

Progressing Reconciliation: Setting future priorities for Northern Ireland

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- Research Aims and Objectives
- Methodology
- Language and Terminology
- External context

Successes to date

Increased stability and bedding in of political structures

“contact hypothesis with meaning”

Evidence of commitment of local government structures to demonstrate and support ‘good relations’

“pleasantly surprised”

Development and implementation of relevant policy initiatives.

“perceptible shift”

Successes to date

Reduction in violence and the threat of violence

“Lessened considerably”

Transformation of policing structures and approaches

“Acceptance...is very significant”

Reduction in territorial markings

“A lot of the problem that people have about this area has to do with perceptions.”

Successes to date

External financial intervention

“It will be hard to undo this work, which is positive.”

Socio-economic disadvantage acknowledged and targeted

“For a long time, the community here did not feel the effect of a peace dividend ...But with the work that has now been done to the area, this is their peace dividend.”

Contact and sharing in the workplace

“...the opportunity to be exposed to other people and other identities.”

Successes to date

Collaborative working across and between sectors

Connections forming, trust building

“spider’s web of connections...”

“...even when politically, things have collapsed, those relationships can be picked up again later.”

Corpus of learning, experience, knowledge built

“We have much more mature conversations.”

Evidence of positive attitudinal change

“People want something different...for their children”

Acknowledging and dealing with the ‘past’

“The level of discussion and awareness... has been raised.”

Observations

Respondents struggled with this question.

What was not mentioned?

Detailing specific examples of good practice or evidence of positive outcomes

Demilitarisation

Broad legislative framework established by the Agreement
North-South and East-West relationships
Commissions established.

Government funding

What are the outstanding issues that require attention?

Outstanding Issues

Political Vision and Leadership

“Simply put, what we have lacked is a vision to work towards. The political leaders have failed to provide the vision to date.”

“If this is not an historic moment now, when is?”

“This will be death by paralysis.”

Cross-Departmental, Cross-Agency Policy Development

“Without departmental responsibility and guidance, the work cannot take place.”

Outstanding Issues

Safety and Security

“There is more and more disillusionment on the streets. We need to engage people, not blame them.”

“How do we stop them walking in to this?”

Outstanding Issues

Social and economic levers of change

- Residential segregation
- Education and youth provision
 - Contact within formal education sector*
 - Statutory and non-statutory youth sector*
 - Methodologies and approaches*
- Interfaces and physical barriers
- Employment and the workplace

Outstanding Issues

Practices and Supports

- What Works and Why?
- How can this be effectively resourced, particularly in current economic context?
- How can effective approaches be mainstreamed?
- What can, and cannot be mainstreamed?
- How should it be coordinated, shared and captured?

Need to ensure a workable structure is in place for strategic oversight and to act as a champion and 'critical friend'.

Outstanding Issues

- Changing attitudes and behaviours
- Finding appropriate ways for people to express their identity
- Acknowledging and dealing with the past

“The past will be on every journey we take as a society, planned or accidental.”

What are the priorities over the next five years?

Five Year Priorities

- Clearly articulate vision and direction of travel
- Develop strategic agreement and practical implementation of cross-departmental working within government
- Develop and strengthen coherent, cross-sectoral collaborative structures
- Consolidate roles and responsibilities of local government to deliver good relations objectives

Five Year Priorities

- Create effective coordination structures between funding streams
- Conduct a broad-based review of what works and why
- Develop an over-arching strategy for work with children and young people
- Demonstrate active political support for integrated and shared education

Five Year Priorities

- Prioritise economic and social regeneration and investment, and enhance opportunities for sharing.
- Prepare the community and voluntary sector for new economic and policy context
- Explore and test new opportunities for residential mixing
- Prepare for key commemorative events

Recommendations

1. Embrace the language of profound change
2. Adopt a strategic framework for action and a significant commitment of resources
3. Create effective and meaningful structures through which progress can be achieved
4. Develop greater understanding of what works and why

Recommendations

- Integrate and mainstream options which support integration
- Articulate link between good relations, reconciliation and dealing with the past
- Seize the opportunity presented by upcoming commemorations to make space for engagement, dialogue and learning between communities
- More effectively utilise existing information, statistics and research data in policy and practice formulation.

Our working hypothesis is that reconciliation is a necessary process following conflict. However, we believe it is a voluntary act and cannot be imposed. It involves five interwoven and related strands.

- Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society
- Acknowledging and dealing with the past
- Building positive relationships
- Significant cultural and attitudinal change
- Substantial social, economic and political change

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