the Commission relate to those set out in the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 as amended by the Commission for Victims and Survivors Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

3. The Commission welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Independent Review of Education (IRE)² which is tasked with reviewing most aspects of education in Northern Ireland as identified in the New Decade, New Approach agreement (NDNA)³.

Overview of the Independent Review of Education

4. The establishment and delivery of an IRE is a key commitment within the NDNA⁴, agreed by the main political parties in NI in January 2020. The IRE is expected to be a fundamental review of the Northern Ireland education system with a focus on quality, equity and sustainability of the system. This has the potential to radically re-shape education design, delivery and provision – albeit decisions following the IRE will be subject to Executive agreement (which at the time of writing, is collapsed), wider stakeholder consensus and the availability of appropriate funding.
5. The IRE panel⁵ will consider a wide range of issues linked to the design and delivery of education, including:
 - the education journey and outcomes of children and young people
 - the support for schools and settings, funding and governance
 - the system level design, delivery and administration
 - a vision of how education should be delivered in Northern Ireland in the 21st century.
6. The term ‘education’ referred to in the NDNA, includes education for children and young people in early years, primary, post-primary or further education settings. The NDNA⁶ also states that ‘*Education includes all aspects of education including Sectoral Bodies, ETI, curriculum, area planning, 14-19 Strategy, Entitlement Framework, teacher training and the interface between*

² Independent Review of Education | Department of Education (education-ni.gov.uk)

³ New Decade, New Approach Agreement (parliament.uk)

⁴ New Decade, New Approach Agreement (parliament.uk)

⁵ About the Panel | Independent Review of Education

⁶ New Decade, New Approach Agreement (parliament.uk) (p43)

*Higher Education and Further Education*⁷. This includes key aspects of education policy and delivery within the remit of the Department of Education as well as key aspects of post 16 education and training that requires close engagement with the Department for the Economy in respect of their remit for further education, higher education and vocational education and training.

7. It also includes early years services, special education, education other than at school (EOTAS), youth services and employment pathways post-16, including e.g. apprenticeships.
8. The IRE is expected to take a period of 18 months, with an interim report available after 12 months.
9. The scope of the Commission's response will be in line with those identified in para 5&6 of this response with a key focus on the potential of education in relation to matters pertaining to victims and survivors of the troubles/conflict and in line with the Commission's corporate objectives:
 - The physical and mental health needs of victims and survivors are met and their quality of life improved.
 - Victims and survivors are supported and empowered in the journey of reconciliation by addressing outstanding legacy issues.
 - Learning from the experiences of victims and survivors can contribute to a lasting peace for our children and young people.
10. The Commission's response to the IRE will help inform its work in this area over the coming years.

Introduction

11. The Commission's research 'Comprehensive Needs Assessment First Interim Report September' 2010⁸ comments that '*Potentially the most enduring*

⁷ New Decade, New Approach Agreement (parliament.uk) footnote p43

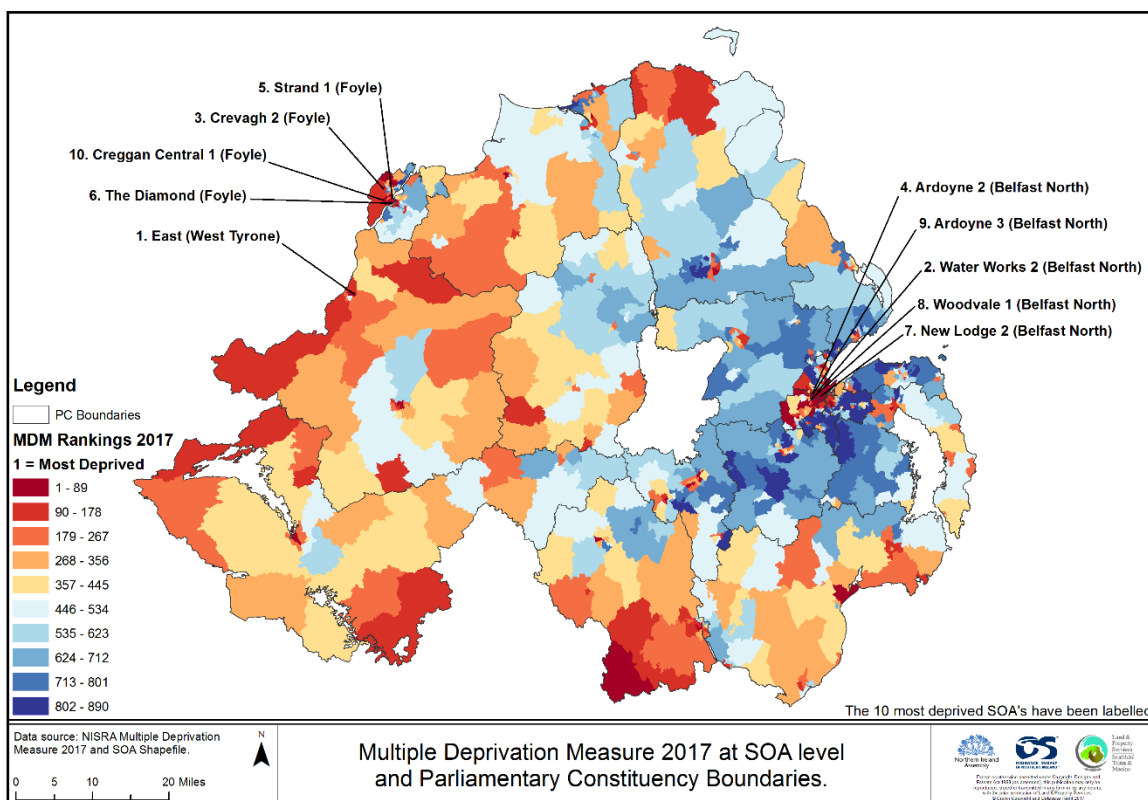
⁸ comprehensive-needs-assessment-first-interim-report-september-2010.pdf (p117)

consequence of the Troubles is the impact on young people throughout 30 years of the Conflict, allied to its perceived legacy on the lives of children and young people growing up in Northern Ireland today.'

12. The Commission believes that children and young people are a vital part of the future. Therefore, it is important to make them a vital part of the present by including them in building a safe, shared, multicultural and vibrant post conflict society.
13. According to Emma de Souza (Irish Times Feb 2022)⁹, *'more than 600,000 children have been born in Northern Ireland since the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998'* - almost twenty-five years ago.
14. The Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service states, those born into areas worst impacted upon by the troubles/conflict are living in areas that still rank as the most socially and economically deprived (see map shown below - the colour dark red denotes the ten per cent most deprived areas).¹⁰

⁹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/peace-babies-may-deliver-surprise-in-northern-assembly-election-1.4799085>

¹⁰ Multiple Deprivation in Northern Ireland: Latest results - Research Matters (assemblyresearchmatters.org) 2018



15. Today's children and young people may have escaped the worst of the pre Belfast/GFA Troubles/Conflict but many of them still feel the impact of the legacy it has left behind. This is especially true for those from the families of victims and survivors of the troubles/conflict.
16. In a newspaper article¹¹ in 2015 about the Commission's research 'Towards A Better Future: The Trans-generational Impact Of The Troubles on Mental Health'¹², author Professor Siobhan O'Neill explained, *'This research shows how in post-Agreement Northern Ireland children continue to remain a group impacted by conflict-legacy issues, directly through exposure to ongoing violence and paramilitarism, and indirectly through the effects of conflict-related mental disorders on their parents.'*
17. The Commission acknowledges that Northern Ireland is a markedly safer place in which to grow up. Nevertheless, for a significant number of children and

¹¹ <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/troubles-link-to-mental-health-31040167.html>

¹² <https://www.TheCommissionni.org/media/1171/towards-a-better-future-march-2015.pdf>

young people living in segregated communities, their lived experience of growing up is still in the shadow of the Troubles/Conflict. During consultation events carried out by the Interface Community Partners Group¹³ in 2013, young people were asked about their experience of living in an interface/contested space. One young person living in a Belfast interface area described it as *'like living in a goldfish bowl as we're constantly being told to move on but it's not safe enough to move beyond the peace walls that surround our area so, we just walk around and around it.'* Another young person living in a single identity rural area described being segregated as *'like living in an open prison as there's plenty of open space to wander around in but we all know where the invisible barriers are that we can't cross'.*

Commission for Victims and Survivors response

18. The Commission agrees with the four key strands of the IRE:

1. **Vision** – A vision of what a high quality, innovative and inclusive education looks like in the 21st century.
2. **Journey** - To focus on the journey of children and young people throughout their education and the outcomes they achieve. Improving pathways for all learners.
3. **Support** – To focus on the support provided to education settings, funding levels and arrangements. Empowering, resourcing and supporting education settings to best educate our children and young people.
4. **System** – To focus on how the system is currently designed, delivered and administered. Ensuring the system is sustainable, efficient and effective.

19. It is universally accepted that the education system generally requires major transformation to ensure it is sustainable, effective, efficient and helps provide positive outcomes for children and young people and their families.

¹³ From 2012-2016 NICRC co-ordinated the Interface Community Partners which provided a mechanism to facilitate dialogue between the various interface groups across Belfast. Its membership included representatives from a range of voluntary/community and statutory organisations.

20. The Commission recognises that while many excellent conflict legacy and peace building programmes have and are, being delivered within the NI education system, there remains room for significant improvement and offers its ongoing support to achieve this in line with its commitment to support *‘the rights of all victims and survivors to be heard, to be respected and to have access to services that are the best they can be’*¹⁴

Joined up approach

21. The Department of Education, the Department for the Economy and their relevant arm’s length bodies and sectoral bodies should review their roles and responsibilities in relation to how they assist in the delivery of a shared, reconciled and multicultural society. This should include exploring how they can work more collaboratively with other government departments and relevant organisations to support children and young people in formal and informal education. For example, when teaching children and young people about respect for other cultures and the importance of integration, we must be mindful of children returning home to areas that have suffered from the legacy of division and conflict, many of which have murals depicting our troubled past and interface barriers.

