



Developing an

AGENDA

for peace through youth work:
application to practice

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The ‘Developing an AGENDA for peace through youth work’ model builds a new framework of peace-building through youth work. It brings together the required vision and practical expertise as defined by Lederach (1995:11). It complements the vision and intention of the Shared Education in Youth Work framework (2018) in Northern Ireland.

The model corresponds directly with findings from research participants, who regularly cited that peace was either ‘never on the agenda’, or indeed had ‘fallen off’ it (McMullan, 2018). McDevitt (2011) also notes how sectarianism and mechanisms for addressing this need to remain at the ‘top of the agenda.’

The model maintains peace development as a priority within youth work and serves to provide young people with the knowledge, values and skills that they require for shaping a more peaceful, shared and diverse society in Northern Ireland.

The framework supports interventions that engage and sustain young people as peacebuilders. As the UN Security Council 2250 notes: *“Young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.”*

The resource is a framework to guide your vision and practice-based intervention. It is a checklist which funnels your thinking and which keeps peace-building clearly on the agenda. The questions are a guide to stimulate thinking

and action. The process results in a bespoke action plan for peace.

While used initially as a review and planning framework it can also be used as an ongoing reflective cycle process which keeps peace-building centred within your work.

The ‘Developing an AGENDA for peace through youth work’ has been established using the ‘AGENDA’ acronym which follows a process for improving youth work interventions. The acronym and the components of the model are described below.

- A** - Assessment of need and Acknowledgement to act
- G** - Getting buy-in
- E** - Exploration of undiscussable or contentious issues
- N** - New relationships and contacts
- D** - Documenting the learning and impact
- A** - Allies for further action

Gather a team of people connected to your group/organisation and work through the simple 8-step process.

Developing an Agenda for Peace through youth work: Create a Statement of Intent by thinking through the following questions.

Step 1:

In terms of your 'agenda for peace through youth work', firstly define your vision or statement of intent.

What do you understand by 'peace'?

What are you trying to achieve?

Is it an organisational strategy or a partnership collaboration?

How does it reflect policies such as the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education policy (CRED, 2011) or the Shared Education in Youth Work framework (2018)?

Will young people from different community backgrounds have opportunities to learn together for better education and reconciliation outcomes?

How might young people develop new relationships and develop themselves as citizens? Who might you collaborate or partner with?

Are the anticipated outcomes focussed at the individual, interpersonal, community and/or policy levels?

Who exactly are your target group?

Who else will be involved in creating and shaping this vision and agenda? Does it involve young people, staff and management?

Is everyone convinced or are there others to convince?

What does peace mean to you and what might this look like in practice

How will you express this vision and statement of intent and to whom?

Date:

Venue:

In attendance:

Statement of Intent (Agenda for Peace):

Assessment of need & Acknowledgement to act

This involves having an appetite to investigate need and to enact process and effort for change. This need is both local and regional. It involves reconnaissance and understanding each individual local context and knowing the local influencers. It also requires skills to read beyond potential disinterest from young people. In creating actions to address need attention must be given to the safety of both young people and workers.

As one participant noted in the findings, *“(it is the) responsibility of workers to be informed on issues (and to) know who the local influencers are.”*

Step 2:

How will or do you know need?

How has this need been identified? Who has identified the need (young people, practitioner, organisation)?

Do you recognise that something is actually broken in society and needs fixed?

In addition to the more visible need, what other subtle needs may you or others have noticed or observed?

Does the need incorporate socio-economic factors as well as issues pertinent to ethno-national identity, culture, territory and politics?

Has the need been informed by multiple perspectives (young people, parents, adults, policy, and practitioners)?

How does this need impact on your approach and next steps?

Who are your actors to help progress your agenda? What knowledge, experience and skills do they bring?

What are you proposing to do? What resources might this require? Will you require additional support?

What change are you anticipating? Is it realistic and achievable?

Key Notes/Points:



Getting buy in (young people, communities, organisation)

This is about pitch and relevance that attracts community engagement and motivates young people to participate. The hook may require creative intervention and initial small steps. It should support ownership of young people in the co-design to maintain relevance and engagement. Buy-in further requires a full community commitment that can provide challenges in negotiating with community gatekeepers who might present resistance to such a peace-building agenda. Buy-in also requires understanding between funders and the practice development in which youth work principles should be retained.

Step 3:

How will other community actors be involved in determining the direction and approach?

