

The Tackling Paramilitarism Programme Newsletter

#endingtheharm

Summer 2019



Page 2-3

WICT participants meet Judge Barney McElholm to discuss the justice system

Page 4-5

Arlene Kee, from the Education Authority, talks about EA's role in the Action Plan

Page 8-9

PSNI holds programme Information Day for key partners

Taking a Closer Look

WELCOME to the 4th edition of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme newsletter.

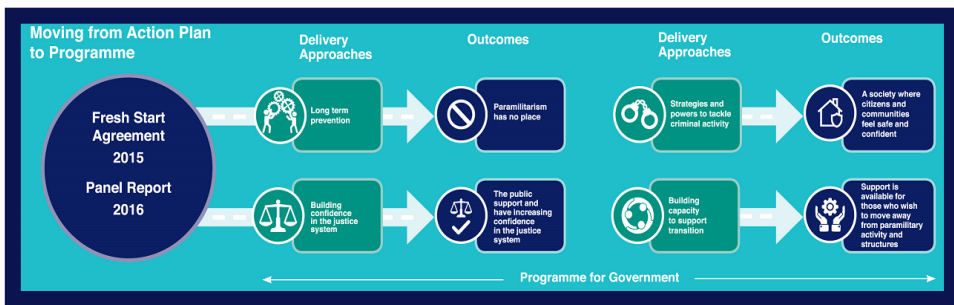
In this edition we will be taking a closer look at the great work being undertaken to support some of our most vulnerable young people by the Education Authority in a special Question and Answer session with Arlene Kee, the EA's Assistant Director for Youth

Services. In her in-depth interview, Arlene talks about the vital role of youth work within the wider Action Plan and the work the EA is doing to help ensure young people get a better start in life. We've also got an update on the Ending the Harm public awareness campaign on so-called 'paramilitary style

“If we all play our part and work together to better our community – great things can happen.”

attacks' including some interesting findings from research undertaken to monitor the impact of the campaign in those areas most impacted by paramilitarism.

Finally, we find out how some of the Women Involved in Community Transformation (WICT) project participants got on when they met District Judge Barney McElholm to discuss the issue of women within the justice system.





WICT Participants enjoy a discussion with Judge Barney McElholm

Judge Barney McElholm and Catherine Cooke, FWIN Co-ordinator, at the recent Women in Community Transformation event

Participants of the Women Involved in Community Transformation project (WICT) recently hosted an audience with Judge Barney McElholm to discuss the issue of women within the justice system.

The event was organised by WICT consortium members Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN) to explore potential alternatives to short prison sentences for vulnerable women.

Catherine Cooke, FWIN Co-ordinator, explained: "Our group recently visited female prisoners in Ash House to hear some of their stories.

"One of the main things that struck them was the fact some of the women were serving short sentences which meant there was not enough time for them to be rehabilitated or treated for addiction issues effectively.

"After a few months they are back out on the streets again with no improvement to their situation. For many women a custodial sentence can also lead to the loss of their homes, livelihoods or even their children, making their lives even more challenging once they are released.

"We decided that it would be worth exploring the possibility of looking at other non-custodial alternatives supported by local women's groups and other voluntary organisations. This would allow these vulnerable women to improve their lives by breaking out of the endless cycle of offending. It would also give them a support network to help them rebuild their lives.

The group raised the issue with District Judge Barney McElholm and he met with them at Holywell Trust to hear their thoughts and discuss some

of the issues further.

Speaking at the meeting, Judge McElholm said he recognised that for many people, conditions and circumstances mean that custodial sentencing is not always the best solution.

He explained: "Yes, we can lock people away, but it will only be for a few months before they are back on the streets again.

"We need more community-based programmes designed by the Probation Service or the Youth Justice Agency, and in conjunction with Social Services, so that everyone can work together as a whole to support people in their own communities.

"This is only the start of a wider conversation but I am hopeful that if we all work together, we will be able to make a real difference."

#StopAttacks Forum holds conference on PSAs

Members of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme Team and our delivery partners recently participated in a conference on the issue of paramilitary style attacks.

The two day event, which was organised by the Stop Attacks Forum, was an opportunity for representatives from across Government Departments, public and statutory bodies and voluntary and community organisations to get together to discuss the issue of paramilitary style attacks and consider emerging themes and opportunities to work together.

