



Alternatives

victim • offender • community

ANNUAL REPORT



2003

Northern Ireland Alternatives

Board of Directors

A. Administration

- The Board of Northern Ireland Alternatives consists of representatives from all the Alternatives management committees along with representatives from other voluntary and statutory agencies.

Detailed below are the members of the Board:

Martin Snoddon (Chairperson)	Conflict Trauma Resource Centre
Sam Johnston (Treasurer)	Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre
Billy Mitchell (Secretary)	LINC Resource Centre
Mark Gordon	Impact, Bangor
Marion Jamison	REACT, Armagh
Colin Robinson	East Belfast Alternatives, Management Committee
Inez McCormick	Unison, Trade Union
Insp Nigel Grimshaw	P.S.N.I.
Baroness May Blood	Early Years Project

Jackie Redpath

Greater Shankill Partnership

Joanne Jones

Millennium Centre

Koulla Yiasouma

Include Youth

- The Probation Board of Northern Ireland has been invited to send a representative to the board and to date we await their reply. Other names and organisations have been discussed at Board Meetings including a representative from the Housing Executive and this will be followed up in the coming year.
- The Board of Northern Ireland Alternatives has been in the development stage for the past year and has only met formally on three occasions. Minutes of the most recent Board meeting are attached at the end of this report.
- Ongoing support has been delivered to all the current sites on a weekly basis. Meetings with the managers of the sites are held weekly and this will be the position for the next few months when it is felt that this will be changed to a monthly report from the sites to central office.
- Starting in January, the training manager from Central Office will be assessing the sites and formulating a training package depending on the individual needs of each site. This will be strictly monitored to consider the appropriate levels of training required to bring the sites up to date with the current procedures of Central Office.

B. Marketing

- Media relations in general are good. Over the past year the coverage that Shankill, Bangor and lately East Belfast Alternatives have received has been very positive. Copies of newspaper reports are submitted at the end of this article. It is and has been the policy of Central Office to encourage the sites to promote the philosophy of the Alternatives

model of restorative justice both through the media and public meetings.

- Central office has been positively working in conjunction with the local management committees of all the projects in strengthening the sites in various ways. For example Central office has been meeting with the sites on a weekly basis to formulate policy decisions to ensure the overall aims of the programme are always adhered to. Central office has also applied to various funding bodies to enhance the staffing levels of all the sites. Increased staffing levels will enable them to respond more effectively to the needs within the local community.
- The Board of N.I. Alternatives has discussed the need for better marketing strategies that will hopefully enhance the public profile of the individual projects. Both the staff of the projects and the Board of Directors sees the ever changing mood of the different statutory and community organisations towards restorative justice and feel that we must act now to promote the Alternatives model to as wide a group as possible. With the ever changing position of the criminal justice system to restorative justice schemes, we now see it actively promoting them all be it solely through police led programmes.

C. Political Activity

- Central office staff has made representations to both the Ulster Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party to ascertain their interest or opposition to community based restorative justice projects and the Alternatives model in particular. However, now that the elections are over we intend to pursue this matter with extreme urgency.
- Again Central office has been involved in meetings with the N.I.O. at the highest level to encourage the development of an active relationship with community based organisations. We believe we have been instrumental in highlighting the need for restorative responses at all levels within society

more staff

More media attention

How do they sit with mainstream P-parties

and government agencies have reacted to work at a grassroots level over the past few years. Our philosophy =has always been that the true embodiment of restorative principles means a true commitment to partnerships. This has yet to happen at a governmental level.

D. Violence and Prevention in the Community

- Community education is an ongoing concept and one that we are very committed to. We believe that it's not just good enough to say to the community that a non-violent response is the way forward without spelling it out for the community that we wish to convince. That is why we at Central Office have instigated public meetings to bring our ideas to the community but also to listen to the community and make sure that we can all move forward together.
- ✓ • Central Office continues to be involved in an informal process of education with local activists who we work and negotiate with on a daily and weekly basis. This contact has enhanced the number of referrals made to various sites thus signifying an increase in the acceptance of non-violence responses within the activist community. Many former activists, with influence, continue to be involved in programmes as staff members and volunteers thus creating a continuous culture of change at this level.
- ✓ • Formal training sessions have taken place with activists from various areas as new sites have been developed to help them understand the philosophy and practice restorative justice and what this could offer to their community. This process is vital if community based programmes are to work effectively in reducing the number of violent punishment attacks at a community level.

- 1- Chart groups + all affiliates
- 2- list all projects
- 3- work out no.s of beneficiaries
- 4- Group projects.
- 5- !

Do a diagram of this

Collaborations and Interface

The working relationships we have with community, statutory and voluntary organisations are many and varied ranging from working relationships to members of committees to sitting on Boards of statutory organisations.

- We sit on the board of Upper Shankill Area Project which is a Belfast Education Library Board run project that works with unattached young people in the Upper Shankill Area. ✓
- Each site has representatives from Probation and the PSNI sitting on the management committee and working with staff on the ground. ✓
- Each site also includes representatives from a justice agency like NIACRO or Include Youth or Children's Panel in East Belfast. These partnerships are and will hopefully prove vital in terms of moving forward together and sharing resources.
- Each site receives referrals from individuals and communities on interface areas. For example, Shankill Alternatives sits on the Board of Springfield Inter Community Development Project and works closely with them in terms of addressing issues of conflict at interface areas.
- We have both formal and informal relationships with victims groups and victim support groups. Victim Support sit on the management committee of Impact, North Down and have also provided training on victims issues for Shankill Alternatives.
- The Director of Conflict Trauma Resource Centre, which is an organisation that provides support for victims of the troubles, sits on the Board of Northern Ireland Alternatives and makes resources available to each site including the provision of community, based counselling, when appropriate.