How will young people design and co-shape the agenda and the activities?

Will, or do, others have a shared vision?

Who needs to know about the project / activities and how is this communicated?

Have you considered both opportunities and challenges within your project / activities?

Will young people feel confident about overcoming any barriers to their participation in shared youth work programmes?

How do you support young people's engagement in a peace related project? What is the hook?

Do young people and others understand the concept and terminology intrinsic with peace? How do you communicate this?

What methods might you incorporate to ensure that the approach is relevant and meaningful?

Key Notes/Points:

G



Exploration of undiscussable or contentious issues (depth)

Youth workers provide leadership in advocating change and in prioritising peace. Rather than confrontational approaches this is about consensus or a vibrant and healthy clash of differences. Herein the challenge function of the youth worker comes to the fore in challenging prejudices etc. Through dialogue or creative expression, young people will experience 'light-bulb' moments and awakenings in which they can identify personal actions for change. Where possible young people and adults in the community should have inter-generational sharing encounters. All of these learning experiences should take place without the fear of threat.

Step 4:

How will you create an inclusive youth setting where young people can demonstrate a culture of acceptance, integration and respect?

What might be considered as a contentious or controversial issue? What are the issues that gets people's backs up? Why might they be so? (e.g. class, gender, religion, borders, violence, prejudice, intolerance).

Are there particular issues that may be emotive, especially in acknowledging and dealing with the past?

Are there issues that have previously been air-brushed or glossed over?

What might a meaningful conversation look like?

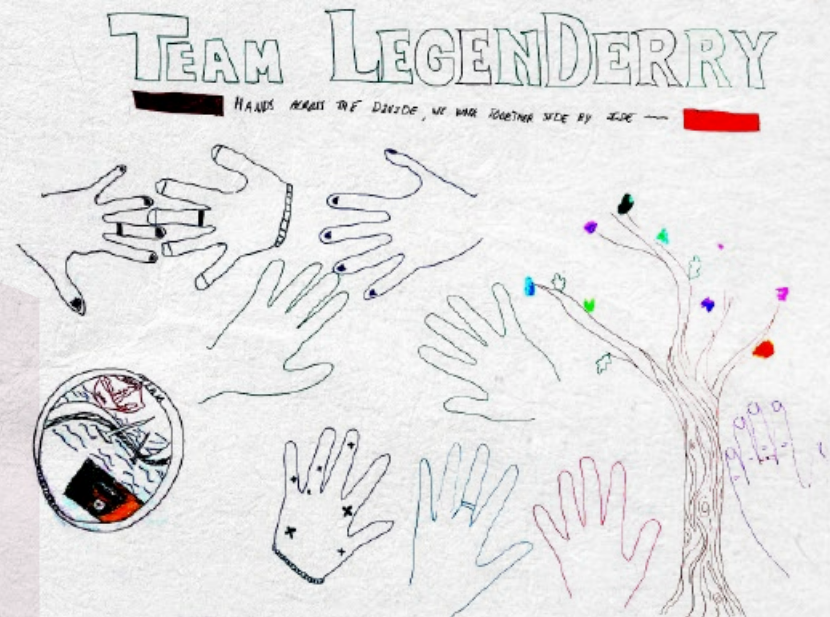
How will you help young people to 'scratch' beneath the surface in exploring issues?

How will you create a safe space for a healthy exchange of difference? How can you people be best prepared for this?

How might young people share their perspectives and understanding with other adults in the community?

Are there opportunities for young people and adults to learn together?

Key Notes/Points:



New relationships and contacts across the divide

Contact and inter-community engagement are essential to fostering good relations and reducing prejudicial attitudes and behaviour. While commonalities can support initial relationship-building this should not overshadow difference which are needed for a more diverse and respectful society. Herein young people can meet together and build lasting relationships.

Step 5:

Is the relationship new for your group or organisation?

What type of contact are you proposing within the project? Is it face-to-face?

Where will the contact take place?

How can you support participants to have an encounter which is well-spirited and at ease with difference?

What preparation needs to be considered?

Will the 'joy of difference' be celebrated where young people can appreciate the 'gift' of the other?

What are your expectations from this contact?

Are you expecting attitudinal change and/or further sustained contact?

How will you support young people to manage any negative feelings towards out-groups?

How will you review any partner relationships?

How will young people be fully embedded in shared youth work programmes with other young people from different community backgrounds?