Julie Harrison, the Programme Director, took part in a panel discussion with Assistant Chief Constable Tim Mairs, Arlene Kee, from the Education Authority, Mairéad McCafferty, from NICCY, and Phil Bowen from the Centre for Court Innovation, during which they discussed the wider context of paramilitary style attacks as well as some of the challenges that exist.

Christopher Farrington, the Programme Manager, gave a presentation which focussed on the importance of taking a collaborative approach to tackling issues linked to par-



Representatives from a number of organisations take part in a panel discussion

amilitary style attacks, and youth programme which works with vulnerable worker Keith McCaugherty, talked about a bespoke youth work project within the programme which is aimed at supporting a group of vulnerable young people in communities most impacted by paramilitarism and coercive control.

June Hopkins, who is a participant in the Women Involved in Community Transformation (WICT) project, spoke movingly about the positive impact the project has had on her life and Deirdre Grant, from Probation Board, delivered a presentation on Aspire which is a project within the pro-

gramme which works with vulnerable young men who are at risk of becoming involved or further involved in criminality.

Speaking after the event, Christopher Farrington said: "This was a really good opportunity for a range of people to discuss paramilitary style attacks and think about how we can all work together to tackle this issue.

"I would like to thank those involved in the Stop Attacks Forum for organising this informative event and I look forward to continuing the discussions."

An Interview With... Arlene Kee—Education Authority

As part of a new section in the Newsletter, we will be running Q+A sessions with some key delivery partners. This month, we caught up with Arlene Kee, from the Education Authority, to find out about the role of the EA within the Action Plan.

Q: Tell us about your role at EA.

A: As Assistant Director for Youth Services, within the Children & Young People's Services Directorate, I am responsible for the strategic planning, delivery and evaluation of youth services in Northern Ireland.

Our primary objectives are to support the overall educational attainment of young people; to enable them to explore their values and beliefs which in turn enables them to become active citizens within their community; and most importantly, we facilitate children and young people to have a voice in their own lives and to participate fully within their community.

Q: How does your work link with the other projects in the Action Plan?

A: We contribute to a number of key actions including the direct delivery of youth work in designated areas through outreach workers, and the delivery of a capacity building pro-



Arlene Kee, Assistant Director for Youth Services, within the Children & Young People's Services Directorate

gramme for teachers and youth workers who support children at risk of paramilitary activity.

The Youth Service also contributes to wider conversations developing models of delivery to support vulnerable young people, including restorative practices and strategic planning for young people.

The important role of the youth service within this project is based on our connection and relationship with young people and their communities, and our experience and ability to deliver services building on effective partnerships.

Unfortunately there is a proportion of

young people who have vulnerabilities and experience a range of challenges and barriers which contribute to a more problematic transition into adulthood.

It is also evident that young people living in certain geographic areas experience additional disadvantage and have significant needs in terms of educational attainment, their physical and mental health with the increased likelihood of coming into conflict with their community and ultimately the justice system.

Q: Tell us about the Youth Workers.

A: Youth staff involved in this programme work with a very targeted

group of young people who they meet on the streets, or who are referred through community members, by parents, by teachers, and other organisations including the PSNI and the Department of Justice (DoJ).

The youth workers focus on building a relationship with each young person and devising a plan with them to empower them to achieve their goals and objectives in terms of personal safety, positive choices, development of positive friendships, educational attainment, employment and finding their place within their family and community. Each programme is bespoke.

In addition to the personal relationship and trust building with each young person, the youth worker will engage with other members of the family and community to enable them to take positive control of their life choices and move forwards with their own action plan.

Often these young people have managed to avoid engagement with a

range of other services and time is spent ensuring that effective referrals are put in place for support.

The START workers are uniquely positioned to provide opportunities for young people to participate in engaging, including adrenaline rush type activities, that will help to develop their resilience and personal, social and emotional skills needed to transform into adulthood.

Q: At what age do you think it is necessary to intervene to prevent a young person from going down the 'wrong path' to criminal activity?

A: Early intervention is key to ensuring a young person has the best start in life.

Many of the young people on our programme have been disaffected from school. They come from families who have not experienced positive engagement with education and have few positive role models in their life, alongside limited involvement with any services including youth service.

Enabling young people to remain in school, value and engage with and in their education is key. Youth workers and teachers work in partnership, as providing an appropriate curriculum that enables restorative practices to be introduced into the school is vital.

