



Inquiry into Building a United Community

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09/10/2014

START360™



**Change
Starts
Here**

Start360 is Northern Ireland's leading provider of support services to young people, adult offenders and families in the community.

We provide a range of services and interventions in the areas of health, justice and employability. Good relations is at the core of everything we do and has been at the heart of our organisation throughout our 21 years.

Our mission statement is '**Change Starts Here**'.

General comments

Start360 welcomes the opportunity to respond to this inquiry. Our main interaction to date with the strategy has been through the development of the United Youth Programme and working relationships with the officials in DEL who are responsible for it.

Across government, there needs to be more recognition of the work that voluntary sector organisations do in the good relations arena and the added value that this brings.

What good relations means and how sectarianism and division can be addressed

Start360 believes that there is something of a general opinion that sectarianism has dissolved over the past few years, yet sadly the reality is that it is everywhere we look within NI. While people generally have become a little more PC, if you scratch the surface it is there just as it was before. Government has done a good job rebranding and repackaging it, but it is still the same monster it always was.

In our own experience, sectarianism and division do not immediately manifest with the young people we work with - they work alongside each other in all our services and their community or other background is rarely an issue. However, when they return to their lives outside of the Start360 experience, the language, influences and prejudices also return. Even the youngest of children can present with less tolerance and understanding of sectarianism.

Start360 delivered two cohorts of the YouthWorks programme (DE initiative funded through IFI) in the North West area in 2013. Sadly, the funding for this has been discontinued. However, what YouthWorks proved, as a pilot intervention, is that with the right supports and environment sectarianism can be tackled and addressed in a manner which is sustained when a young person returns to their own community and life.

For example, an analysis of the young people who completed the last cohort of YouthWorks in 2013 showed that 92% of young people reported a raised awareness of and respect for other cultures and communities within their city.

Make recommendations in order to support and enhance policy and decision-making with regard to building a united community.

Our recommendations would be:

- 1) Funding for the YouthWorks programme is reinstated;
- 2) The United Youth Programme ensures that it meets Good Relations needs among its participants;
- 3) The learning from both is carried into other Good Relations programmes, not just aimed at young people but at their families and communities.

Contact

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