

DRAFT REPORT
20 YEARS OF DIALOGUE IN CONFLICT:
DIALOGUE, POWER SHARING AND BREXIT

Community Dialogue 20th Anniversary Conference
Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts, Thursday 23rd November 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the celebrations of Community Dialogue's 20th Anniversary we hosted a conference on the efficacy of dialogue, with three speakers followed by small group dialogues and participants drawn from the peacebuilding sector. The plenary feedback was followed by a celebratory buffet dinner provided by Café Krem with musical accompaniment on harp and flute by pupils of St. Dominic's School.

We were joined by 49 people from across NI and from the Republic of Ireland combining peacebuilding practitioners and representatives from 28 organizations who shared their experience and views on the efficacy of dialogue as a response to conflict, and the impacts of the collapse of power sharing and Brexit on the peace process:

2. SUMMARY

There was significant agreement among participants on many issues; the main ones are summarized here:

1. Our peace process is under significant threat because of the collapse of power sharing and the impact of Brexit on relationships within and between our two islands and because of the threat that Brexit poses to our Agreement, not least of which is the imposition of a hard border.
2. We need to be given the right to vote on the final Brexit deal, an opportunity to make an informed decision.
3. Our political leaders lack the capacity to work together effectively to resolve their differences, to meaningfully address the crises we are facing and the issues that really matter to the people of Northern Ireland collectively.
4. The people have generally moved beyond the positions their political representatives are stuck in and are more open to accepting the changes necessary to build a united, peaceful, prosperous community than their political representatives understand.
5. We urgently need full implementation of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement including the creation of a broadly representative Civic Forum
6. We urgently need a Northern Ireland wide civic society dialogue on the critical issues that divide and challenge us.

7. We urgently need to build a unified sector voice to rebuild momentum towards a peaceful, inclusive and prosperous future.

3. SPEAKER INPUTS

Our speakers were peacebuilding practitioners with decades of experience: Community Dialogue's Director Dr David Holloway, former Director and independent practitioner Ms Anne Beattie and former Director, now Director of Dialogue for Diversity, Fr Brian Lennon. They offered their personal reflections on the efficacy of dialogue in response to conflict and intolerance in Northern Ireland and presented their views on the current state of peacebuilding and the peace process with reference to the collapse of power sharing in Northern Ireland and the implications of Brexit for our peace process.

JAW JAW AND WAR WAR: THE PROS AND CONS by Brian Lennon

This is a great event. I think those of us who gathered together 20 years ago never thought in terms of an organisation lasting all these years. In fact I think we never thought of an organisation at all.

There was a great sense of hope in those early days of November 1997. There was no Belfast Agreement. The ceasefires of 1994 were still fresh in our minds, but so also was the Canary Wharf bomb in February 1996 and then the 2nd IRA ceasefire in July 1997, just after one of the worst conflicts over Drumcree. The Omagh bomb of August 1998 had not yet happened. There was no Stormont. The SDLP was leading political negotiations for Nationalists, the Ulster for Unionists. David Trimble and John Hume were to the fore. Ian Paisley played a spoiler role.

Behind the scenes there were talks between government and paramilitaries. Church people and others were talking to paramilitaries, politicians and governments. But what about the views, the fears, the sufferings, the hopes of people in working-class areas who had borne the brunt of the conflict? Who was representing their views? Where and how was their voice being heard? In the middle of all this we stumbled on the idea of dialogue.

This was not new for some of us. A process had been developed in the Signs of the Times group since about 1995 in the South. It brought people together from different backgrounds and asked them not to debate, or to agree, but to speak and to listen to each other. Eventually a group came together to run events based on this process for people from North and South.

When Community Dialogue started our first aim was to help people understand the issues behind the political negotiations. Our second was to get them to express their views and to make sure that these views were passed on to the politicians. This second aim was naive. It overlooked the obvious realities that working-class people were going to be as divided among themselves as any other groups. And it did not take face the fact that most politicians, of necessity, will listen more to those who can influence their votes or financial support than those who cannot. Otherwise for the most part they will not be re-elected.

One central strategy we had was to try to ensure that the people who came into the room were deeply divided. Peace is made not between friends, but between enemies. We did not want to work only with extreme moderates. Yet extreme moderates also had a role to play, for example in asking apparently stupid questions, such as: who gave paramilitaries the right to carry arms in this society?

So what are some of my memories?

- An intense dialogue within CD which started with one person saying that she would be including dialogue with the RUC, a second saying if that happened he was out of here, a third saying he would be gone if the RUC were excluded, and 45 minutes later, the core issue was not resolved,

but respect had been established, people had been heard, wriggle room was created, and no one walked. That outcome was possible because the people around the table had already taken part in many hard dialogues between themselves.

- People from opposing backgrounds being deeply moved when they heard the other group describe what they suffered in the conflict in a way that they themselves recognised. It was an example of being heard.
- In Cyprus, 5 days of deep, deep disagreement, then going into N. Cyprus and meeting a Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot, both UN workers, and seeing them disagree with each other even more vehemently than we had.
- Our trips to Stanford hosted by Byron Bland and Lee Ross and many others, including one Jewish Speaker who used to give courses on the Holocaust, and who asked: who is included in our community of concern, and who is excluded? In our Northern Irish: who is one of ours, and who is not?

As time went on the political negotiations became more difficult. Parades, policing, decommissioning, on and on and on. The hatred and bitterness which had always been there came to the surface, as it had previously done in violence. Do you remember Mandela having to make separate speeches to the Unionist and Nationalist delegations in S. Africa in 1997? And they flew out on separate planes. And I remember Steve Stedman from Stanford saying the hatred was the worst he had seen - and he had studied the implementation of over 16 peace agreements around the world. Stormont was up and down like a yo-yo. It seemed that the formula for peace processes that we could offer others was a) never let the protagonist meet; b) do not shake hands (do you remember those rows?); c) bore them to death (do you remember decommissioning?).

Yet at the same time the number of political killings grew less and less. It was, in a phrase we used in our 2004 publication: *Peace Comes Dropping Slow*, a 'sulky stalemate', a description we first from Lee Ross in Stanford. It was infinitely better than the past. But it seemed like a poor pup to pass on to future generations.

Yet in the middle of that phase, which was difficult, CD dialogues continued. People made new discoveries about the other side: that they were not the super-intelligent human beings that they had thought, that they were not as completely united as they appeared from the outside, and that in some cases it was easier to relate to them than to some of our own.

But of course it was also the case that our dialogues confirmed for some people that the others were unrepentant terrorists, or committed imperialists.

Leaflets

And then there were the leaflets: The very first on 20 Feb 1998: A Voice for Community Groups, and the second, which is highly relevant even today: the Summary of the Agreement. I think we printed 11,000 copies. Perhaps we should have printed 1.5 million - one for every person in Northern Ireland.

I remember one we did on Sectarianism and noting that at the root of it is the desire to be morally superior to the other side: why is that this often that gives us a really good feeling? What is about us that we want to look down morally on others when, of all sins, moral superiority is surely one of the most foolish?