Ultimately, living in communities where paramilitarism has no place is important from two perspectives. Firstly, where the young person is not subject to or fearful of paramilitary style attacks or secondly, where they are encouraged (or groomed) to be involved in crime for financial rewards or for example in drug taking.

Our experience shows that young people who have shown limited or no ambition, either educationally or through limited opportunities for employment, and who have experienced significant poverty, may turn to crime. There is potential within the Action Plan and via the additional resources, to address these issues to help ensure young people get a better start in life.



Young people taking part in an EA programme



Arlene Kee (far right) taking part in a panel discussion on the issue of PSAs

NI Young Life and Times Survey Results Published

The results of the 2018 Northern Ireland Young Life and Times Survey were recently published. The survey, which now contains questions directly related to paramilitarism, reflects the views of more than 1,000 16-year-olds living in Northern Ireland.

Here are some of the key findings.

Paramilitaries

- 15% of young people agreed that paramilitaries had a controlling influence in their area.
- 11% agreed that young people were influenced too much by paramilitaries.
- 20% agreed that paramilitary groups contributed to crime, drug dealing and anti-social behaviour in their area.
- 17% of young people thought that paramilitaries created fear and intimidation and 6% believed Paramilitary groups keep their area safe.

Safety

- 67% of young people believed that people generally abide by the law.
- 49% believed that people in their area feel protected by the law and justice system.
- 48% believe that the PSNI keep their area safe.

Crime, Drugs and Antisocial behaviour

- 56% agreed that there were low levels of crime and antisocial behaviour in the area where they lived.
- On the other hand, 31% agreed that there is a lot of crime, drugs and antisocial behaviour among young people where they lived.
- 26% of young people believe that people in their area do not feel confident reporting crime and antisocial behaviour to the PSNI.

The full results are available on the NILTS [website](#).

Attorney General attends lawfulness event

The Attorney General recently met with the Factory Community Forum, a community development organisation that works to improve quality of life for everyone living in the Ferris Park area of Larne, to discuss the issue of lawfulness.

NI Alternatives is training Forum members in restorative practices and restorative street work and invited the Attorney General along to talk.

Debbie Watters, from NI Alternatives, said the event was important in terms of addressing the disconnect between

the 'system' and working class communities.

Thanking the Attorney General and his office for being willing to engage with groups at a grassroots level and have difficult conversations, she said the group welcomed the chance to connect with him in these important strategic conversations.

The Attorney's 'It's your Law' sessions aim to improve understanding of our criminal justice system. Topics include the principles underlying our legal system, how law gets made, and what makes a good law.

Update on Ending the Harm Campaign



The hard-hitting ‘Ending the Harm’ public awareness campaign about the brutal reality of so-called ‘paramilitary style attacks’ (PSAs) has been relaunched.

The multi-media campaign, which was first launched in October 2018, is aimed at highlighting the devastating impact of so-called ‘PSAs’ on victims, their families, local communities and wider society.

Anthony Harbinson, from the Programme Board, said: “Research showed that 35% of people living in

those areas most impacted by paramilitary activity thought PSAs were justified in certain circumstances.

“The purpose of this campaign has been to highlight the devastating toll these attacks have and help people understand that the criminals who carry them out don’t care about people, or justice, or solving social problems in communities.

“Recent research carried out to assess the impact of the campaign and get a snapshot of current attitudes towards PSAs in those areas now shows that

19% of people believe they are justified; that’s a 46% decrease which is encouraging.

“But the reality is these barbaric attacks are still an issue of concern and this campaign is a vital part of tackling this scourge on our communities.”

The research was carried out in May 2019 in those areas most impacted by so-called ‘PSAs’ to provide an indication of the effectiveness of the campaign and to take an updated snapshot of attitudes.

While caution is exercised in terms of drawing a direct comparison between the results of the two surveys, due to a change in how a PSA was defined, the research provides a representative indication of the opinions of people living within areas most impacted.

You can access the ‘Ending the Harm’ campaign material on the website www.endingtheharm.com

<u>Key findings of research</u>	PSAs just involved a good kicking	A PSA is a good way of giving an offender a warning
There were substantial shifts in attitude between 2017 and 2019 on whether people agreed/strongly agreed with the following statements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017: 25% • 2019: 18% • Change: - 28% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017: 35% • 2019: 17% • Change: - 51%
PSAs are justified / justified in certain circumstances	PSAs deliver swift justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017: 34% • 2019: 15% • Change: - 56% 	There is normally a good reason for a PSA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017: 44% • 2019: 20% • Change: - 55%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017: 35% • 2019: 19% • Change: - 46% 		

PSNI holds Action Plan Information Day



Chief Constable Simon Byrne and the speakers at the PSNI's recent Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Information Day

The Police Service of Northern Ireland held a Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime information day recently as an opportunity to share learning about the Action Plan and the work undertaken to date.