22. In relation to expressions of cultural identity, the Commission works from, and promotes the use of, trauma-informed practice to address some of the manifestations of segregation and displays of commemorative practices that divide society and mark out territory. The Commission works through a victims’ focussed lens, recognising that trauma is expressed in many ways, some of which has become normalised for some communities where victims and survivors live. It recognises that, despite good work by and in communities, there is still further research required to explore the challenges facing those working within a single identity context where well-intentioned but traumatised

¹⁴ <https://www.cvsni.org/about-us/> web page

adults work as unelected community leaders providing (and sometimes publicly funded) informal education that can support formal shared education and cross community activities in schools but, on occasion, can undermine these.

23. Commission research conducted by QUB and published in 2021, 'It didn't end in 98'¹⁵, emphasises the importance of Community based programmes being developed '*in consultation with communities, and community workers trained and supported in delivering programmes exploring the Conflict and its impacts. These could be integrated into already existing community-based programmes (e.g. Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) - funded community programmes, the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme)*'. It also stated that its findings '*support an increased need for shared spaces for young people to come together safely without being subject to negative attitudes and to develop greater understanding of the 'other' community and their culture*'. The need for more shared spaces for children and young people from different backgrounds and communities to come together is echoed across many research publications.

24. The Victims and Survivors Service delivers '*a wide range of services and support in the community, in more than 50 locations across Northern Ireland. These services are delivered free of charge, specifically for victims and survivors*¹⁶.' One such initiative '*The BSc (Hons) Psychological Trauma degree programme can be completed over four academic years as a part-time course of study. The programme is managed collaboratively by the School of Nursing and Midwifery and WAVE Trauma Centre, a cross community organisation, providing therapeutic support and befriending services for those affected by the psychological trauma associated with the Northern Ireland Troubles*¹⁷. This is one of many examples of how community-based organisations work in partnership with statutory bodies to offer accredited training courses in the field of trauma, loss and growth which in turn might impact educational learning.

¹⁵ Microsoft Word - CVS-Final-Full-Report-02.docx (cvsnri.org) (p 17&18)

¹⁶ https://www.victimsservice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/VSS-Regional_leaflet_300320.pdf (p1)

¹⁷ <https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofNursingandMidwifery/Study/ContinuingProfessionalDevelopment/UndergraduateDegreeProgrammes/BScHonsPsychologicalTrauma/>

25. The IRE states that education policy links with other Departments such as, in the early years with Department of Health, in terms of equality legislation with the Executive Office and in delivering education in the youth justice system with the Department of Justice and, there will also be a working relationship with the Department of the Economy. The Commission wishes to emphasise the important broader role of the departments listed and the role of other Departments not listed that play a significant role in relation to children and young people and their families such as:

- The Executive Office is responsible for matters such as victims and survivors; truth recovery; social investment fund and the Together: Building a United Community Strategy.
- The Department for Communities is responsible for matters ranging from the voluntary and community sector through to housing and the anti-poverty strategy.
- The Department of Justice is responsible for youth justice, policing and community safety.
- As the central peace and reconciliation lynchpin of government, the Commission encourages the Executive to keep victims and survivors to the forefront of the political agenda until issues are adequately addressed. This includes creating the conditions for children and young people in education to be brought to their full potential. To achieve this, a holistic approach is necessary to assist children and young people still caught up in the legacy of the past (*'it takes a whole village to raise a child'* – African proverb)

26. It requires mainstreaming victims and survivors issues across the Northern Ireland Civil Service by building it into the design and delivery of policy, legislation and services to ensure lasting change. This will only be achieved by a concerted, multi-agency and partnership-focussed approach.

27. In the Commission's presentation to the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for The Executive Office (October 2021)¹⁸, Dr. Katy Radford spoke about *'the commission's need and desire to have departmental champions. We need those dedicated people in Departments. We need a shortcut and an opportunity to*

¹⁸ committee-28710.pdf (niassembly.gov.uk)

raise specific areas that particular Departments have an understanding of and a commitment to. I cannot reiterate enough how important that is for us. They would be just like the race equality or rural proofing champions. This is a category of people who, unlike others, are not protected under particular legislation.'

28. In order to achieve this mainstreaming, the Commission recommends that designated public authorities including government departments and agencies, local councils, health trusts, housing associations, colleges and universities, and education and library bodies appoint a dedicated Victims and Survivors Champion whose key focus will be to ensure victims and survivors are central to policy making and service delivery throughout the public sector by:

- Developing and delivering the effective implementation of an action plan to improve the quality of life for victims and survivors including raising staff and school governors awareness about issues relevant to each public authority's policy and operational areas.
- Encouraging public authorities to demonstrate the measurable positive impact of actions implemented.
- Engaging in a Champions Hub where knowledge and learning is shared, good practice is acknowledged and replicated and areas for improvement explored.
- Assisting the implementation of The Strategy for Victims and Survivors¹⁹ including its commitment '*to provide the outline of a coherent and comprehensive approach for taking forward work on a range of issues relating to victims and survivors.*'

Vision and implementation

29. The IRE will be underpinned by a vision (when agreed) which aims to outline '*what a high quality, innovative and inclusive education looks like in the 21st century.*'²⁰ The Commission urges the IRE Panel to draft a hope filled vision for

¹⁹Strategy for Victims and Survivors (2009) | The Executive Office (executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk) web page

²⁰ <https://www.independentreviewofeducation.org.uk/files/independentreviewofeducation/2021-11/ire-revised-draft-terms-of-reference.pdf> (p13)

consultation which should be the product of a consensus-building process by the various education sectors and stakeholders. This vision should reflect a genuine intention to address current shortcomings within the education system including:

- sustainable funding
- increased access to integrated and/or shared educational opportunities
- a system that contributes to building a safe, shared, reconciled society built on the foundations of equality and human rights.

30. A critical aspect of the final IRE report will be an accompanying implementation plan, the supply of adequate funding and resources to make it happen and a joined-up multi-agency approach to help bring about a sustainable safe, shared, multicultural society.

31. To create this multi-agency approach for a holistic delivery plan, a clear process must be developed to interlink the IRE outcomes within and between all departments and relevant external organisations. Relevant strategies for victims and survivors across departments must also be interlinked including (this list is not exhaustive):

- Children and Young Peoples Strategy 2020-2030²¹
- Together: Building a United Community Strategy²²
- Racial Equality Strategy²³
- The Strategic Framework for Youth Justice²⁴
- The Good Friday Agreement²⁵
- New Decade New Approach²⁶
- The Programme for Government²⁷

²¹ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/children-and-young-people>

²² Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) | The Executive Office (executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

²³ Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025 (executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

²⁴ Justice Minister launches a new Strategic Framework for Youth Justice | Department of Justice (justice-ni.gov.uk)

²⁵ The_Belfast_Agreement_An_Agreement_Reached_at_the_Multi-Party_Talks_on_Northern_Ireland.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

²⁶ New Decade, New Approach Agreement (parliament.uk)

²⁷ Programme for Government (PfG) 2021 | Northern Ireland Executive

- Restoring Relationships, Redressing Harm Adult Restorative Justice Strategy for Northern Ireland 2022- 2027²⁸
- Fourth Report of the Independent Reporting Commission²⁹
- Report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement - A Fair Start³⁰
- The Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill 2020³¹
- The new Strategy for Victims and Survivors 2022-2032

Integrated education

32. Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ³² states *‘education of the child shall be directed to the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.’*

33. On the matter of integrated education, the Commission has not yet taken a definitive position on this matter. In its report ‘It Didn’t End in 1998’³³ researchers found that Northern Ireland remained a *‘highly segregated’* society in respect of housing, education and other *‘single-identity activities’*. Segregation results in contact with young people from the *‘other community’* being limited.

34. In relation to domestic law, the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989³⁴ statutory duty on the Department of Education in relation to integrated education states that, *‘It shall be the duty of the Department to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education, that is to say the education together at school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils.’*

²⁸ Adult Restorative Justice Strategy and action plan (justice-ni.gov.uk)

²⁹ IRC Fourth Report | Independent Reporting Commission (ircommission.org)

³⁰ A Fair Start – Final Report & Action Plan | Department of Education (education-ni.gov.uk)

³¹ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/legislation/bills/executive-bills/session-2017-2022/domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-bill---efm---as-introduced.pdf>

³² UNCRC_summary-1.pdf (unicef.org.uk) (p9)

³³ Microsoft Word - CVS-Final-Full-Report-02.docx (cvsni.org) (p13)

³⁴ The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (legislation.gov.uk) (p5)

35. However, only 7% of pupils in NI attend integrated schools and more than 90% of schools are segregated meaning most young people are educated in either a state-funded school that is predominantly Protestant or a school funded by the state but maintained by the Catholic church that is predominantly Catholic.³⁵, This parallel structure reduces the opportunity for children and young people to collectively consider the impact of the legacy of the past and explore their hopes and vision of a shared and reconciled society.

36. Surveys and academic research consistently evidence considerable support for increasing the opportunities for sharing within the education system. These preferences reveal the aspiration of many parents/guardians to educate their children in a mixed and shared environment. The Commission's research 'Towards a Better Future'³⁶ recommends that '*The role of segregated education in the transmission of prejudice should be examined and the effects of alternative education systems on the transmission of transgenerational trauma should be the subject of investigation.*'

37. Recent developments may have an impact on statistics in the future due to the Northern Ireland Assembly vote in favour of the private members' Bill by Alliance Party MLA Kellie Armstrong in March 2022. This new legislation places a statutory duty on the Department of Education to provide further support to the integrated school sector. The Integrated Education Bill³⁷ includes provision for setting minimum targets for the numbers of pupils educated in such schools.

38. Other interesting developments included:

- the opening of Naíscoil na Seolta, the first Integrated Irish language nursery school in east Belfast. The school was scheduled to open in September 2021 in the grounds of Braniel Primary School. However,

³⁵ Integrated Education Bill: Final Stage: 9 Mar 2022: Northern Ireland Assembly debates - TheyWorkForYou report on MLA Kellie Armstrong integrated education motion

³⁶ <https://www.TheCommissionni.org/media/1171/towards-a-better-future-march-2015.pdf> (p21)

³⁷ Bill-Integrated-Education-Bill-information.pdf (ief.org.uk) (p1)

due to an ongoing social media hate campaign the nursery had to relocate to temporary accommodation in another part of east Belfast. It successfully opened in March 2022³⁸ with plans for an integrated Irish-medium primary school in East Belfast also underway.