The key thing about the leaflets was that every word was fought over by a large group of people from very different backgrounds. In presenting the views of different groups the criterion for success was: did the particular group whose views we presented recognise these as a reasonably full account

of their actual views? Only then could we raise challenging questions because this can only be done after people feel they have been heard.

The present and the future

From the outside today it seems as if Community Dialogue is really thriving. And that is amazing. There are so many dices loaded against a small group like this even surviving that it is great to see it. You have continued its local dialogues, your leaflets and your international outreach. And more recently after a long process you were key to ensuring the publication of the Galvanising the Peace Document. This is an important document laying out a blueprint for the future.

Dialogue is needed now more than ever. Because dialogue is about understanding. And it is also about challenging lazy and exclusive thinking by digging into that question about what really matters to us. This is so because at our deepest we want what is good for ourselves and what is good for ourselves ultimately is good for others.

We face big issues. I mention only four:

Past

On the past I am pessimistic. People look for truth. But here neither side was completely defeated militarily. In those circumstances it is unlikely that we will get much truth. Perhaps Churches could play a role by receiving in confidence the truth about some incidents and passing this on to those relatives who want it. Nor is justice likely because of blocks by government and paramilitaries. Perhaps our function as dialogue practitioners is to help people who have suffered face up to such brutal realities.

Perhaps also we should put less emphasis on forgiving. It seems to me that forgiving is often only possible when people have begun to heal. So why not emphasise moving towards freedom? Freedom from gut wrenching bitterness; for one's own sake. For some this will be helped by meeting those who have wronged them. For others not so. But it can be a help to put before people who have suffered the dream of being free in their own minds and spirit from those who have wronged them, and reaching a place where their lives are no longer dominated by the past.

Paramilitaries

Paramilitaries continue to exercise influence, and some are heavily engaged in drugs and other crime. It is a false idea of a peace process to continue to go easy on such crime. They should now be treated the same as any other law breaker. And we should ask what have they got their arms for. Who do they plan to kill?

Northern Ireland

Both Republicans and Unionists face a challenge, an old one: do they want to commit to this place and to the people living in it? For Nationalists that would mean using the term in the 1998 Agreement: Northern Ireland. It would mean accepting that any future Northern Ireland would continue as a political unit with safeguards built in for Unionists. For Unionists it would mean accepting that this place is not simply British: it is British and Irish; not equally in its political governance, but equally in its identity.

Brexit

Finally, of the many issues that we face, perhaps the most important is Brexit. And as far as I know, for the first time since Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the nationalist community has no representatives in the place where final decisions on this will be made: the House of Commons. That is a tragic absence of leadership. It stands in marked contrast to the impactful parliamentary battles fought by Parnell and John Hume. And it is also a tragedy that Stormont is down at the very time

that if it were running and if it were effective our politicians could lobby together for what unites them and do so in London, Dublin and Brussels. Brexit will impact on all of us, and we need to ask our political parties what they are doing about it and what the consequences will be.

Conclusion

Perhaps the greatest block to peace moving forward is that we are protected from the consequences of our decisions by the British Government. Imagine if there could be no budget or government spending in Northern Ireland without the agreement of the Stormont Executive? That's what happens in other places with a gridlock system, e.g. US. If congress does not agree a budget federal spending stops. And, you know what happens? They find a way to agree because otherwise no salaries would be paid. But here the British Government rescues us from ourselves, and so we can continue to play games with limited consequences.

It takes a long time to build a new, respectful society. It is frustrating and difficult. But it is really important. I think Community Dialogue has made a real contribution in the past and you need to continue to do so in the future. May you continue to thrive for many years more. Thank you.

THE IMPACT OF DIALOGUE IN NI ON PEACE BUILDING: LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE by Anne Beattie

"We hate what we fear and we fear what we don't understand" Funny enough, when I think of dialogue this is the first thing that comes to my mind.

My son Adam was 5 when I took him to see the movie Batman Returns and this was the caped crusader in another attempt to save the world. Adam is nearly 30 now. Way back then we in this little part of the world were in the darkest deepest densest pits of senseless diabolical destruction.

It was the summer of 1992. I was working for Women Together and my friend and colleague Pat Campbell and I were campaigning tirelessly to bring an end to the mindless violence that at that time meant every morning you got up and turned on the radio to find out how many people had been killed or injured overnight. How many more young people had been savagely brutalised in a cold dark alleyway with bullets shattering their young bones? Who next was on the "legitimate target" Republican death list or had his card marked by Loyalist death squads?

As it happened Pat's youngest son Philip got that calling card a few months earlier. Earning his living as a young chef, a great job at the weekends in a rural restaurant and a burger van lunchtimes mid-week at the Moira roundabout, 27 years of age, full of life, no interest in party politics, gunned down in his prime, eight bullets to the back as he cleaned up his mobile kitchen after another successful shift serving his gourmet burgers to hungry punters.

At Pat's home the next evening I counted those bullet wounds as he lay in his coffin; every one. Pat explained that one had hit Philip's wrist and blown the watch she had bought him for Christmas three weeks earlier off his arm.

What did those hell bent on murder that day know about this life loving, funny, entrepreneurial young man? That he was making money on their territory and that he was a Taig, one of them. Them that are destroying our wee country. Greening our land. A Papist. A Parasite. A Low Life. Scum. We'll show them. What level of demonization of one group of people over another does it take to mean that you can drive up to a simple burger van and shoot a young man dead with not one but eight close range bullets. Just one example of the horror of our conflict. Multiply it thousands of times, on all sides, driven and deadly. We hate what we fear and we fear what we don't understand.

We had already started on that journey of transforming hate through understanding, not only walking a mile in the shoes of the other but feeling what it was really like to walk in those shoes so different in so many ways from our own, yet so similar in the basic, fundamental human needs that transcend all difference and tiptoe constantly around the soul. There comes a time when the people lose their fear and things are never quite the same again.

So in dialogue I see, and in many ways over the years have grown enormously in that seeing, the transformation of fear driven hate through knowing a bigger picture, being able to share what was for years left outside the door, being honest about who I truly am and why my wants and needs are important to me and at the same time have ears that listen, eyes that see and a heart that can often for the first time find space for you. And you, and you and you.

It is simply amazing to me that Community Dialogue is celebrating its 20th anniversary. On a daily basis I am back in those early rooms, those rooms where new shared meaning emerged, where an opinion well founded in experience suddenly allowed an armoured defensive mask to fall, where those on either side of a bitter, revenge focused battle, little by little, word by word, found a pebble of common ground and on that slowly, meticulously, three steps forward, five steps back, built a beach. In the midst of our blood curdling conflict I found dialogue and dialogue found me.

I laugh to myself and still tell people that we set Community Dialogue up initially for six months. Six months should be enough time for this temporary intervention to create safe enough spaces for people here to have the sort of conversations that for so many years had been left outside the door. Conversations about building a peaceful society after so many years of violence. Why should politicians be discussing our future when we needed to have those conversations? It was, after all, our future that was being discussed. Agreement, what would that look like?

- What did I want?
- What did I need?
- What could I live with considering that others had very different wants and needs?