The event was attended by representatives from a range of partner agencies including local councils, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, the Department of Justice, the Department for Communities, the Executive Office, Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI), NI Alternatives, Co-operation Ireland, National Crime Agency, HM Revenue and Customs,

and Ulster University. Addressing the audience, Chief Constable Simon Byrne said he fully supported the ongoing work and encouraged everyone to be “audacious” when it comes to tackling paramilitary activity.

Programme Director Julie Harrison gave an overview of the Action Plan and highlighted some of the progress that has been made to date.

Referring to the important role of policing, she added: “Policing with the community is a vital part of the Action Plan.

“It is important that we make a long

term, measurable difference by working together to end the harm caused in local communities.”

Detective Chief Inspector Marty Cummings, from the Paramilitary Crime Task Force, updated the group on their activity to date, including more than 400 searches, 199 arrests and the seizure of more than £500,000 of



Debbie Watters, NI Alternatives, spoke about the role of restorative justice

drugs.

He added: “The issue of paramilitarism is very complex and as such, policing alone will not solve it. We’re not going to arrest our way out of this, but along with the other strands of the Action Plan, we can deliver lasting improvement for our most vulnerable communities.”

Debbie Watters, from NI Alternatives, and Harry Maguire, from Community Restorative Justice Ireland, spoke on the topic of restorative justice and its positive influence in communities.

Debbie Watters said: “Restorative justice is healing relationships. Policing and community safety doesn’t just belong to the police; it is a joint responsibility between the PSNI, partner agencies and communities.”

Chief Inspector Lynne Knox, from Policing with the Community, gave a valuable insight into their work and highlighted the links to the Action Plan including engagement, early in-



Chief Constable Simon Byrne addressing the audience

tervention and evidence based policing.

She added: “Community relationships and engagement with purpose are vital.”

The final session involved a discussion during which a number of issues were raised including the importance of increasing understanding of the wider justice system, the clearance rates for paramilitary style attacks, and dealing with information that

comes from communities .

Closing the conference, Chief Superintendent Darren Evans, who organised the event, said: “We can’t challenge paramilitaries on our own. This event provides reassurance that we, alongside our partners are doing everything possible to stop paramilitary activity within our communities.

“It is of the utmost importance that we continue to work together to keep people safe.”



Speakers taking part in a panel discussion



Programme Director Julie Harrison, Chief Constable Simon Byrne, and DCS Darren Evans



Communications and Engagement Manager Debra Whyte

PCSPs Community Safety Awards

The first Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) Community Safety Awards took place recently. The special event, which was attended by 400 people including representation from Community and Voluntary Sector who work with and are helped by PCSPs to deliver local initiatives, recognized the work PCSPs do with their local communities and other organisations to help ensure that the voices of local people are heard on policing and community safety issues. A total of 50 nominations were re-

ceived against 7 different award categories, which included an Award for Contribution to Embedding a Culture of Lawfulness. This award recognised innovative projects/initiatives that have contributed to embedding a culture of lawfulness or improving confidence in the rule of law through challenging the coercive control of paramilitaries or organised crime gangs and criminals. Derry & Strabane PCSP won this award for their work with local theatre The Playhouse to produce the



Derry and Strabane PCSP at the event

News in brief

- David Sterling, Head of Civil Service, chaired a Symposium meeting with Permanent Secretaries and other Senior Civil Servants to focus their attention on the Action Plan and to encourage collaboration and buy-in at the most senior levels.
- The Programme Team hosted a session at the annual NICS Live event. The session, 'Working together to tackle paramilitarism' included a panel discussion with a number of key partners which focused on the importance of collaboration.
- This year's conference will take place on November 12th, further details, including the agenda, will be announced soon.

Get in touch

We welcome your feedback.

If you want to get involved or find out more please get in touch.

Contact Details:

Phone: 028 9037 8674 or 028 9052 0069

Email: tppt@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk

Find us on  @endingtheharm

You can also find more information on the programme at the following links:

[The Tackling Paramilitarism Programme](#)

[The Ending the Harm Campaign](#)