- The first transformation of a Catholic Maintained primary school in Glenarm in County Antrim, to transform to an integrated school also in September 2021.

Transgenerational legacy

39. The Commission acknowledges the ongoing commitment of practitioners based within the statutory and non-statutory sectors who work to address the troubles/conflict transgenerational impact on the health and wellbeing of victims and survivors such as the services funded by the Victims and Survivors Service and through the Health and Social Care Trusts. These services provide an invaluable source of support to individuals and families continuing to deal with the mental health legacy of our troubled past.

40. According to the Commission's 2021 research 'It Didn't End in 1998'³⁹, *'Transgenerational legacy, however, extends beyond psychological trauma. Some research, for instance, has examined how social and cultural identities, as well as sectarian prejudice, myths and beliefs, have been transmitted to younger generations ... It can also be argued that there are socio-economic and structural transgenerational legacies, in that children growing up in some communities (i.e. interface areas, and other socio-economically deprived areas where violence has been frequent and widespread) are negatively affected by residual sectarianism, continued segregation and chronic under-investment in their communities.'*

41. Transgenerational work should not only be for children and young people who, at the end of the school/college day, return home to families, friends,

³⁸ Irish language pre-school opens at new site after being forced to relocate over hate campaign - Belfast Live

³⁹ Microsoft Word - CVS-Final-Full-Report-02.docx (cvsni.org) (p5-6)

communities and a society still trying to move from conflict management to conflict transformation. Education and support must also be available for intergenerational work within and between children and young people and older people (including relatives); with political leaders/church leaders/community leaders; service providers and others with the power to influence and make a positive contribution to the everyday life of children and young people in the context of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

42. Whatever support is offered to victims and survivors, it is advisable to assess need by exploring the circumstances in which they live. The Commission has examined these needs in great depth through the 'The Needs Review Report (NRP)' produced in 2021⁴⁰ that *presents an analysis of the needs of victims and survivors of the Troubles/Conflict, in Northern Ireland (NI), the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and the Border Region, and Great Britain (GB). The report builds on the Commission's Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA)*⁴¹ 2012. These reports would be of value to the IRE Panel should it need to explore the issues and recommendations in more detail to help support and inform its work.

43. The Commission's 'Towards a Better Future' report⁴² outlines Forum members' consideration of the Troubles/Conflict transgenerational legacy and recognised the importance of examining the role of early years education in supporting parents/guardians and addressing sectarianism. It responds to the recommendations contained in the Young People's Transgenerational Issues in Northern Ireland Report⁴³ produced by Queen's University Belfast on behalf of The Commission in 2012 which concluded that '*transgenerational trauma is a real phenomenon affecting young people in Northern Ireland*' and highlighted the need to rigorously examine the impact of psychological trauma transmission and other factors, including social deprivation and parenting styles likely to explain a transgenerational impact.

⁴⁰ full-report-needs-review-project-report-2021.pdf (cvsni.org)

⁴¹ <https://www.TheCommissionni.org/media/1434/comprehensive-needs-assessment-february-2012.pdf>

⁴² <https://www.TheCommissionni.org/media/1171/towards-a-better-future-march-2015.pdf>

⁴³ <https://www.TheCommissionni.org/media/1164/young-peoples-transgenerational-issues-in-ni-april-2012.pdf> (p77)

44. The Commission's Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA)⁴⁴ sought to develop an understanding of the transgenerational impact of exposure to conflict-related trauma. It highlighted how the effects of the Troubles/Conflict on parents/guardians, especially their mental health, represented a potential serious risk to the wellbeing of younger generations.

45. The Commission hosted a residential in Chester in January 2022, where it engaged with young people experiencing transgenerational legacy due to older family members being victims or survivors of the NI troubles/conflict. These young people identified constraints within the education system that inhibit positive outcomes for affected children and young people. Based on their life experience these young people made the following comments and recommendations:

- Better understanding of the impact of conflict on children and young people and transgenerational legacy e.g. research 'War, Peace and Suicide' by Mike Tomlinson⁴⁵ highlighted the worrying increase in suicides by young men in NI who were children during the Troubles/Conflict. This has an effect on their families including children and young people.
- Early intervention for children in schools plus support for families directly affected to be able to understand how to support their children e.g. the Community Relations In Schools organisations 'Buddy Up!' programme⁴⁶ which is an intergenerational peacebuilding approach that seeks to engage the whole school community and build meaningful relationships across segregated communities.
- Safe space and preparation for young people to have open conversations and validation through discussing lived experiences. Where possible, this work should be codesigned by young people who have benefited from engaging in other programmes. It should also help to enlighten young people not directly

⁴⁴ <https://www.TheCommissionni.org/media/1434/comprehensive-needs-assessment-february-2012.pdf> (6.2.12 p116)

⁴⁵ Tomlinson, M. W. (2012). War, peace and suicide: The case of Northern Ireland. *International Sociology*, 27(4), 464-482.

⁴⁶ <https://www.crisni.org/buddy-up> (web page)

affected by the Troubles/Conflict to improve their knowledge, understanding and dispel myths.

- It should identify the needs of young people with a view to putting in place a support package – especially for young people who may be carers, have overprotective/anxious/controlling parents/guardians or who feel vulnerable or lonely.⁴⁷
- Work with young people in schools and youth clubs should explore and encourage leadership in conflict legacy and peace building. A good example of this is the model developed by Youth Action Peace Network⁴⁸ which according to Assistant Director Dr Martin McMullan, *‘The Youth Network for Peace connects young people who care about creating change and in mobilising attitudes and behaviours across the North and South of Ireland. Social action, research and insight polls, youth-led dialogue events and conventions all form part of this dynamic network.’*
- The young people the Commission engaged with said that social and political conflicts had not been included in schools they had attended, not on courses (one was studying to be a social worker) they had engaged in. This may be because their teachers did not have the resources or training to deliver these subject matters. An example of a useful resource for teacher training is ‘The Peace Training Handbook’⁴⁹ for *‘strengthening the capabilities and training curricula of conflict prevention and peace building personnel with information and communications technology (ICT)-based collaboration and knowledge approaches.’* The Handbook provides one of the first major attempts in the field to support trainers and those involved in the development, design, delivery and evaluation of training and capacity building support by:
 - Providing a practical Curricula Model
 - Providing a practical ‘step-by-step’ Curricula Design Process
 - Introducing the concept of a Curricula & Competency Framework for Peacebuilding and Prevention
 - It goes further and provides an overview of both existing and ‘front of the field’ approaches to peacebuilding and prevention training, methods that can be

⁴⁷ <https://www.cvsni.org/media/1617/cvs-cyp-final-report-26-april-2016.pdf>

⁴⁸ YouthAction Youth Network for (Peace Home page)

⁴⁹ PeaceTraining.eu (p9)

used in training, and ICT. This is followed by a Trainers Guide and first steps towards creation of a 'Competency Framework' for trainers in the field, together with an overview of Qualification Standards for Training Centres building on the latest in EU qualification frameworks.

- The young people were interested in one-off courses that came with their own certification describing the course content and signed off by course trainers and organisers. A certificate like this could be included in CV's.
- There was keen interest in the development of a career path for young people to become conflict legacy and peace building programme deliverers/ambassadors at home and in other countries emerging from conflict.
- A dedicated third level qualification such as the University of Ulster Peace and Conflict Studies MSc⁵⁰ was thought to be a good route. Student placements could also provide the opportunity for older peace practitioners to engage with young people, pass on their skills and share good practice.

46. The Commission's 2021 Needs Review Report⁵¹ recommended '*Further investment in bespoke services, including increased funding of family therapy and programmes for young people is required.*' Services for physical, psychological, emotional, financial, or other support for which victims and survivors are eligible, should be well funded and accessible.

47. The Victims and Survivors Service (VSS)⁵² offers a range of free services and support in the community in more than 50 locations across Northern Ireland including:

- Befriending Services
- Complementary Therapies
- Personal and Professional Development
- Social Support
- Talking Therapies

⁵⁰ Peace and Conflict Studies MSc at Ulster University 2022/23 entry - Part-time Postgraduate Study in Belfast web page

⁵¹ full-report-needs-review-project-report-2021.pdf (cvsni.org) (p11)

⁵² 35947 - VSS - A3 For WEB v2.indd (victimsservice.org) (p1)

- Transgenerational Services
- Truth, Justice & Acknowledgement Activities
- Welfare Support

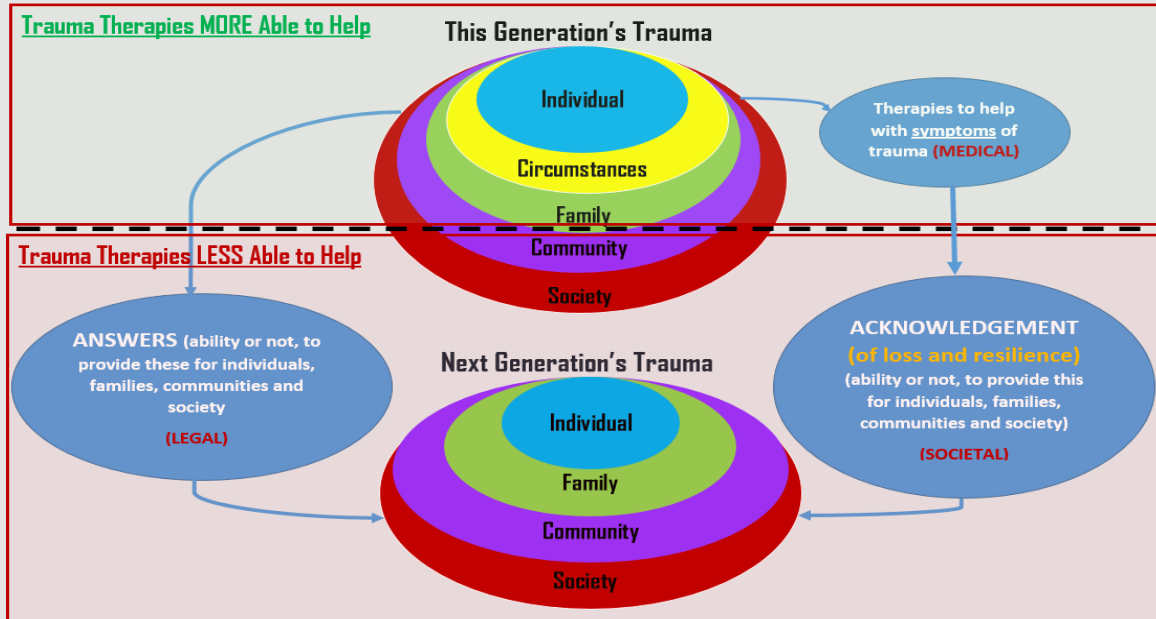
48. VSS is a responsive service and during the Covid 19 lockdown, VSS recognised that children and young people may not have access to computers for distance learning. It offered to cover the cost of purchasing one to those who might need it and support to help improve skills in using it. The Commission recommends a complimentary working relationship be developed between the IRE and VSS to avail of some of its services. An IT programme could be considered with VSS funding IT hardware and training for both students and parents/guardians provided by VSS funded community based organisations. This type of package available to the recipients, trauma informed and victim focused, developed as an incremental process and used for different ages/family and is focussed on good relations and reconciliation.