Finding out what each other's bottom lines were in relation to moving on together. Sequencing implementation and change that would help to keep people across divides on board with the peace process, to help them feel that this building a shared society was something that they could give the benefit of the doubt to. And six months has become twenty years and growing.

When I reflect on the "impact" of CD on Northern Ireland peace building I again reflect back to the early days, through that 20 year journey to a little process just emerging, that I have been facilitating with women, as a pilot, for Community Dialogue, in North Belfast and Armagh, over the past few weeks.

In the early days "dialogue" was itself a divisive word. It belonged to Sinn Fein. "They talk about dialogue so obviously it wasn't anything I was going to have any truck with" I was told whilst facilitating a session in a rural setting with a group of people from Protestant churches. Language. Once the word dialogue was changed to conversation the sharing and learning became possible.

I started reading about David Bohm, his powerful book "On Dialogue" and it just made so much sense – dialogue is like a stream of meaning, flowing through, between and around us. It is a process of unfolding, unpacking, exploring, expanding, enabling, questioning, new thinking, new possibilities, new understanding.

Add to that our own experiences of taking the difficult and contentious issue of the time and unpacking them. Producing those invaluable little booklets, ingenious in presenting the sort of things both sides were saying and then asking people to have their own conversations in the hope of finding some common ground to map a way forward, or that the issue was just too difficult to progress on and it was parking time, for the moment. So often people seeing shades of themselves in one side of the community viewpoint presented and never really having the opportunity to hear the other side.

CD centred in Belfast, Armagh, Carrickmore and Newcastle had more ample funding and staff to promote dialogue. Funding allowed regular residential processes where time gave extended energy to process and these were fundamental to the important impact we had on the peace process in those early, difficult years. I meet people now who were part of those early dialogues and they express just how informative and transformative they were and how they so often had the conversations with people who they would never have spoken to in any other context, often wouldn't have sat in the same room with ever and therefore would not have been given the

opportunity to expand their own understanding on so many of the difficult and contentious issues facing a society moving from violent conflict to a new sense of community.

I took the opportunity to look through the list on the CD website:

- A Voice For Community Groups: Community Dialogue Discussion Packs
- Summary of the Agreement
- Policing in Northern Ireland: Policing, the RUC and the Patten Commission: What Do You Want?
- What Price Peace: Achievements in the Peace Process
- Symbols and Marches: Your Consent?
- St. Andrews Agreement
- Agreement at Hillsborough Castle

And then of course Brian's book 'Peace Comes Dropping Slow', so delighted to have launched it for him that day in the Linenhall Library and as I said in my speech that day "to me it was taking all the important learning that we had developed over the previous 7 years since CD's inception out of the overflowing filing cabinet and presenting it in book format." Add to that Brian's contributions and the contributions from our partners in Stanford University and to this day I read and re read it and draw on its learning.

As far as impact goes, I do feel it was much more publicly evident in the first ten years or so. Dialogue as a process, with Community Dialogue here as the dominant voice promoting it and making it happen. Not only the number of events, but the frequency and diversity of participants, the depth of the conversations and the changes in attitudes of many is special.

My passion for the process and the impact on my personal growth and understanding continues to this day. I draw regularly on the voices, the stories, the passion, the experiences of so many so very different from my own but equally important in our pursuit of a just and inclusive society.

It is fascinating how those differing viewpoints are imprinted on my soul so much so that when I am looking at possibilities for moving forward they come jumping into my consciousness and become the essence of my thought processes and opinions.

Although in recent years I have not been directly involved with Community Dialogue, I have carried the learning with me in everything I have been involved in. Always dialogue at the heart of my extensive work with women in our residential processes in Glencree, in the early development of the Greater North Belfast Women's Networking Project, in the personal development work I have undertaken, Time For Me projects, work with Barnardos and teachers in West Belfast, multiple processes where dialogue has been at the heart of it – even in my overseas work with Women Without Borders, bringing women together in Mumbai, India for an extensive week long dialogue to share their experiences of the pain and suffering experienced by Hindu, Muslim and Christian women in the Mumbai hotel shootings of 2008 and sharing the process of dialogue and storytelling with women from many areas of conflict around the world, giving them some hope that things can get better – women from Pakistan, Israel and Palestine, Somalia and the Yemen. So whilst the focus today is on the impact of CD in Northern Ireland, its influence in reality is much broader.

What though are the lessons learnt in these 20 years that are important to carry into the future? This is where I want to talk about a pilot dialogue process I devised and with the help of Marion Weir and Caroline McCord of WINI which we developed and piloted with a group of women from North Belfast and a group of women from Armagh in recent weeks. Entitled "The Peace Process According To Women" the idea was to engage women in a dialogue to explore their experiences of the peace process, twenty years ago at the time of the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, today acknowledging what had changed for the better or worse and what still needed to change and to think through what next steps might be.

Included in the process would be learning zones to provide information on the timeline of building the peace from ceasefires to talks to Agreement to implementation. Some detail on what exactly was in the Agreement, the spirit in which it was signed, the changes made by the two governments to accommodate the Agreement, the implementation process and series of sub agreements etc.

Fascinating was the enthusiasm of the women who participated in sharing their experiences and understanding of what had happened twenty years ago and particularly of becoming much more informed, giving them a new confidence in talking about and responding to and sharing with others their feelings about the peace process and its importance today, acknowledging how far we had come and what was most important for them in moving forward. In fact, we were immersed in the dialogue processes which characterised the inception of Community Dialogue 20 years ago and as I expected are just as vitally important today.

- What do you want ?
- What do you need ?
- What can you live with?

And at the end of the day an awakening around the fact that actually this is our peace process and no matter what elected politicians are doing or not doing, it is our future and the future of our children and grandchildren that we are talking about here and we are going to make sure we keep working it out and going forward.

I also dug out the important contributions from our friends and colleagues in Stanford University. We discussed Steve Stedman's research on the Implementations of Peace Agreements around the world and the women were able to see that so many of the findings were relevant to where we are today. His three viewing lens of compliance, process and, Relationship Building and Trust, and the importance of getting the balances right could have been written in relation to our political stalemate today.

Couple with that the speech Irish President Michael D Higgins made a few days ago on World Philosophy Day for Philosophy Ireland as they implement the new commitment to developing the practice of philosophy in Irish schools, universities and the wider community. He said "A new politics of fear, resentment and prejudice against those who are not "like us" requires the capacity of critique which an early exposure to the themes and methods of philosophy can bring. He talks about inviting children and others in classrooms and community settings to articulate their own questions in response to an initial stimulus, and then to go on and explore those questions thoughtfully and collaboratively, nurturing the reflective and critical capacities that are so essential to active citizenship. Then too he said, the importance of the "ground rules" established in the classroom as a prerequisite for any informed and respectful dialogue – the quality of attention required from students, the invitation to listen in silence before taking a turn to speak – he sees as building blocks of a thorough and very concrete acclimatisation with pluralism and with democracy itself.