People to talk to

F. Support for Project Sites

- During the past few months, Northern Ireland Alternatives has continued to build on its existing work by providing restorative responses to anti-social behaviour and conflict within the areas agreed, namely Shankill, East Belfast and North Belfast. Our primary focus continues to be that of community conflict in all its various forms but primarily the reduction of paramilitary punishment attacks, threats and coercion, addressing the hurts of the community caused by socially harmful activities and the development of restorative structures within the community to help address ongoing community conflict and violence.
- A major aspect of our current work is not only the development of the new sites but the drawing down of funding to help build on this new work. Funding applications have been submitted to Oak Foundation, Esme Fairbairn Trust, Community Foundation and ongoing discussions with Atlantic Philanthropies.

Greater Shankill Alternatives

- The Shankill office remains the Flagship for Northern Ireland Alternatives and as such will be used by all the other sites to aspire to the professionalism that Shankill has built up over the years. Greater Shankill Alternatives continues to flourish and become more embedded within the community as a non-violent response to punishment beatings and anti-social behaviour. Increasingly, victims and community members are using the services of Greater Shankill Alternatives to help resolve issues of community conflict.
- A more recent piece of work is the intensive work with a group of young men some of whom have previously been

involved in anti-social and have come to the attention of paramilitaries. This project is called the RECOVERY Project and is an attempt to build up the leadership capacity with young men within the Shankill community. This group has just returned from South Africa as part of their ongoing education and capacity building.

- Due to the funding situation within Northern Ireland Alternatives, the staffing levels at Shankill Alternatives have dropped but we hope to increase these in the very near future. Various applications have been submitted through Northern Ireland Alternatives and we await their outcome.

East Belfast Alternatives

- East Belfast Alternatives started their project in October 2003. The post of Project Manager was advertised in September 2003 and Jimmy McKinley was hired in October 2003 and started in post immediately. A few weeks later the post of administrator was filled and this worker started immediately. To date the manager along with the management committee have completed the refurbishment of their offices and are now in full operation. Contacts are being made throughout the East Belfast area with all the statutory and community organisations and a full launch of the project will take place in the New Year.

North Belfast Alternatives

- The post of Manager for North Belfast Alternatives was advertised in October 2003 and Joan Totten was hired and started work immediately. North Belfast Alternatives therefore became operational on the 3rd November 2003 and the Management Committee along with the manager have organised a number of community events to publicise their programme in the Sunningdale area of North Belfast. The Management Committee comprises representatives from the community, voluntary, statutory and church sectors. This will help increase community ownership of the project and help

the principles of restorative justice become embedded within all layers of community life.

Impact, North Down

- The Impact Programme became operational 6 months ago with staff positions being filled in March 2003. The staff positions are manager, support worker, victim support worker and administrator and all staff has received group and individual training in terms of their various roles and positions. This programme has been receiving referrals since they became operational and have received funding for training from Lady Sylvia Hermon, MP for North Down. Their credibility within the community continues to increase as they deal with difficult cases referred by Housing Executive, Probation, Social Services and local activists.
- Ongoing technical assistance has been provided to all sites in areas of funding, training, ongoing support and supervision all mentioned above.
- The Central Office is responsible for submitting overall funding applications for the continual development of the individual sites. To date funding applications have been submitted to the Oak Foundation for a support worker for each site and to the Esme Fairbairn Trust for two support workers for Northern Ireland Alternatives. Please find these funding applications attached. An application is waiting to be submitted to the Lottery once each site has received charitable status.
- Each individual site can also submit their own funding applications - Shankill received funding from the Unlimited fund to help develop the RECOVERY Project - a project developing leadership skills with young men on the Shankill.
- Training with local sites has been ongoing and wide ranging. Staff from all sites have participating in training sessions provided or facilitated by Central Office ranging from the philosophy and practice of restorative justice to the

Alternatives Model of working intensively with young people. Please find attached a sample of a training package delivered to the staff from Impact.

- Each site has received basic training on giving presentations and working with the media. This training will be ongoing and will take place at the practitioner's forum. Managers at a local level have been advised that all contact with the media should go through Central Office to ensure professionalism and consistency.
- All sites have adopted, work to and received training in Alternatives' principles of good practice.
- Greater Shankill Alternatives is the only programme that has been operational long enough to measure a change in the level of punishment threat and violence. The other programmes are only beginning to receive referrals and make a difference within their communities. PSNI and internal figures suggest that punishment attacks have decreased significantly since the inception of the Programme in 1996.
- Again, this report can only comment on the Shankill experience. Over the past four years, the number of exclusions on the Shankill have numbered three to our knowledge. This number is so minimal due to the early intervention of the Alternatives Programme negotiating at an early stage.
- In the past four years, Shankill Alternatives has been responsible for the negotiation for the reintegration of 12 people into the community.
- A vital aspect of the development of new programmes has been programmes of community and activist education. Without these programmes of work, the development and presence of new programmes would be impossible.
- Within the Shankill community, PSNI statistics indicate that levels of anti-social behaviour over the past four years have decreased. The number of young people on probation orders

within the Shankill community is also low in comparison to other areas in Belfast.

- Sunningdale, North Belfast, has experienced an increase in anti-social behaviour during the past year and PSNI and community recordings support this. This anti-social behaviour ranges from acts of vandalism to joyriding.
- East Belfast Alternatives will work initially in inner East which experiences significant levels of anti-social behaviour and paramilitary activity.