49. The two tables⁵³ below summarise the patterns and solutions for transgenerational legacy. The tables were developed by Damien McNally, a trauma education facilitator with WAVE, they are based on the teaching delivered on the module on Transgenerational Trauma (part of the BSc in Psychological Trauma Studies delivered by WAVE and QUB). WAVE suggests that *'these tables highlight that trauma is as much a social and political issue as a medical one. To prevent trauma being passed to the next generations will require individual therapies and help but more importantly, requires that answers and acknowledgement are provided for those traumatised.'*⁵⁴

⁵³ Transgenerational Trauma » Wave Trauma (wavetraumacentre.org.uk)

⁵⁴ Transgenerational Trauma » Wave Trauma (wavetraumacentre.org.uk) quote from web page

Trauma: What Gets Passed to the Next Generation?



Individual and Social Responses to Trauma

Individual Support (Dealing with Trauma Symptoms and Supporting Resilience)

| | |
|--|--|
| Therapies | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provision of counselling, CBT, EMDR, Complicated Grief Therapy, Limbic System Therapy (restoring balance between rational and emotional brain). Help to move body out of fight or flight mode & integrate traumatic memories. 2. Mindfulness, yoga and breathing exercises etc. 3. Don't over-rely on medications. |
| Education & Awareness Building | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gain awareness of how your body responds to trauma. Gain control over internal sensations and emotions. Be able to feel without becoming overwhelmed. 2. Processes of finding meaning (naming and acknowledging what happened to you) and tempering mastery (knowing what you can and cannot control). 3. Externalising the blame, realising what has happened is not your fault. |
| Acknowledgement & Communication | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Break the silence, communicate with others. Silence reinforces isolation of trauma. 2. Access to Support Groups. 3. Rituals to mark all types of loss, not just loss related to death. |

⊕ Social Support (Dealing with Trauma Causes by Justice, Education & Acknowledgement)

| | |
|---|---|
| Legal Response | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Truth, justice and acknowledgement cannot be separated from the healing process. 2. Rights and social justice shape collective healing. |
| Public Acknowledgement & Communication | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need for public and collective remembering. Includes education initiatives. 2. Recognizing that social support is a biological necessity, should be the backbone of all prevention and treatment. Recovering from trauma means reconnecting with our fellow human beings. 3. Tackle the silence (nobody, including the victims, wants to remember trauma. We want to live in a safe and predictable world. Victims remind us that this isn't always the case and then we blame them for it). |
| Education & Awareness Building | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educate that health and illness have political and social roots. Post-traumatic reactions are not just a private problem. 2. Need to understand human suffering from variety of discourses; medical, moral, political and economic. Problems emerge by over-committing to use of a single discourse. Trauma has a bio-psycho-social basis, which should not be assessed through a purely medical model of diagnosis. 3. Education about socio-political explanations of inequalities and trauma (influenced by gender, culture, race, age and class), to counterbalance evidence from medical and psychological perspectives. 4. Highlight resilience but also what limits resilience. People's income, family structure, housing, employment and educational opportunities affect not only your risk of developing traumatic stress but your access to effective help to address it. |
| Young People | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support for young people dealing with grief and trauma. Hear their voice. 2. Recognize profound effects of trauma and deprivation on child development. |
| Holistic Support | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Required interventions include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Psychosocial therapeutic interventions (healthcare, counselling & other therapies) B. Social networks of support (befriending & remembrance) C. Advocacy (welfare rights, financial help, education, training & employment, acknowledgement, information/truth recovery) 2. Need for mixed methods approach with balance between formal assistance and informal support via social networks. 3. Need for combined approach of peacebuilding together with mental health and psychosocial support – socio-ecological model. 4. Mix of top-down approaches (to activate social engagement) and bottom-up methods (to calm the physical sensations in the body). |

Intergenerational impact on young people

50. Sectarianism is intergenerational and young people sometimes carry on the negative messages passed on by older people. These young people tend to live mainly in working class areas and are often used for violent or illegal activities. Most do not even understand what cause they are fighting for. Young people's attitudes and behaviour should be challenged as a specific intervention within a broader commitment to conflict transformation and building a united society. This requires multi-agency intervention.
51. In his report *Sectarianism in Northern Ireland: A Review 2019*⁵⁵, Duncan Morrow comments *'It is strongly argued that investing in children and young people from an early age, especially those at risk of falling out of education, would have significant long-term benefits for individuals, communities and society and for enabling a reduction in violence and destructive patterns of behaving. In addition, by encouraging children to engage with others, the risk that young people remain in single community settings could be addressed.'*
52. Siobhan McEvoy-Levy 2001 research paper 'Youth as Social and Political Agents: Issues in Post-settlement Peace Building'⁵⁶ suggests that *'A peace agreement's endurance depends on whether the next generations accept or reject it, how they are socialized during the peace process, and their perceptions of what that peace process has achieved.'* Success will depend on how they are included as peacebuilders and become participants in the transition process and there are tangible benefits to peace.
53. The Commission recognises the importance of both mainstreaming and measuring how children and young people are taught about the legacy of the troubles/conflict and what difference this learning and support makes to them, their communities and society generally. For example,

⁵⁵ https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/410227/A-Review-Addressing-Sectarianism-in-Northern-Ireland_FINAL.pdf (p42)

⁵⁶ McEvoy-Levy, S. (2001) 'Youth as Social and Political Agents: Issues in Post-settlement Peace Building', Kroc Institute Occasional Paper, pp. 1–40.

- how do we measure how the younger generation are taught about the legacy of the troubles/conflict?
- how will their capacity be built to equip them to learn from the lessons of the past and avoid choosing violence for political ends in the future?
and
- what impact this will have?

54. Therefore, the Commission recommends that a systematic approach is put in place to support the embedding and mainstreaming of good community and race relations throughout policies, practices, procedures and ethos in the provision of education across the board. This will require enhanced long-term support for educators and the various delivery structures that work successfully to promote greater sharing and collaboration across and between communities and throughout the education system.

Gender

55. The Commission's research 'It Didn't End In 1998'⁵⁷ demonstrates that the intimidation, abuse and exploitation of children by paramilitary-style groups remains a reality through accounts of abuses against children, young people, and their families and how this coercive control continues today. The research also noted that *"The presence of paramilitaries meant the potential for violence was ever present."*

56. The research goes on to point out that *'reflective of the relative invisibility of the impacts of violence on women and girls during the Troubles/Conflict, little is known today about how young women experience violence related to Conflict legacy. The report also 'confirms this, identifying the processes by which young women's experiences of paramilitary-style violence are 'silently silenced'.'*

57. It recommends that young women should be *more visible in the actions, implementation and analysis of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme* and the

⁵⁷ Microsoft Word - CVS-Final-Full-Report-02.docx (cvsnri.org) (p24-25 & 27-28 & 42)

need for *‘specific research into how young women experience this type of violence’*.

58. Although women in Northern Ireland have a long history of peacebuilding, their role has not been properly recognised. In October 2000, UN Security Council Resolution 1325⁵⁸ recognised for the first time the crucial role women play in sustainable peacebuilding. In Northern Ireland, UNSCR 1325 has helped highlight women's role in public life and women's perspective on peacebuilding, although much more remains to be done.

59. In fact, the Women's Policy Group NI - COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan 2022⁵⁹, commented that *‘there has been little progress on increasing women's participation in securing peace or in post conflict reconstruction. The 2014 Stormont House Agreement (SHA), the latest agreement outlining structures to deal with the past in Northern Ireland, contained no specific mechanisms for increasing the involvement of women. Extensive consultation with women found that many feel disempowered, have difficulty circumnavigating community gate-keepers (including paramilitary groups) and fear harm if they were to speak out.’*

60. A model of international engagement was the Hume Foundation ‘Fire in the Belly’⁶⁰ event in 2021, featuring lessons from young women peacebuilders from Somalia, Libya and Northern Ireland and inspiring leaders for peaceful change. Emma Johnston of Youth Action Northern Ireland and UU Alumni, said: *‘The Youth, Peace and Security Seminar Series frames critical conversations which enable global youth leaders to pool our resources and work collectively with young women to breathe positive energy into their lives. Young women need role models; women who they can look up to. I am looking forward to coming together to ignite that important fire in the belly.’*

⁵⁸ <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/blog/document/security-council-resolution-1325-2000-on-women-and-peace-and-security/> (p1)

⁵⁹ covid-19 feminist recovery plan (wrda.net) (p88)

⁶⁰ Young voices from NI, Libya and Somalia will honour Pat Hume's legacy - Interpeace : Interpeace blog

61. Research and processes are required to counter the '*silently silenced*' dynamic and empower women and girls to speak out about their experiences, learn about dealing with the past, identify and address their needs and encourage their participation as peacebuilders. The Commission encourages the IRE Panel to ensure the education system supports the development of leadership roles for women and girls across formal and informal education sectors.
62. Research such as the 'Gender Principles for Dealing with the Legacy of the Past'⁶¹, which was developed in 2015 by a multi-disciplinary group of human rights experts and academics, could assist in developing a gender post-conflict analysis of the Troubles/Conflict and specific actions to effectively address the needs of women it identifies.