Sounds very similar to the foundation process of our dialogues and sounds to me as if we are on the right track and simply need to continue reaching out with our process and main streaming it in ways like this. So vital to taking forward the extensive and timely piece of work "Galvanising the Peace" is dialogue with Community Dialogue and partners at its heart. Partnership too is the key to taking the proposals forward. So many skills and so much experience developed over so many difficult years must not be lost.

We have another consultation process on the horizon to look again at dealing with the past. Is any real progress possible without inclusive dialogue? Language and culture. Is any real progress possible without inclusive dialogue at its heart? Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. Is any real

progress possible without inclusive dialogue at its heart? Building trust, respect and reconciliation, Is any real progress possible without inclusive dialogue at its heart?

A dual process of politics and peace was always deemed as crucial from the very beginning. Somewhere along the line I think we took our eye off the ball and suddenly working through the delicate and sensitive implementation of our Agreement and keeping alive the important spirit of generosity key to developing a new and shared future was left in the hands of political parties.

Back to our friends in Stanford again: We need to move from my vision of a shared future to our shared vision of a future. That to me is what “Galvanising the Peace” all is about. And the key is inclusive dialogue.

CONFLICT, INTOLERANCE AND DIALOGUE: REFLECTIONS ON A WORK IN PROGRESS by David Holloway

Over 2,000 dialogues and 24,000 participants in 20 years and still counting. I must start by acknowledging all those, too many to name, who have, and are, making this happen; founders, staff, board, facilitators, volunteers, partners, colleagues, mentors and funders and those who accepted the challenge and opportunity of dialogue. I’m going to reflect briefly on how we came to be, why we do what we do and where we’re at now.

Introduction

In 1997 a series of meetings were held between 30 or so disparate community leaders and activists involved in contentious conversations between adversaries in our conflict. We gathered in response to the negotiations enabled by paramilitary cease-fires. You will remember that time of hope mixed in equal measure with fear and suspicion as our future was negotiated behind closed doors.

Despite our differences; we agreed that our future was too important to leave solely in the hands of politicians; that without inclusive dialogue we would have no lasting peace. CD formed as a result and began using dialogue to:

1. Broaden ownership of the process of agreeing our future;
2. Promote understanding and agreement on the diverse issues affecting that future;
3. Build societal capacity to make informed decisions on any political agreement and;
4. Build a ladder of communication between the people and the political negotiations.

Those frantic early days leading to Agreement were followed by support for the post conflict transition and expansion into building society’s capacity to more effectively manage conflict and intolerance in all its forms.

Over those 20 years I have learned that every contentious issue we explore in dialogue obscures the real underlying problem.

What Is That Problem?

Underpinning conflict and intolerance are dysfunctional relationships rooted in an absence of empathy- understanding and sharing the feelings of others. This is a capacity we are born with. Children learn to apply it with natural ease, but living experience erodes it and the way we are taught to respond to difference and conflict disables it.

The way we learn to manage conflict is rooted in our most basic programmed survival responses to threat through strategies of fight, flight or avoidance. We unthinkingly apply these strategies in ways that dehumanise both *others* and *self* and directly nourish conflict. My 53 years of experience using

these strategies tell me by way of confusion, despair and exhaustion that they are fundamentally flawed.

What is our Response?

That there is an easier softer way- dialogue- an effective tool for building our capacity to manage difference and conflict by nourishing our disabled capacity to empathise. It achieves this simply, by moving us from arguing over conflicted stated positions into a process of sharing the experiences, feelings and needs that led us to hold those positions.

The process of sharing builds empathy by encouraging people to experience the world through each other's eyes. Empathy brings awareness of common humanity, liberating a shared understanding of what really matters.

The impact of moving from positional argument to understanding shared need is transformative. When experienced; it is difficult to maintain black and white positions because we know it isn't that simple. We are less likely to maintain intolerant views and behaviours because we understand the *other* more deeply.

Dialogue releases our power to choose between the attitudes and behaviours of intolerant, win-lose oppositional conflict and collaborative win-win problem solving. It enables us to step towards living in meaningful right relationship with the *other* and with *self*; this is the true foundation stone on which inclusive peace, freedom and prosperity are built.

This response is simple and effective but we face huge sectoral and structural challenges:

Sectoral Challenges

Our sector is trapped in a context that disempowers even as we work to empower others, that ensures failure to achieve the society-wide impacts we aspire to. We are:

- Struggling to survive and faced with public apathy;
- Locked into unwilling competition with each other for diminishing resources;
- Struggling to secure short term funds in response to long term needs;
- Forced to conform to government and funder priorities despite need on the ground;
- Forced to constantly reinvent what works to survive;
- Without a meaningful collective voice.

This represents the antithesis of what we work towards.

Structural Challenges

I believe the Agreement's 3 strands, the foundation of our peace, face their most serious threat to date:

Strand 1. **The Government of NI** is threatened by our broken political system, the background to which is unresolved culture war, where generosity has been replaced by recrimination.

Direct Rule will not demonstrate neutral management with a government dependent on DUP votes.

In the meantime; a pipe bomb preventing a Remembrance Commemoration in Omagh was chilling in the symbolism of time and place. Paramilitaries continue to prey upon marginalized communities. Our education system remains largely segregated, the health service is in critical condition, and the corruption revealed in the RHI scandal suggests that, even when operational, the Stormont two-party carve up was a conveyor belt for party interests.

Strand 2. **North-South Relationships** are threatened by the possibility of a 'no deal' Brexit that will reinstitute a hard border in Ireland.

Strand 3. **British-Irish Relationships** are threatened by a deteriorating British Irish relationship over the absence of a plan to adapt Brexit to fit the unique needs of our two islands.

At a structural level this is as big a crisis as 1969, 1972 or 1974. Thankfully the prospect of violence seems far off, but we are adrift without a compass. We have come full circle, finding ourselves again in a time of hope mixed in equal measure with fear and suspicion, facing a future which remains too important to leave solely in the hands of politicians.

What Can We Do?

The GTP coalition of sector practitioners published a report in April outlining obstacles to building a genuinely peaceful future. That coalition is evolving into a voice for our sector.

We need a collective voice if we hope to respond meaningfully to the issues I outlined. Such a coalition could empower us; harnessing our experience, skills and vision, building a greater whole from the sum of our parts and enable us to offer an agreed society-wide transformative response to the obstacles we face in our struggle to build a peaceful, prosperous, inclusive future.

I know such initiatives have been attempted many times, but urge you to join the coalition and give it another shot. If you want more details about GTP chat to me after and fill in the 'expression of interest' form in your conference pack. Here's to the next 20 years! Thank you.

Father Lennon offered numerous personal anecdotes that illustrated the capacity of dialogue to shift opponents from being stuck in fixed positions to understanding each other's positions more deeply. He noted how 20 years on from the foundation of Community Dialogue we remain in a situation where dialogue between our divided peoples remains essential.

Ms Beattie offered emotionally impacting reflections on the personal cost of our conflict in the lives of so many and the remarkable ways that dialogue can be used to promote truth, reconciliation and healing in our still divided community. She called, in particular, for more engagement by women and the necessity that the voice of our women be heard.