Key Notes/Points:



Documenting the learning and impact within the local community and across the sector

Any intervention should plan attitudinal or behavioural changes aligned to a more peaceful, diverse and stable society. Youth work should identify the impact at individual, community and wider society levels.

Step 6:

Thinking about your project purpose and outcomes what do you hope to achieve? Have you considered possible unanticipated outcomes?

Will the outcomes relate to individual, interpersonal, community and policy outcomes?

How will you review the impact of the project?

How will you monitor progress and individual as well as group development?

How will you know the actions are making a difference?

How will young people self-evaluate to recognise personal and social skills that progress their understanding of themselves, their peers, others and their community?

How might improvement plans or recommendations be incorporated?

How might learning be documented and shared with others?

Will you have local or regional celebration or profile events which engage the wider community?

Key Notes/Points:

D



Allies for further action

Citizenship and civil and social engagement are required to sustain momentum towards a more peaceful society. Young people should consider ways of connecting with others to further progress in this area. Youth work should recognise the triggers to youth activism and support a range of traditional and alternative mechanisms to affect change. Ultimately, this is about challenging separation and sectarianism. This component particularly recognises that many other young people remain disconnected to peace development and political engagement.

A

Step 7:

How can you nurture young people's ongoing engagement and activism?

What forms of positive protest and disruption might young people engage?

Will young people's new knowledge and consciousness inspire practical social action?

Can the project and young people further connect with other young people at a regional, European or global level?

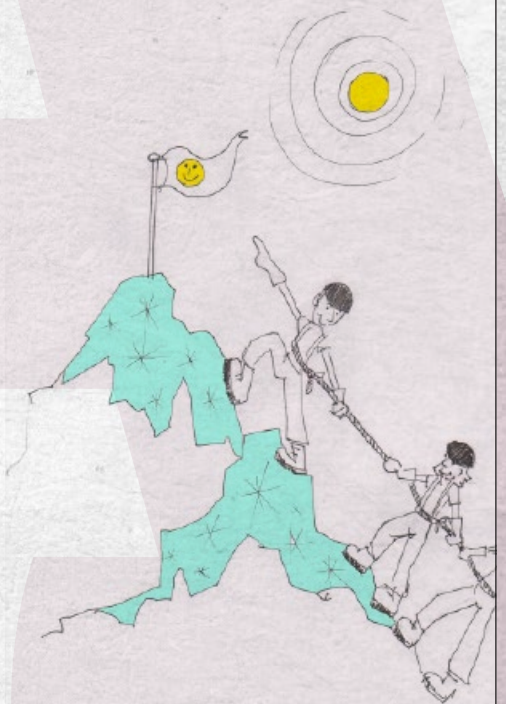
How can young people further support inclusiveness and integration (not assimilation)?

How can young people work with community leaders and representatives to support social cohesion?

How can young people be part of something bigger, beyond that of their local community?

How can the project nurture shared youth work programmes as common practice and as worthwhile to parents, carers and other adults?

Key Notes/Points:



ACTION PLAN for PEACE

Step 8:

Having completed steps 1-7 you will now have a clearer vision and approach to building peace through youth work.

Step 8 requires your reflection and insight to create a short action plan which reflects your Statement of Intent.

Identify 1 or 2 key actions that can encourage sustainability and a continued momentum towards peace.

What key reflection and learning has informed the actions or improvement area?

Who is responsible for overseeing these actions?

What time-frame has been considered?

NOTE:

Review your plan in line with your statement of intent in step 1.

The 8 step process above can be repeated at a later time to ensure peace remains a priority on your agenda.

This process recognises that peace is a process and not an end in itself.

Key Notes/Points from Steps 1-7:

Statement of Intent (Agenda for Peace):
(from Step 1)

Action Plan for Peace:

• **Action 1:**

• **Action 2:**

• **Any further actions:**



References:

1. Education and Training Inspectorate (2018), *Developing Shared Education: A Framework for Youth Provision Partnerships*
2. Lederach, J.P. (1995) *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*, Syracuse University Press, New York
3. McDevitt, C (2011), UTV Live (27 Jan 2011)
4. McMullan, M (2018), 'Sectarianism and Separation in Northern Ireland - a perspective based evaluation on the contribution of youthwork', University of Southampton.
5. United Nations Security Council, (2015), UNSCR 2250 Resolution on Youth Peace and Security, 9th December 2015, www.youth4peace.info



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