Educational underachievement

63. The Commission is aware of previous times where children and young people's educational attainment and capacity to participate in schooling has been negatively affected by tensions in communities connected to the legacy of the Conflict.
64. Unfortunately, some children and young people are still engaging in dangerous political unrest as witnessed during the recent NI Protocol riots⁶². The children and young people involved are being put at serious risk of physical harm, getting caught up in the criminal justice system or worse. They are following the example of what went before when violent responses were viewed as heroic, exciting and even brave. This negative intergenerational impact of the Troubles/Conflict on children and young people will only be resolved through positive political influence and a new approach to youth intervention and cultural work through formal and informal education. These young people must be heard, their issues addressed and offered better alternative life choices.

⁶¹ Gender-Principle-Report-Sept-2015_Final-Version.pdf (caj.org.uk)

⁶² Two boys arrested after police attacked at Northern Ireland protocol protest | UK news | The Guardian

65. During the Commission's 2016 conference 'The Impact of Conflict Legacy Issues on Children and Young People'⁶³ the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People, Koulla Yiasouma, told delegates *'Educational under attainment places young people at a significant disadvantage when it comes to securing further education and employment. The areas most impacted upon by the conflict are also the most socially deprived. Free School Meals Entitlement (FSME) is an indicator of social deprivation and is highly correlated with lower levels of educational attainment, with pupils entitled to free school meals being more likely to have special educational needs; be excluded from school; be persistent truants; at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour; and, as a consequence, when they leave school they are more likely to be unemployed or earning lower salaries. This lack of opportunity and disadvantage is compounded when you consider the fact that the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training are considerably higher here than the UK average, as is youth unemployment.'*

66. Young working-class Protestant boys have statistically had the highest levels of underachievement in school. Many research reports on the matter have been produced with evidence to support there has been little change over decades. These include:

- Peace Monitoring Report (2014): NICRC compared ethnic groups using five good GCSE grades as the measure of success. It found half of Protestant boys failed to achieve this and warned they were being left behind. Dr Paul Nolan, the academic who led the research, said the attainment gap was *'colossal'*
- Peace Monitoring Report (2019)⁶⁴: The NICRC noted under-achievement among working class pupils generally, adding 'working class Protestant boys continue to have lower educational attainment

⁶³ cvs-conference-niccy.pdf P 4-5

⁶⁴ Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report | Community Relations Council (community-relations.org.uk) (p14)

than Catholic boys'. It criticised the *'failure of the NI government to tackle fundamental problems regarding the structure of education in NI'*

- No Child Left Behind (2016)⁶⁵: Led by DUP councillor Peter Martin, reported that many of those most affected by underachievement came from the Protestant community. Mr Martin made several recommendations including addressing low parental expectations and aspirations. It also said early intervention in pupil non-attendance by schools should be a priority.
- Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation (2015)⁶⁶: Commissioned by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, ILiAD recommended the end of the current system of academic selection claiming it reinforced *'privilege and disadvantage'*. It found Catholic areas had higher levels of attainment in GCSEs than Protestant areas.
- Education Inequalities in Northern Ireland (2015)⁶⁷: The Equality Commission/Queen's University found Protestant males entitled to free school meals had the lowest GCSE and A-level attainment rates and lowest proportions of school leavers moving on to higher education. It said the particular barriers to educational equality for Protestant males *'must be considered closely'*.
- A Call To Action (2011)⁶⁸: Made up of educationalists, academics, community and voluntary representatives and early years providers, recommended capping grammar places adding academic selection accentuated social division. Community and cultural factors, it said, affected how Protestant families perceived education and participation in schools.

⁶⁵ cllr-peter-martin.pdf (niassembly.gov.uk) (p35)

⁶⁶ ruth-leitch-policy-briefing-paper.pdf (niassembly.gov.uk)

⁶⁷ EducationInequality-FullReportQUB.pdf (equalityni.org) (p348)

⁶⁸ Layout 1 (regenerateni.com) (p8)

The Commission recommends the IRE Panel revisit the recommendations made within the reports on the underachievement of Protestant working class boys to help inform its work.

Political education

67. The ARK Research Update⁶⁹ found that less than 10% of respondents felt they could influence local decisions or those made in Northern Ireland and, according to the Electoral Commission for Northern Ireland⁷⁰, *‘Age also remains a significant factor in rates of registration, with the under 20s having the lowest estimated levels of registration at only 57%, compared with 88% and over for all other age ranges.’* This is reflected in the University of Liverpool NI General Election Survey 2019⁷¹. These young voters have power they are not utilising.

Table 9: Voters and Non-Voters by Age⁷²

| Age | Voted | Did Not Vote |
|-------|-------|--------------|
| 18-29 | 48.4 | 51.6 |
| 30-44 | 72.0 | 28.0 |
| 45-64 | 77.0 | 23.0 |
| 65+ | 71.1 | 28.9 |

68. The NI Curriculum ranges from pre-school through to key stage 14 and aims to *‘to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives’*⁷³. The learning opportunities provided within the Curriculum should help young people to develop as

⁶⁹ <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/sites/default/files/2021-03/update140.pdf> (Research Update nos 140).

⁷⁰ <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media-centre/largest-ever-electoral-register-northern-ireland-reform-electoral-canvass-needed> (p1)

⁷¹ <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/research/heroimages/The-University-of-Liverpool-NI-General-Election-Survey-2019-March-20.pdf> (p17-18)

⁷² <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/research/heroimages/The-University-of-Liverpool-NI-General-Election-Survey-2019-March-20.pdf>

⁷³ <https://ccea.org.uk/key-stage-4/curriculum>

individuals, contributors to society and this includes understanding and making informed decisions about voting within the context of NI.

69. According to research ‘Education, Equality and the Economy’, produced in 2019 by Tony Gallagher⁷⁴, *‘The lowest voting cohort in Northern Ireland is young people and many do not even register to vote. It is hard to escape the conclusion that education could do a lot more to empower young people to believe that a better, shared world is not only possible, but achievable.’*

70. Political education may sit naturally within the Citizenship subject area. However, a recent (2022) University of Ulster Briefing Paper ‘Citizenship Education in Northern Ireland – An opportunity not yet realised?’⁷⁵ commented *‘It follows that all teachers must be able to create the conditions which encourage young people to share their own views and positions - even if they are unpalatable to some. This is particularly important in Citizenship as young people have repeatedly said that they want to learn about conflict-related issues at school such as equality, sectarianism, politics, cultural identities, parading, unresolved legacy issues and commemorations. Teachers must also expose students to alternative views and opinions (particularly those which they may not hear outside the classroom), encourage reflection on how they view others, challenge them to think why ‘others’ in society hold different views and build respect for ‘them’. The Citizenship classroom needs to be about “frank discussion” rather than “promoting political correctness”. It is not about changing minds; it is about opening minds and nurturing the next generation of young people to be empowered and confident in who they are and their positions while respecting and understanding difference.’*

71. Nevertheless, young people do want a more active role in society. According to the NI Youth Forum 2021 ‘Report on Young People’s views on NI Centenary, identity and Social Issues’⁷⁶ *‘the overwhelming majority of respondents (71%) ‘agreed and strongly agreed’ with the position that young*

⁷⁴ Filetoupload,925382,en.pdf (qub.ac.uk) (p32)

⁷⁵ Integrated Education Fund - TE UU Report 15 - Citizenship FINAL - Page 1 - Created with Publitas.com (Section 6 p8-10)

⁷⁶ Young-People-of-the-Peace-Process-Report-Final.doc (live.com) (p21)

people should be allowed to vote at sixteen and a further 87% 'agreed and strongly agreed' with the statement that young people can affect change by getting involved in campaigns and activism.'

72. The Commission is heartened by the establishment of the first Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland which had its Inaugural Meeting in 2021⁷⁷. This must include political education as a curriculum topic for young people which enables them to make an informed decision and choice and to encourage interest in joining such groups.

73. Therefore, the Commission recommends that the IRE panel find ways for schools to strengthen political education to create higher levels of understanding and interest in politics, participation and the democratic political process to engage, educate and empower the very people that embody the future.

Involving children and young people

74. Research by Magill, Smith and Hamber, 'The Role of Education in Reconciliation'(2009)⁷⁸ reports that young people want an answer to the critical questions:

- Why did all the Troubles start?
- Why is it still going on?
- And why couldn't it have been prevented?

75. Policy makers and educators should provide opportunities for genuine dialogue between children, young people and adults in power therefore, enabling them to define solutions to issues impacting on their lives. Government and education policy should put the views of young people central to the peace process.

76. The Northern Ireland Youth Assembly is one example of providing a platform for young people to influence decision making by mirroring the structures of the NI

⁷⁷ Inaugural Meeting of the First Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland (niassembly.gov.uk)

⁷⁸ The Role of Education in Reconciliation — Ulster University 2009 (p105)

Assembly. At the first session of the recently elected Youth Assembly⁷⁹ in November 2021, the outcome of the vote on the Youth Assembly's focus for the next two years were Education, environment, health, and rights and equality. The Commission encourages the Youth Assembly to include victims and survivors as central to debates and decisions around these four key issues.

The role of the youth service

77. Children and young people tend to learn about the past from their parents/guardians and peer group. This can be positive or negative depending on life experiences, political and religious views etc. and may not always be based on all the facts. Therefore, educators need to be given the training and support to work with children and young people about conflict legacy and peacebuilding. Children, young people and the community should be involved in co-designing long term strategies to reduce prejudice, promote rights and responsibilities and build a culture of mutual respect.
78. There are numerous examples of good work carried out with young people such as detached youth work, diversionary work at times of heightened tensions and work to engage young people in building a better future for themselves and their communities eg Youthlink offer 'Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Training *Conflict Transformation Programme*' including OCN NI Level 2 '*Handling Life's Conflicts*'⁸⁰ which can be delivered at youth level for 15-17 year olds or at an adult level.
79. Young people on the frontline of community violence are often blamed for acting out old patterns of community hatred. The Commission believes that rather than blame young people, they should be educated to understand the futility of violence and the legacy it leaves.