Dr Holloway outlined how dialogue works to build empathy and shared understanding. He detailed obstacles that peacebuilding organizations currently struggle with and the challenges to peace caused by the collapse of power sharing in Northern Ireland and the impacts of Brexit on North-South relationships and relationships between the governments of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. He asked participants to join in the Galvanizing the Peace coalition's efforts to build articulate a unified voice for our sector.

4. DIALOGUE RECORD

Facilitators: David Holloway, Catherine Quinn, Jim O Neill, Lyn Moffett,

Small Group Dialogue 1

Collapse of Power Sharing

- We are going backwards instead of forwards.
- We are splitting back into separate camps.
- We have settled for separation.
- There is real ignorance about the Irish Language Act, people don't understand that it was already agreed.
- Instead of being about rights and respect, the Irish language has been weaponized.
- The Irish Language Act is about ensuring equality for all.

- Ignorance is consciously used by both the media and politicians to build a climate of fear. For one, it sells papers, for the other it ensures votes.
- The media collectively is hurting us e.g. Stephen Nolan damages and hurts to the whole community.
- People believe what they are told and they are not told the truth.
- After all we have learned we are still being played by the powers that be and falling for it.
- People are disengaged from, disillusioned by, politics.
- We don't vote for the DUP we vote against SF.
- If I had a pound for every loyalist who hates the DUP but still votes for them I would be rich.
- We expect our 1st and Deputy First Ministers to represent all of our people, not their party base. They fail to do so.
- There is disconnect between the people and the politicians, the issues we care about and those that are reflected in the political spectrum.
- How is this democracy when we voted for marriage equality and Stormont overturned it- that is not democracy.
- Our sector isn't wanted by the powers that be, they don't want events like this to happen. They feel that we should be leaving this to the politicians and the civil servants but look at the mess they are making.
- With SF in the ascendant Nationalists no longer have a voice.
- We have no politicians willing to be leaders, to push ahead and take risks for peace like John Hume did.
- CD needs to leaflet what has been agreed but not implemented and call the politicians and media bluff.

Brexit

- Brexit is like buying a car, ordered a shiny new one but ended up with a banger and can't give it back.
- Brexit is good as it reinforces unionist security within the UK.
- Well then why was there a rush on passport applications for RoI in Loyalist East Belfast and up the Shankill Rd?
- Brexit is bad for Unionists because it weakens the union by increasing tensions with Scotland and with nationalists in NI feeling trapped- they are now upping the anti-again on the border issue and unification.
- Brexit is bad because it weakens the Agreement. A return to a meaningful border means that nationalists start to feel trapped somewhere they don't belong again.
- I'm a unionist and the prospect of a hard border feels me with fear. Bad things will happen as a consequence, not just economic damage but conflict.
- We can slip back into conflict easily. I remember the IRA's 50's border campaign. When it ended everyone said that its but 2 decades later- bang!
- We are in an uncertain and fragile place. I work with young people and I hear their fears and concerns. They don't want to be part of a place that is not welcoming to others and they see Brexit as being all about that.
- They see Brexit as imposed upon them and upon their future by others and they don't like it.

Small Group Dialogue 2

- The difference between "The vision of a shared future" and "The shared vision of the future". These statements are very different, and the difference is very important.
- What can Ireland/Northern Ireland offer to Palestine/Israel? This creates a conversation about where we are at. How can we offer anything when here we still have peace walls, segregation at all levels!

- Why are we not putting up buildings that are shared? Why is our education still segregated?
- Decisions in Brexit that can change the face of this island and it's all out of our hands.
- The 3 issues that Britain has committed to taking care of in the Brexit process - the rights of Citizens, the Divorce Bill and Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement. We are in a situation where we don't know what it will be like. The Good Friday Agreement is our agreement. If the EU reneges on its commitment and lets the UK off the hook on its commitments – what next? Could history repeat itself? War? Horrific social, cultural and economic disaster?
- There is no plan, and no one seems to care. It is unbelievable that no one cared about the Good Friday agreement when they voted for Brexit.
- There is a great need for a civic forum.
- It's not about an Irish Language Act – it's about equality!
- We are at a crunch time!
- Northern Ireland remaining in the UK and deploying borders like the rest of the UK impacts commerce and trade between NI and the republic of Ireland.
- A border in the Irish sea?
- The Irish border issue one of the major sticking points of Brexit talks as the EU, UK and the Republic of Ireland have struggled to agree how to regulate trade and the movement of people on the island post-Brexit.
- The community is excluded – this is not about a united Ireland, this is about wellbeing for all. Relationships that we need to maintain.
- Fears of the rise in right wing groups polarising groups.
- We are fed up with this top down thinking, hierarchy, politics!
- The Galvanising the Peace Document – Peace building sector, consultations on what do you need/want? Where are we at?
- As long as those with a concern for peace live in the bubble while others address the pluralism we have no collective voice.
- We have no charismatic leadership!
- If we continue to talk about peace and good relations to the ordinary everyday person we will further alienate them, remove them from the possibility of making a contribution to peace or the collective, we need to give attention to the real issues that people face – bread and butter, we need connection to these issues.
- We need regional gatherings including statutory.
- There are other issues like Fracking, mining, incinerators, and the industrialisation of our communities.
- If we all join up there is another picture.
- In relation to agreements, the research illustrates that there are three core components – Compliance, the process and building relationships and trust. The three components must be held equally. If there is an over emphasis on one the agreement could break down. Here there is too much emphasis on compliance, the other two components need to be maintained and built upon.
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Need – we need to change the mindset! We need to be supporting each other in creative ways. How can we ask people to operate at the higher levels when they are concerned about meeting their basic needs like surviving, food heat care and security?
- “Nothing to do with me” - how do we engage the day to day folk who don't have connection to what is going on?
- Future ways Duncan Morrow - The Future Ways Project – Equity Diversity and Interdependence. The informal conversations developing a holistic society, getting the word out to those who wouldn't normally be having these conversations.
- Those who are highly deprived and disadvantaged
- Women - really fired up at having to pay for molestation orders!

- Patriarchy! Men undermining women in community development work.
- We in community are a despised bunch by those in government. It was the community sector that held this place together when it was at its worst. Then when the agreement came in we are told to go away!
- For the sake of the children something has to be done. We agreed to the Good Friday Agreement in general for the good of all but there were aspects of it I and others from my community did not agree to – like the release of prisoners. There has been no gain or benefit to the ordinary people from the Good Friday Agreement. There are still Peace walls and deprivation.
- We need to focus on building infrastructure in our communities – but we are stopped from doing it and in other cases it is not possible.
- People don't know much about Brexit – until it hits! We need to be educating people.
- If people don't see/ feel the benefits of the peace process they will bow out.
- The police service is becoming a place where the catholic community do not feel safe and are walking out.
- Always goes back to the Good Friday Agreement when we agreed to stop killing people
 - The DUP weren't involved in it.
 - This is the only agreement that went to the people.
 - Selective misuse of the Good Friday Agreement. Constructive ambiguity!
- The dramatics of politics and politicians – repeating the same old patterns. There is disagreement, everything comes to a standstill, they fight it out in the media, who knows what they are like behind closed doors, there will always be an issue - the cycle continues!
- There are always special dispensations for Northern Ireland – The Mainland despises this!
- People are still feeling bitter!
- Media forums like Nolan are counterproductive and are growing hatred whereas community Dialogue is very beneficial.
- There should never be any surprise in peace agreements – look at how many surprises we have had (flags etc.)
- I keep on looking for signs of good things, despite the way things are and the legacy of the past – Scotland for example has legislation of community empowerment – The community planning model – Asset Transfer. “You are in our service” not the other way around! - you serve us as a people, we pay your wages!
- In Scotland every community has a small village, community centre, community school and post office, they support the community and each other. It's the reverse here! We get stopped when you try to build something, the communities do not have the means. It always comes down to a row between two parties!
- There are models out there – what are the blockages – it is the systems, the structures and the council.
- What if 10% of the Council budget was assigned to the local community – this will not happen as there is concern about how this will work with the divisions here.
- Philosophy Ireland – goals are to promote philosophy in education through training, research, public engagement, and by establishing a collaborative network of resources, skills and talent. Already working with Irish schools, universities, community groups, and with public agencies (including the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, and Junior Cycle for Teachers) to these ends. This is about opening the mind, they are given the funding to do this work in schools and communities, we should have philosophy in the schools here.
- Here we are schooled not educated and it is about creating employment. We are not educated, and this leads to ignorance. Schooling s getting in the way of education.
- Imagine a society where everyone thinks out of the box!
- The community sector finding ways of standing together building on and galvanising the peace.

Group 2 Closing Statements

1. Our Peace Process, based on the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, is rapidly dissipating in front of our eyes and we need to reclaim it.
2. Civic society in Northern Ireland needs to organise to be heard.
3. As a community we need to be shouting very loudly, we need to be doing it for our young people, we need to be role models for humanity, because they will be doing it next.
4. We are floating adrift and we need to engage everyone regardless of age, race, creed, religious background, politics, gender, culture etc. or its going to fall apart.
5. We need to help the people get on to the journey (moving forward, making a change) using community development principles, linked up and joined up thinking and action.
6. We need to utilise the media – we need to make our voices heard by getting on social media platforms and raising our concerns and getting the momentum going.
7. Fear of stagnation, lack of financial support, fear of political parties not working together. Lead parties need to open the doors and engage with all parties because all have been elected by the people. We need and deserve joined up thinking in politics, creating a way for the future, something to be proud of, we need hope.

Small Group Dialogue 3

Brexit

- A 'No Deal' Brexit will inevitably result in a 'hard border'.
- We are being drip fed information, and only now are people beginning to understand the implications – the catastrophic implications - of the vote.
- We are already feeling the implications of Brexit following the announcement today that British cities are no longer eligible to bid for European City of Culture.
- The level of uncertainty about the future is having a huge impact on well-being – this is compounded by the political breakdown in regional politics on top of doubts over Brexit.
- Migrant workers from Europe are experiencing very high levels of anxiety about what the future holds for them. Those who are considering adopting British Citizenship as a means to remain face extremely high costs.
- One person was optimistic and believed that common sense will prevail.
- However, there was a high degree of pessimism in the rest of the group, with one person describing the vista of the Peace Process post Brexit and with a hard border as “horrendous”.
- The peace process and cross border relationships will come under additional pressure, as successes won over the years will be undermined.
- Diverse agendas on both sides of the Border – 90% of people in ROI voted for the Peace Process – will Articles 1 and 2 be re-instated?
- Uncertainty leads to fear.
- How will the border be policed and will there be a return to violence if there is a hard border?
- One participant feared that any physical barrier, any infrastructure on the border such as cameras will make easy and symbolic targets. This would reinforce the symbolism of re-establishing a United Ireland.
- Participants shared a sense of being powerless because of an inability to affect the eventual outcome, and a belief that the incompetence of the negotiators will result in more than the loss of European Citizenship.

Impact Of Brexit On Daily Life

- The UK, and Northern in particular, has no Bill of Rights, but I felt protected when we were in Europe.
- I have no trust in the UK government to protect my rights and to get the best deal for the North.
- The drop in the pound since the referendum has impacted everyone – good for exporters – but not so good for consumers for whom prices have risen, holiday makers etc.

- Non community relations practitioners in the group were fearful of change, and feared for their “very existence”. They lived in areas already experiencing extreme deprivation, inequalities in health and education, and described themselves as having been left in the “wilderness”.
- They couldn’t see anything positive coming out of Brexit.
- Questions were asked as to whether local people could continue to hold both a British Passport and an EU/Irish passport, and whether this would have implications for the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement.
- Our membership of the EU is completely interwoven into all aspects of our lives, and Brexit will affect trade, cross border commuters, education, agriculture, health, standards across the board.

Optimism?

- Perhaps we can lobby for a referendum on the final agreement.
- With luck Brexit will be like the “Millennium Bug” - a prediction of doom which turned out to have no serious implications.

Small Group Dialogue 4

- We are at a bad place. People don't know what's going on so don't commit.
- People know what they don't want but cannot look positively to the future.
- People vote to stop other parties doing something they don't want.
- There is an absence of leadership.
- Over the years there has been a flurry of agreements but there is nothing for people to buy into.
- People have reverted to Orange and Green.
- For most issues we know what to do but we won't commit to doing it e.g. with flags we know that you need to stop sticking them in other people's faces.
- There is blindness to empathy.
- There is still whataboutery. Response to the focus on the Loughinsiland massacre: 'Why is there nothing about our suffering?'
- It depends who you speak to how good or bad it is. There has been economic growth and if you have a job you can have a better standard of living e.g. than in the South.
- It is not unreasonable for everyone to want recognition for their issues.
- We should not keep talking about a religious divide because religion is no longer important in most people's lives but the sectarian divide hasn't gone away.
- The political situation is difficult and we need to look at all the relationships on this island.
- Are we expecting too much too soon? 20 years is a long time in a life but not in history.
- There are practical concerns about Brexit: where will children's heart operations, now happening in Dublin, take place? What is the future of the Derry cancer unit etc.
- The legal obligations of the Good Friday Agreement will be affected by Brexit.
- Most discussions take place with the view that all people are Breainers, they aren't. It's a legitimate position to be pro Brexit but that doesn't seem to be respected.
- A lot of people thought that Brexit would secure the Union.
- Brexit will undermine the union by creating political tension in NI, between NI and ROI and between ROI and UK.
- There was complacency in Sinn Fein. They assumed that people would vote to remain.
- The turnout was low, especially in Nationalist areas.
- Some radicals here supported Brexit e.g. People Without Profit.
- Much of the Brexit vote was poverty-driven. People felt disconnected from the political process.
- Our society is more divided now than ever. The Brexit vote was on sectarian lines. Most working class people leave everything to the politicians.
- People are scared about welfare reform. SF wants it to be implemented before they go back onto Stormont so that they can't be implemented.