⁷⁹ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/session-2019--2020/youth-assembly-for-northern-ireland-gets-green-light-from-assembly-commission/> newspaper article

⁸⁰ Youth Link NI – Handling Life's Conflicts (web page)

80. The role of youth work tends to be underacknowledged in relation to reconciliation and peacebuilding work and much of the learning goes unrecorded. An impressive example of this work was the targeted intervention by youth leaders across the sectarian divide at the Lanark Way interface in Belfast⁸¹ who put themselves in the front line to successfully engage with the young people involved in sectarian rioting to avoid the situation escalating.
81. Another model of good practice in youth work is the Community Dialogue Tool (CDT) report 2013⁸² by the Institute for Conflict Research and commissioned by the Lurgan Town Project. At the report launch, Minister John O'Dowd praised the work⁸³: *"I congratulate the SELB's Youth Service for taking the initiative to develop this Community Dialogue Tool which has the benefit of young people and their role within the wider community at its heart... When it comes to our education system, I am a great believer in communities coming together to find local solutions to local problems. This report identifies the key issues young people in the Lurgan area are facing and provides us with the first step in seeking to find the local solutions to address them."*
82. The Commission suggests that such models of best practice at community, voluntary and statutory level are held and shared within and between the formal and informal education sectors alongside the training materials of other organisations.

Examining the past

83. The Report of the Consultative Group of the Past⁸⁴ 2009, highlighted the need for much more debate on dealing with the past in Northern Ireland. It is critical that we find an honest way to examine the Troubles/Conflict if we are to stop the next generation from repeating the same mistakes. The education system must

⁸¹ Young people urged to stay away from Lanark Way this weekend (belfastmedia.com)

⁸² <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/26887818/community-dialogue-tool-lurgan-town-project-institute-for-/63>

⁸³ 22_May_Lurgan_Town_project_Press_Release.docx (live.com) IFI Press Release

⁸⁴ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmniaf/171/17104.htm> (p81)

address this crucial issue and not leave it to be addressed only at the community level. The education system could provide the leadership and support to deal with the past effectively and honestly. The Report made the point that *‘Clear leadership is needed in promoting the debate on this issue across the various agencies and ensuring that any actions identified are implemented. The CVSNI has identified a need to reach out to victims and survivors of the conflict. In discussions with the CVSNI it is clear that this includes those exiled from Northern Ireland. The Group recommends that the Legacy Commission, proposed in Chapter 7, supports the CVSNI in their endeavours to address this issue.’*

84. In relation to this recommendation, the Commission has reached out to victims and survivors in GB and the RoI to gather the experiences of those who were affected by the Troubles/Conflict and in so doing, contribute to the building of sustainable working relationships. The outcome of this work will help inform the Commission’s future work and would also be of benefit to the education sector in relation to the Troubles/Conflict in the broader north/south – east/west context. This is an important aspect of history which would benefit students who may choose to study, and perhaps end up working, in GB or RoI to give them a better understanding of our shared past. Some children and young people may know/be related to victims and survivors exiled as a result of the troubles/conflict and this may feed into the transgenerational impact on their families.

85. An example of a resource for Key Stage Four curriculum subject Local and Global Citizenship is the publication by the Community Foundation in conjunction with ex combatants/political ex-prisoners ‘From Prison to Peace, Learning from the Experience of Ex-combatants’⁸⁵. In the follow up evaluation of the resource, ‘Transforming Education Through Evidence’⁸⁶, funded by OFMDFM 2014, a positive outcome was shown *‘Not only is the Prisoner to Peace programme seen as valuable by key stakeholders, but the analysis of*

⁸⁵ https://www.niacro.co.uk/sites/default/files/publications/From_PRISON_to_PEACE-_CFNI.pdf (p113)

⁸⁶ https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/ofmdfm_dev/prison-to-peace-evaluation-report.pdf (P113)

findings from the CRCT⁸⁷ provide clear evidence of its positive effects on young peoples' knowledge attitudes and behaviours. The programme increases young peoples' knowledge of the troubles as well as their support for nonviolent means to deal with conflict and their likeliness to participate positively in political activities, as measured by several indicators.'

86. In order to balance the narrative connected to ex-combatants/ex political prisoners with the lived experience of others engaged in post-traumatic work and to embed a non-judgmental victims' perspective into curriculum, the Commission decided to produce 'The House' in partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. 'The House' is an action based theatrical performance by Big Telly using a script devised from quotations and dialogue drawn from research carried out by and on behalf of the Commission and which uses the words of victims and survivors of the NI Troubles/Conflict. It was so well received when staged in east and west Belfast in 2021⁸⁸ that it is currently being made into a touring augmented reality experience for schools to receive in 2022.

Training and educational material

87. The Commission supports the view that educators should be supported to teach children and young people the importance of their contribution in terms of the possibility of change in relation to the transformation of a society emerging from conflict.

88. One of the huge legacy benefits of formal education is that it stayed open throughout the conflict. It was and is, central to the provision of information and learning and provides a safe haven to explore new ideas about respect and inclusion. It can challenge myths about the legacy of the past and teach our children and young people how to build a vibrant multicultural society in this

⁸⁷ Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial (CRCT) survey method used where participants are randomised in groups or clusters - in the case of this trial, the cluster was a school.

⁸⁸ Layout 1 (feilebelfast.com)

ever-changing world. Children and young people are our most important hope for the future so we must help them create a peaceful and shared one.

89. In a conversation about teacher training, Fr. Eddie McGee⁸⁹, Director of the Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service commented that *'schools play an essential and integral role within communities as they have sustained contact with children and young people and their families over a long period of time. Over the years, working closely alongside parents and guardians, schools have established an important forum for addressing the legacy of intergenerational trauma through their ethos, their pastoral care structures and through the curriculum. Having an in-depth knowledge of the children they teach and their local communities, teachers are often in a position to be able to identify the signs and symptoms of conflict trauma, to establish a safe environment within which pupils can learn, and to signpost on to other agencies and support services those children who need particular care in dealing with the legacy of the past.'*

Training for difficult and contentious conversations

90. Throughout the numerous bodies of research, formal and informal educators have stressed the need for training and support around dealing with the legacy of the past and how it has and continues to, impact on children and young people and building for the future.
91. Teachers may have to deal with children and young people's strongly held inherited views and attitudes passed down by a variety of people including parents, grandparents and other family members, friends and community whose views may be influenced by their lived experiences of the Troubles/Conflict which can be selective or skewed accounts that could perpetuate sectarian views.

⁸⁹Meeting with Eddie McGee 18 March 2022

92. Young people entering further education who may not have had the experience of mixing with ‘the other side’, also need to be prepared to hear another side to their own lived experience.

93. Educators themselves may or may not have been exposed to the Troubles/Conflict and may feel anxious or out of their depth introducing the subject for discussion. The Commission’s 2021 report ‘It Didn’t End in 1998’⁹⁰ recommended *‘The current training for teachers on the Troubles/Conflict and cross-community issues needs to be expanded to develop their capacity and confidence to facilitate challenging and sensitive topics and to respond to emotion in the classroom. Teachers require additional support in the teaching of the Conflict, particularly where they are dealing with their own related issues.’*

94. This is also borne out in the findings of The British Council funded QUB ‘Education in Divided Societies: Final Report’ 2021⁹¹, *‘perhaps the most commonly referenced issue over the three days centred on practical approaches to discussing conflict. The teachers within the group felt unprepared and ill-equipped with resources to begin to do this. They recognised the importance of proper training, as well as gaining support from administrators and parents, in order to have the confidence to design and implement a curriculum that addresses controversial issues. Attendees saw this as the next step in furthering shared education in Northern Ireland.’*

95. The Commission’s research ‘Children and Young People Engagement Project Research Report’⁹² (2016) highlighted concerns that *‘some programmes to address sectarianism were too piecemeal and thin, when long-term engagement was in fact required. One contributor pointed to the need for long term engagement in order to address these issues, commenting: ‘If a child has had 14 years of sectarianism, taking them away for a weekend is not going to change it. And the one-off school sessions are a nonsense’.*

⁹⁰Microsoft Word - CVS-Final-Full-Report-02.docx (cvsnri.org) (p10-11)

⁹¹ Final report Ed’s BC - dmcglade126@gmail.com - Gmail (google.com) (final paragraph)

⁹² <https://www.cvsni.org/media/1617/cvs-cyp-final-report-26-april-2016.pdf> (p17)

96. Training to carry out sensitive engagement through initial teacher training and continual professional development for teachers and heads is essential as educators often feel ill equipped to introduce peace and reconciliation into the classroom. In its 2021 'Official Report 2nd sitting of the Youth Assembly'⁹³, the Youth Assembly reported *'Our discussions on education, health, youth services, rights and equality were all intertwined. In our view, education is key, but, to educate young people, we must also educate our educators. Teachers are not equipped to recognise the signs of poor mental health and to deal with bullying and complex issues around identity.'* Teachers, as key agents in the education sector, should be given initial and continuing/in-service professional development training and support to develop the knowledge and skills to become teachers of peace and social cohesion in classrooms and communities. The Commission recommends that this should be done collectively with teacher training colleges to ensure the curriculum is delivered to maximise the learning and potential contribution trained teachers could make to peacebuilding and the reduction and prevention of violent conflict.