- People on the Shankill didn't want welfare reform but they still voted for DUP.
- Someone said about leadership 'Good ideas don't wash.' People need an enemy. Politicians need to invent a bogey man.
- Radicals don't want to be accused of implementing difficult things but are happy for others to do so.
- Brexit has caused fear that violence may return. In the 60s we said that there would never be violence that the old IRA had gone but we were wrong. The trick of the peace process is that Unionists can feel that they are British and the superstructure is there and Nationalists can feel Irish and there are cross-border institutions. Brexit threatens that.
- There are positives. Brexit may not damage the economy.
- But the feeling that there is an all-Ireland matters, especially in the north, there is a need to feel part of the Irish nation. People in the South don't care.
- Young people in the South are more likely to go to London for the weekend than go to Belfast.
- What borders do my kids have in their lives? Young people have a more fluid sense of identity.
- A lot depends on where you were born and the area you live in. My grandchild was called a terrorist because her skin is dark. The child who said it thought it was funny.
- Foreign nationals from the EU have a massive fear of being sent home after Brexit and their children do not even know their parents' homeland.
- That fear is widespread.
- People are afraid that if they don't work in food factories or on the land, or in other jobs that are needed, they will be sent home.
- People can consider getting permanent residence; the paper work has been simplified. It is illegal to give immigration advice if you are not licensed but you can signpost.
- The legislation on hate crime is better here than in the South where there's no recognition of hate crime.
- All crimes have to be evidentially based. It is only if there is evidence of the hate element that the sentence can be increased in NI.
- I am proud of where I come from. I came back (from abroad) consciously because I love the banter/ craic/ the people. I see myself as Northern Irish rather than British - it has the Irish element.
- I share that; us from Dunlaoghaire were always seen as a bunch of West Brits.
- We beat ourselves up far too much; look at how the far right is developing in Eastern Europe.

Additional Comments

Reformed Executive

- Any reformed Executive must be better than it was, not more of the same.
- Agreement that the people should be able to see what it will 'look like' before deciding whether they want it back.
- The Executive must do-away with mechanisms that cause repetitive deadlock over contentious issues or the cycle will continue.
- Mixed opinions on the impact that no Executive has, with growing apathy towards the political institutions and parties. People are concerned with struggles of daily life.
- Examples of initiatives/projects that are on hold due to deadlock (e.g. roadworks, housing, community services). Anything that was not formally signed off on cannot move ahead without Executive, society cannot progress.
- Suggestion that younger generation feel more aggrieved by lack of Executive. Example given of young relative that has expressed 'anger' and 'upset' over failed Executive and being treated as a '2nd class citizen' by Westminster.

Direct Rule

- Direct Rule may be only option as nothing can be done without functioning decision making powers.
- Reflection on prior dialogues where members of both PUL and CNR communities expressed mistrust of Westminster and handling of Brexit. Feeling that NI is at the bottom of the 'pecking order' for Westminster. Agreement with this in group. Questions as to whether Westminster would 'even care about what happens here'.
- If there are proposals to return to power sharing the people should be able to see them and vote on them first. We should be given the chance to decide whether or not it's just more of the same old thing. Because I don't want a return to what it was.

Brexit

- Acknowledgement that there are diverse and competing political and personal 'agendas' both by political parties and communities.
- Overarching sense of uncertainty, where conversation was frequently bought back to statements such as; we have no answers, we have no idea what is going to happen.
- This uncertainty is 'not just political' but 'profound', where the 'process of Brexit is so complex and interwoven into facets of everyday life'.
- Fear that uncertainty can fuel fear and lead to violence.
- Agreement on an overwhelming sense of 'helplessness', where 'there's nothing we can do, the people in power have all the control'.
- 'Truths' about the 'catastrophe' of Brexit were either ignored or are being revealed drip by drip.
- Heightened cynicism within the group, 'we haven't been given any positives to feel optimistic!'
- Example given of most recent consequence; removal of UK from 'City of Culture' awards and a loss of 'pride' and income possibilities as a result.
- Increased feelings of fear within BEM communities and concerns of EU citizens more generally living here.
- 'People realising they don't know what they voted for'. Surprise and recognition for the people that voted Leave as if it were the 'status-quo', even though it meant going into the 'unknown'. Could be considered 'brave'.
- Voting Leave was a 'vote against' a 'feeling/rejection' of politics.
- There still exists a 'blind faith' in leaving the EU, 'regardless of consequences, it is better than remaining'.
- Hard to envision Good Friday Agreement outside of EU context. 'Spirit of agreement' supported/reflective of wider 'spirit of EU and its principles'.
- We didn't know what we are voting for or against- too many conflicting views and no substantial information. We need to be given the right to vote on the final Brexit deal, an opportunity to make an informed decision.
- Forget religion, orange, green, whatever, identities. There was a sense of safety from being an EU citizen'. Without 'our own Bill of Rights', there is feeling of being unprotected, 'people are fearful for very existence
- Overall frustration with 'complete incompetence of the process'
- Widespread confusion regarding passports and potential for loss, in identity and opportunity as a result.
- Discussion on opportunities to be consulted about border decisions. Response that 'people are concerned with everything, daily living, getting by, not consultations about the border'.
- The symbolism of the border is critical, and so will checkpoints on it be. They will be seen as 'easy targets' for 'paramilitary attacks'.
- 'The demilitarisation of the border is considered one of the biggest successes'; this should be 'built on' not reneged.
- A border and Brexit more generally are 'barriers to progress'. They block 'continuing/improving' Irish-British relationship.

- Whether it is reunification or a hard border, both will result in 'discontent for both sides'. It's a lose-lose scenario.
- A physical border will reinvigorate a sense of 'being wronged', of discontent. Provides a sense of something to fight for.
- Discussion of Articles 1&2 from constitution being brought back due to Brexit.

5. MEDIA COVERAGE

The event was filmed throughout by Northern Visions and includes in depth interviews with Community Dialogue Director David Holloway and long term members Anne Beattie independent practitioner and FR Brian Lennon Director of Dialogue for Diversity. An additional one hour documentary will be recorded on the life and work of Community Dialogue and on-going challenges to peace by Northern Visions on the 18th of December 2017.

A summary report is available to download from www.communitydialogue.org and our Facebook page and a report will also appear in the December issue of NICRC e-zine.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Community Dialogue acknowledges with appreciation all those who attended for their insightful contributions to our dialogues on the collapse of power sharing in Northern Ireland and the impact of Brexit on our peace process and those who wished us well in this event but were unable to participate.

We also thank NICRC, DFA, Big Lottery and CFNI for the support that enabled this event to take place, the Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts for hosting the event, Café Krem for providing food and the pupils of St Dominic's School for beautiful musical accompaniment.