Underpinning principles and organisational policies

97. A lot of excellent work has gone into the development of underpinning/guiding principles to help foster learning and understanding that contributes to the process of healing and peacebuilding. These principles can be helpful for teachers to avoid discussions becoming divisive and reinforcing division. They can also help children and young people reflect more sensitively, inclusively and honestly and consider their contribution to building a shared and reconciled society. Examples of these are:

- NI Community Relations Council (NICRC) and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)⁹⁴,
- Healing Through Remembering⁹⁵

⁹³ http://www.niyouthassembly.org/assets/official-report/Youth_Assembly_061121.pdf (p5)

⁹⁴ <https://www.community-relations.org.uk/sites/crc/files/media-files/Decade%20Principles.pdf>

⁹⁵ <http://healingthroughremembering.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/AWTY-Commemoration.pdf>

- Towards Understanding and Healing project⁹⁶
- The Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment⁹⁷

98. The Nerve Centre, in partnership with the Tower Museum, used the NICRC/HLF principles to underpin its approach to its Understanding the Decade of Commemorations project which was supported by the EU PEACE IV Programme and match funded by The Executive Office and the RDI Department of Rural and Community Development. Sue Divin, PEACE IV Programme Manager with Derry City & Strabane District Council, said *'The PEACE IV Board are delighted that issues from the Decade of Centenaries have been explored so creatively through this project. The project has dealt with many contentious events from 100 years ago, which sometimes evoke significant emotion, memories and debate. The creative programmes, exhibition and events have been very well received and have helped local communities engage with new perspectives and different points of view.'*⁹⁸

Teacher training

99. In relation to teacher training and the four institutions in Northern Ireland that provide teacher training, a briefing paper⁹⁹ from Ulster University's Unesco Centre of education suggests that *'There would potentially be considerable benefit from social, professional and educational initiatives aimed at ensuring that all student teachers gain practical experience of working on both sides of the divided school systems. These could operate in tandem alongside programmes that support cross-community interaction between students – within and between institutions'*. It calls for a *'radical review and redesign'* of initial teacher education in Northern Ireland.

⁹⁶ <https://thejunction-ni.org/towards-understanding-healing/>

⁹⁷ <https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/Support/General/2020/TeacherStudent%20Guidance%3A%20Teaching%20Controversial%20and%20Sensitive%20Issues.pdf>

⁹⁸ <https://nervecentre.org/news/major-decade-centenaries-project-draws-close> (webpage)

⁹⁹ https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/794235/Community-division-and-student-separation-in-Initial-Teacher-Education.pdf (p28)

100. Professional, innovative, accessible and wide-ranging conflict legacy and peacebuilding programmes and resources have been produced by practitioners and academics to enhance teacher training in reconciliation and peacebuilding. This work has been mostly developed as evidenced-based models using lived experience to help shape and inform the work. These resources often fit within several curriculum subjects ranging from history through to drama and most certainly fit within the Citizenship, Personal Development and Employability subject area. Several of these programmes have been mentioned throughout this response.

101. In relation to the Citizenship subject area, the (2022) University of Ulster Briefing Paper ‘Citizenship education in Northern Ireland – An opportunity not yet realised?’¹⁰⁰ made recommendations similar to previous research referred to throughout this response:

Table 2 Considerations to improve the status and provision of Citizenship education

| Priority Areas | Responsibility Leads | Considerations |
|---|--|--|
| Commitment of politicians and policy makers | Education Minister The Executive Office Education Committee DE ETI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review commitment to Citizenship agenda within education • ETI to conduct a system-wide survey to find out the ‘state of play’ of Citizenship education in schools • ETI to showcase best practice of Citizenship provision in schools including democratic structures and active Citizenship engagement • DE to define requirements, provide advice and resources to CCEA, EA, |

¹⁰⁰ Integrated Education Fund - TE UU Report 15 - Citizenship FINAL - Page 1 - Created with Publitas.com (Section 6 p8-10)

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| | | ITE institutions and school leaders to support the actioning of priority areas outlined below: |
| Curriculum and examinations | DE CCEA School Leaders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review appropriateness of LLW • Explore traditional subjects, for example, History and Geography, taking on wider responsibility for teaching Citizenship • Consider the amalgamation of subjects into broader areas of shared study • CCEA to develop a discrete GCSE in Citizenship • CCEA to develop a joint History and Citizenship GCSE |
| High quality teacher professional learning | DE ITE Institutions EA CCEA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train specific number of Citizenship teachers each year • ITE providers, working together, design a teacher education programme for Citizenship • A mandatory critical self-reflection module for all ITE students to reflect on 'who they are' and their formative experiences • Design Teacher Professional Learning workshops to engage teachers in deep dialogue related to the teaching of difference, share classroom experiences and enhance pedagogical expertise through practical activities |
| Engagement between schools and parents/ community School leaders | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish school/parent/community consultative forums • Create consultative forums as reciprocal learning spaces to help diminish teacher fears and parental/community concerns related to the |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | teaching of controversial conflict related issues • The co-design of parent/community educational outreach workshops to allow them to experience ‘first hand’ the teaching approaches used. |
|--|--|--|

Training resources

102. Given the vast array of available resources, policy makers should review how different levels of formal and informal education and personal development can work jointly to use them to promote mutual trust, equality and reconciliation.

103. The Commission recommends this body of work be catalogued and held in one place to be easily accessed by those formal and informal education providers. A resource such as this would also be of benefit at local level, internationally and, especially to other countries emerging from conflict.

104. The Commission also encourages the IRE Panel to commit to build upon current conflict legacy and peacebuilding programmes being delivered within the education sector and introduce new programmes of work where gaps exist.

105. The ‘PEACE Programmes Learning Platform’¹⁰¹ is a model of good practice as a repository and archive of key records related to the PEACE Programmes and to provide a single point of access to the materials that have been developed since 1994. It contains thousands of different files including project case studies, evaluations, research documents and reports, audio-recordings, films, photographs, images and promotional materials.

106. These programmes are often delivered by voluntary/community sector organisations that require more secure funding to continue delivery and further

¹⁰¹ www.peaceplatform.seupb.eu/en/

develop this impressive body of work.

Evaluating and measuring outcomes

107. In relation to measuring outcomes, the Government has such a measuring tool in place in the form of the Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) process. The Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service briefing paper ‘Outcomes Based Accountability and the Programme for Government’¹⁰² will act as a useful tool for DE when considering the delivery of the IRE implementation plan and the allocation of associated budgets. The briefing paper explains that OBA was developed as a measuring tool in 2014, alongside the assessment of Government’s public reform agenda in the context of the divided nature of Northern Ireland, increased budget pressures and the need for the reform of public administration. The briefing paper outlines the NI OBA process in the following way:

‘Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) operates on two distinct levels: ‘population accountability’ and ‘performance accountability.’

Population accountability is the higher level of OBA, and addresses the wellbeing of whole populations. Responsible organisations identify desired outcomes, and indicators which monitor progress towards these outcomes, and then develop and deliver action plans to progress the outcomes. The Programme for Government will operate at the population accountability level, as it seeks to deliver outcomes for whole populations within Northern Ireland: for example, all Northern Ireland residents, all children in Northern Ireland or all older people in Northern Ireland.

Performance accountability is the lower level of OBA, and addresses the wellbeing of specific client groups: for example, all children in care.

Responsible organisations identify their client group, desired impacts for this group and how these impacts can be delivered and measured. Interventions at the performance accountability level are then monitored using report cards which detail the quantity of work done; the quality of work done; and the

¹⁰²https://ceforum.org/uploads/event/event_documents/610/Outcomes_Based_Accountability_and_the_Programme_for_Government.pdf (p1)

impact of this work.'

108. Another way to measure outcomes could be through the Equality Commission NI 2010 publication 'Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 A Guide for Public Authorities'¹⁰³. The Equality Commission NI states that Section 75 is '*intended to be transformative. Its aim was to change the practices of Government and public authorities so that equality of opportunity and good relations are central to policy making, policy implementation, policy review and service delivery*'. Unfortunately, victims and survivors are not included as a S75 category and this has been raised with the Equality Commission.

109. A model of good practice in mainstreaming and evaluation is The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016¹⁰⁴ which, in his Ministerial Foreword to the 'Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021', the Minister of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs, Edwin Poots stated that '*This duty requires public authorities to give fair consideration to the issues that may impact on rural dwellers and to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and designing and delivering public services.*'¹⁰⁵ An approach similar to this for victims and survivors would be very helpful.

Recommendations

Holistic approach and mainstreaming

110. The Commission and other research institutions have provided extensive evidence of both the legacy and ongoing Conflict related issues that impact on children and young people. This includes transgenerational trauma, suicide, segregation, sectarianism, paramilitarism, social and economic deprivation, disengagement from the political process, the role of women and girls in peacebuilding, low educational attainment and other issues.

¹⁰³ untitled (equalityni.org) (p5)

¹⁰⁴ Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (legislation.gov.uk) (web page)

¹⁰⁵ 4th Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report (2020-2021).PDF (daera-ni.gov.uk) (Ministerial foreword)

111. The Commission encourages the Executive, as the lead body in the implementation of the Together: Building a United Community, to keep victims and survivors to the forefront of the political agenda until issues are adequately addressed.
112. The Commission recommends the IRE Panel include the aspiration to create the conditions within the education system, for children and young people to engage fully in understanding the legacy of the past and building a shared, reconciled, and multicultural society by:
- Strengthening intervention and support work across the formal and informal education sectors.
 - Developing a holistic approach to assist children and young people to understand and deal with ongoing legacy issues.
 - Mainstreaming victims and survivors issues across the Northern Ireland Civil Service by building it into the design and delivery of policy, legislation and services to ensure lasting change.
113. Mainstreaming requires a concerted, multi-agency and partnership-focussed approach. The Commission recommends that public authorities appoint a dedicated Victims and Survivors Champion whose key focus will be to ensure victims and survivors are central to policy making and service delivery throughout the public sector.
114. The IRE mentions the following Departments
- Department of Education - schools
 - Department for the Economy - further education, higher education and vocational education and training
 - Department of Health - early years
 - Executive Office - equality legislation
 - Department of Justice - education in the youth justice system
- The Commission emphasises the important broader role of the departments listed and the role of other Departments not listed that play a significant role in relation to children and young people, their families, communities and

society generally. For example –

- The Executive Office is also responsible for victims and survivors;
- truth recovery; Social Investment Fund and the Together: Building a United Community Strategy (currently under review)
- The Department for Communities is responsible for matters ranging from the voluntary and community sector through to housing and the anti-poverty strategy.