APPENDIX 1: AGENDA

2.45 - 3.00pm	Refreshments
3.00 - 3.20pm	Welcome by Ms Sinead O'Regan Chairperson, Community Dialogue Input by Dr David Holloway Director, Community Dialogue: <i>"Conflict, Intolerance and Dialogue: Reflections on a Work In Progress"</i>
3.20 - 3.40pm	Input by Fr Brian Lennon, Dialogue for Diversity <i>"Jaw Jaw and War War: The Pros and Cons"</i>
3.40 - 4.00pm	Input by Ms Anne Beattie, Dialogue Practitioner: <i>"The Impact of Dialogue in NI Peacebuilding: Lessons for the Future"</i>
4.00 - 5.30pm	Facilitated Small Group Dialogues: <i>"Where are we at and what are we going to do about it?"</i>
5.30 - 7.30pm	Feedback, Conclusions and Evaluation Buffett Dinner and Music

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANTS

We were joined by 49 people from across NI and the Republic of Ireland combining peacebuilding practitioners and representatives of 28 organizations including:

Antrim Newtownabbey Community Relations Forum, Building Communities Resource Centre, Belfast City Council, Belfast Friendship Club, Corrymeela, CRC, Cooperation Ireland, Citi, Department of Foreign Affairs Republic of Ireland, Dialogue for Diversity, Forthspring, Glencree, Institute for Conflict Research, Integrated Education Fund, Junction, Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, North Belfast Interface Network, Northern Visions, Queens University of Belfast, Shankill Women's Centre, Spectrum Centre, Towards Understanding and Healing, Unitarian Church, University of Kent, Women's Information Northern Ireland and 174 Trust.

APPENDIX 3: RETURNED EVALUATIONS

M 6 / F 13

C 8 / P 6 / Other 1 (USA) / None 3

Age 26-40 2

41-64 11

65+ 6

Disability Y 2

What did you hope to get?

- Learn about CD
- Celebrate and meet old friends 2
- Be challenged by the views/thinking of others, new ideas 15
- Dialogue on the future, Brexit, peace process crisis 1
- Support CD and celebrate its survival 3
- Renewed sense of purpose and validation of the dialogue process
- Networking 3
- Build unity of purpose in response to peace crisis 1

Was this achieved?

Yes- 15 No- 1

How or Why not?

- Brilliant presentations by the speakers / (very) challenging speakers 6
- Met old friends
- Too much talk of the present. People very frustrated and needed to get things off their chest.
- Open sharing of fears and hopes / Good dialogue 5
- Diversity of opinion yet significant agreement 2
- Engaging wholeheartedly in the dialogue process
- Well facilitated 2
- Reaffirmed my confidence in humankind!
- Brian raised the forgiveness issues which challenges me.

What will you remember?

- Encouraged to keep working at peacebuilding by the example of success reflected in the work of CD
- There are still people who care deeply about the issues that really matter to people and are doing something about it.
- People's frustration with their politicians.
- Apathy and fear for the future.
- Humour in adversity.
- That most people feel we are moving backwards. Them and Us attitudes are resurging.
- The passion in the room, the care, commitment and dedication.
- We're all from different communities with different politics but we're all saying the same thing!
- The naïve views of some people.
- Anne's rap and her enthusiasm!

Would you like further dialogues?

Yes 8 (I can offer a venue in Tyrone- Greystone Farm.)

Please Grade the following:

	Poor	Average	Good	V. Good	Excellent
Content			√√√√	√√√√√	√√√√√√√√
Facilitation			√√	√√√√√√√√	√√√√√√√
Presentations			√	√√√√√	√√√√√√√√√√√√
Small Group Discussion		√	√√√	√√√√	√√√√√√√√√
Catering			√	√√√√√√√√	√√√√√√
Venue			√	√√√√√	√√√√√√√√√√
Overall			√	√√√√	√√√√√√√√√√

Other Comments

- Great event from a great organization.
- Very positive workshop despite challenges and sense of fear and apathy in society and in the community/voluntary sector.
- We need more of these sessions and need to reach out to civic society / the wider community / to build agreement on a better future / convince people of the value of dialogue 5
- GTP / unified voice for our sector needed 3
- Civic forum needed 5
- Full Implementation of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement needed 5
- The engagement was a delight.
- Great to see such a diversity of people in dialogue on issues that matter.
- Congrats on 20 years and may there be at least another 20 more!
- Community Dialogue needs to get back out into the grassroots communities.
- We need to build leadership of the community relations sector.
- Most people have bought into peace by separation.

APPENDIX 4: OUTCOMES

Overview

- 49 participants from diverse backgrounds and representing 28 organisations engaged on the impact of Brexit and the collapse of power sharing.
- Reached significant agreement on the issues, challenges, needs and responses.
- Participant commitment to the on-going work of CD.
- Participant commitment to the on-going role of GTO coalition. Many of those who had not already signed a GTP expression of Interest Form did so at this event building the participant base to 58 groups and independent practitioners.

The Urgent Need To Expand Dialogue

There was consensus that all groups engaged in critical issues dialogue need to find the means to urgently expand their capacity for civic society engagement on the current challenges to our peace process represented by the collapse of power sharing, the underlying culture of distrust and disrespect, the polarising of Brexit along sectarian political lines and the deteriorating relationship between the governments of the UK and ROI.

New engagements

- CD was asked to host a Global Peace Foundation event bringing 15 international practitioners to Belfast to engage with us on our learning with respect to the effective management of conflict and intolerance through dialogue and peacebuilding capacity training.
- We were asked to participate in a Global Peace Foundation peacebuilding practitioner's conference in Belfast City Hall on Ash Wednesday 2018
- We were asked to work with 15 women from either side of the Springfield Road interface.
- We were invited to engage with Northern Visions TV Company in the production of a 1 hr documentary on the life and work of CD, the collapse of power sharing and the Brexit crisis on 18.12.17.

Further Events

Similar event to be planned for next year in response to high attendance, quality of dialogues, significant level of agreement on how to respond to the challenges to our peace that we face and popular demand.

Agreement Implementation Leaflet

We were asked to produce a new summary of the agreement and outstanding areas of implementation to be used by groups on the ground as they face the confusion of ordinary people over issues like disagreement over flags or the Irish language.

Media Coverage

The event was filmed throughout by Northern Visions and includes in depth interviews with Community Dialogue Director David Holloway and long term members Anne Beattie independent practitioner and FR Brian Lennon Director of Dialogue for Diversity. An additional one hour documentary will be recorded on the life and work of Community Dialogue and on-going challenges to peace by Northern Visions on the 18th of December 2017.

A summary report is available to download from www.communitydialogue.org and our Facebook page and a report will also appear in the December issue of NICRC e-zine.

Participants who signed an Expression of Interest Form for participation in the GTP coalition

NAME	CONTACT DETAILS	ORGANISATION
Shona Bell	shona@corrymeela.org	Corrymeela
Janice Beggs	beggsjan@hotmail.com	?
Jacqui McGeough	jacqui_mcgeough@hotmail.com	GTLRA
Katie Rutledge	katy@greystonefarmni.org	Independent practitioner
Margaret McNulty	mg-mcnulty@talktalk.net	Ethnic Minorities practitioner
Teresa Darragh	teresadarragh177@hotmail.com	GTLRA
Barry Fennell	bfennell@cooperationireland.org	Co-operation Ireland
Marian Kane	90 712649	Ardoynne Community Association