Co-design

115. The Commission recommends that the IRE Panel to draft a hope filled vision for consultation which should be the product of a consensus-building process with the various education sectors and stakeholders and including children and young people.
116. Research evidences the fact that children and young people want to engage in learning about the Troubles/Conflict and explore difficult/contentious issues and identifies the need for children and young people to be listened to in relation to addressing the legacy of the past and building a shared and reconciled society. It suggests that young people engage in co-designing programmes. As part of the co-design approach, the Commission recommends that the IRE Panel circulate its first draft report for consultation with children and young people through the formal and informal education settings (also consult parents/guardians and all other relevant stakeholders including victims and survivors).

Implementation plan

117. The critical aspect of the IRE will be an accompanying implementation plan, the supply of adequate funding and resources to make it happen and a joined-up multi-agency approach to help bring about a sustainable safe, shared,

multicultural society. The Commission supports the IRE commitment to:

- settling the teachers' pay agreement
- the delivery of nine reviews to modernise the school working environment; deliver financial savings; modernise the teacher work environment; transform accountability and assessment approaches and systems; and improve outcomes for pupils
- achieving a more settled industrial relations climate.

118. The Commission recommends that a systematic approach is put in place to support the embedding and mainstreaming of the IRE implementation plan (when finalised) throughout policies, practices, procedures and ethos in the provision of education. This includes linking relevant strategies/policies/agreements to deliver the IRE implementation plan within and between all departments and relevant external organisations.

Measuring progress

119. The Commission recognises the importance of measuring how children and young people are taught about the legacy of the Troubles/Conflict and what difference this learning and support makes to them, their communities and society generally. Key questions include:

- how do we measure how the younger generation are taught about the legacy of the troubles/conflict?
- how will their capacity be built to equip them to learn from the lessons of the past and avoid choosing violence for political ends in the future? and
- what impact this will have?

120. Government already has measuring tools in place that could be considered for adapting:

- Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act. Victims and survivors are not included in the 9 categories.

- Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) process How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?

- Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 which introduced Rural Proofing to Departments, local authorities and other public authorities to ensure fair and equitable treatment of rural communities.

Transgenerational legacy

121. The Commission believes education has a role in developing children and young people's understanding of the transgenerational impact of the Troubles/Conflict legacy on children and young people, their families and communities and society generally almost 25 years since the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The Commission recommends education and support programmes for work within and between children and young people; young people older people (including relatives); political leaders/church leaders/community leaders; service providers and others with the power to influence and make a positive contribution to the everyday life of children and young people in the context of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Integrated education

122. Commission funded research reports comment on a '*highly segregated*' society in respect of housing, education and other '*single-identity activities* and notes that segregation results in contact with young people from the '*other community*' being limited. The research recommends that -
'The role of segregated education in the transmission of prejudice should be examined and the effects of alternative education systems on the transmission of transgenerational trauma should be the subject of investigation.'

123. The Commission and Victims and Survivors Forum is currently discussing integrated education but has not yet taken a definitive position on this matter.

However, it acknowledges integrated education as an aspiration and strongly recommends that shared education should be enhanced across the education sectors including teacher training.

Gender

124. The Commission recommends the IRE Panel ensure the education system supports the development of programmes to build the confidence of women and girls in relation to leadership roles in public life and perspective on peacebuilding.

Education underachievement

125. The areas most impacted upon by the Troubles/Conflict are also the most socially and economically deprived. Free school meals entitlement is an indicator of poverty and highly correlated with:

- Low educational attainment
- Special needs
- Exclusion from school
- Truancy
- Anti-social behaviour
- Leaving school early
- Unemployment
- Low paid work

The Commission recommends an in depth review of existing research into the relationship between poverty, educational underachievement and the legacy of the Troubles/Conflict.

126. Many research reports have statistically proven that working class Protestant boys have the highest levels of underachievement in school with little change over several decades. The Commission recommends the IRE Panel revisit the

recommendations made within the reports listed (point 66) the underachievement of Protestant working class boys to help inform its work.

Political education

127. The lowest voting group in Northern Ireland is young people with many not even registering to vote. The Commission recommends the IRE do a lot more to empower young people to believe that a better, shared world is not only possible, but achievable and find ways for schools to strengthen political education to create higher levels of understanding and interest in politics, participation and the democratic political process to engage, educate and empower the very people that embody the future.

Discouraging violence

128. Young people on the frontline of community violence are often blamed for acting out old patterns of community violence. The Commission believes rather than blaming young people, they should be educated to understand the futility of violence and the legacy it leaves.

Inclusion

129. Government and education policy should put the views of young people central to the peace process. Policy makers and educators should provide opportunities for genuine dialogue between children, young people and adults in power therefore, enabling them to define solutions to issues impacting on their lives. This includes the provision of shared space.
130. The Northern Ireland Youth Assembly is one example of providing a platform for young people to influence decision making by mirroring the structures of the NI Assembly. In November 2021, the outcome of the vote on the Youth Assembly's focus for the next two years were education, environment, health, and rights and equality. The Commission encourages the Youth Assembly to include victims and survivors as central to debates and decisions around these four key issues.

The role of youth work

131. Youth work plays a central role in building a shared society by equipping children and young people with the skills to understand and respect difference, and build relationships across divided communities. Youth work provides after school activities thus giving a whole organisational approach to embedding the principles and practices needed to build a shared society. The Commission recommends the IRE strengthens the support and coordination between schools and youth work in the delivery and implementation of peace and reconciliation education programmes.
132. The youth workers often address Troubles/Conflict related issues such as rioting, paramilitary activity, transgenerational legacy, misinformation/myths etc. The Commission recommends that youth work models of good practice are shared within and between the formal and informal education sectors along with all other relevant training materials.

Training for formal and informal educators

133. There are four teacher training institutions. A briefing paper from Ulster University's UNESCO Centre of education suggests that '*There would potentially be considerable benefit from social, professional and educational initiatives aimed at ensuring that all student teachers gain practical experience of working on both sides of the divided school systems.*' It calls for a '*radical review and redesign*' of initial teacher education in Northern Ireland. The Commission recommends that reconciliation and peacebuilding teacher training should be done collectively with teacher training colleges to ensure a common narrative is developed and maximise the learning and potential contribution trained teachers could make to the reduction and prevention of conflict and to peacebuilding.
134. The Commission recommends ongoing personal and professional development programmes to build the capacity of formal and informal education

staff in relation to facilitating contentious and contested Conflict topics needs to be expanded to develop their confidence, especially where they may be dealing with their own lived experiences. This should include approaches to understanding and dealing with transgenerational legacy issues.

Diversity Policy

135. The Commission recommends the formal and informal education sectors develop a diversity policy for staff and service users to use and promote. The ETI Safeguarding Proforma¹⁰⁶ requires schools to demonstrate an ethos and culture of inclusion for pupils. Examples of what the policy should contain can be found in the EA Equality and Diversity Policy – For Schools¹⁰⁷ in the Equality & Inclusion Policy¹⁰⁸ section. The EA has developed a range of materials to support schools in achieving this aim which should be updated as part of the IRE and issued with guidance on how it should be implemented by the formal and informal education sectors.

Resources

136. Many well produced Troubles/Conflict training and education programmes have been produced and delivered across the education sectors by experienced organisations. The Commission notes that these are not always easily accessible as they are produced by a variety of different organisations. The Commission recommends that this important body of work be collated, referenced and held in a single repository for ease of access throughout the education sectors and made available at international level.
137. Research suggests the need for successful programmes to be embedded in the school curriculum, teacher training and youth work training. This should be age appropriate and start at as early as possible so that children learn at school

¹⁰⁶ Safeguarding guidance and proforma - Nursery, Primary, Post-primary, Special Education schools and EOTAS centres | Education Training Inspectorate (etini.gov.uk) (section 8)

¹⁰⁷ Equality and Diversity Policy – For Schools | Education Authority Northern Ireland (eani.org.uk)

¹⁰⁸ Model Policy Equality Inclusion 2020.docx (live.com)

as well as at home, from their friends and in their community. This also requires the capacity of children and young people to be developed to engage in discussion with the older generations and challenge views as they make sense of the past and vice versa. The Commission recommends that:

- The school curriculum, teacher training and youth work training be revised to consider teaching legacy issues, reconciliation and peacebuilding;
- Build upon current conflict legacy and peace building programmes being delivered and introduce new programmes of work where gaps exist.
- Provide secure funding for the continued delivery and further development of this impressive body of work.

138. The Commission believes that it should be made as easy as possible for victims and survivors' families to access the physical, psychological, emotional, financial, or other support for which they are eligible. The Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) offers a range of free services and support in the community in more than 50 locations across Northern Ireland. The Commission recommends a complimentary working relationship be developed between the IRE and VSS to avail of some of its services. Long-term support for educators and the various delivery structures that work successfully to promote greater sharing and collaboration across and between communities, throughout the education system and across the public sector.

Conclusion

139. The NDNA commits to *'help build a shared and integrated society, the Executive will support educating children and young people of different backgrounds together in the classroom.'*

140. The recommendations outlined within this submission warrants significant changes that will require additional levels of funding to deliver. The Commission

believes that the results will help young people break through the barriers to achieving the commitments within the Stormont House Agreement¹⁰⁹ to *‘act in accordance with the obligations on government to promote equality and respect and to prevent discrimination; to promote a culture of tolerance, mutual respect and mutual understanding at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage shared and integrated education’*

141. To achieve all the recommendations contained within this paper and the commitments of the various policies, strategies and legislation, the Commission supports the teachers’ pay agreement that includes a commitment to deliver nine reviews necessary for the modernisation of the school working environment and to achieve a more settled industrial relations climate. These should result in:

- Modernising teachers' work environments.
- Transforming accountability and assessment approaches and systems.
- Improving outcomes for pupils.

142. The Commission wishes the IRE Panel success in this fundamental review of the Northern Ireland education system. In particular, the Commission offers its support in endeavours to reflect victims and survivors within the formal and informal education system to promote peace, counter violence and foster inclusion. This will require a holistic approach as ‘it takes a whole village to raise a child.’

¹⁰⁹ Stormont_House_Agreement.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)