

'It Didn't End in 1998'

Examining The Impacts Of Conflict Legacy Across Generations



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Queen's University Belfast
October 2021

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Foreword

This report is one in a suite of four considering the needs of victims and survivors undertaken over a three-year period during which responses to Covid-19 greatly affected the way in which fieldwork could be conducted. This research was commissioned by the Commission for Victims and Survivors (The Commission). The researchers engaged with key stakeholders in policy and service provision, community workers and parents, and with over 100 children and young people aged 14-24. Within the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), the study illustrates the on-going transgenerational impacts of the Troubles/Conflict on the lives of children, young people and parents throughout Northern Ireland and the border regions. The Commission is grateful to all those who have contributed to the research process not least because of the sensitivities and reflections these considerations require.

This study builds upon and develops previous research on transgenerational legacy. The 'two-generation approach' (O'Neill et al., 2015) was adopted as a core principle to ensure that the focus is not only on the needs of specific generations, but also on the relationships between them. A key focus of the research, grounded in a Child Rights Based Approach (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012), was to embed young people's participation in all facets of the project, including in the design of data collection instruments, use of participatory research methods, analysis of research findings, and forming research recommendations. Based on the findings from the extensive qualitative research programme undertaken across multiple sites, the report presents a series of findings and recommendations that require serious consideration by service commissioners and providers, practitioners and policy makers.

Recommendations from the research include revising the school curriculum, in consultation with parents/guardians and young people, to consider the delivery of teaching related to the Troubles/Conflict; consulting young people about the ways in which they would like to express culture and identity; safe spaces for young people in which to learn about the Troubles/Conflict and their culture; community-based programmes to be developed in consultation with communities most impacted by the Troubles/Conflict; addressing the range of *push* and *pull*

factors that combine to draw some young people into paramilitary-style groups; and addressing gaps in the available research literature, including specific research to address the absence of girls' and young women's narratives and experiences.

In treating victims' needs as societal needs we build on a solid foundation towards a future that offers peace, prosperity, and growth for all who live here.

The Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland

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We would like to thank the 195 participants who took part in interviews and focus groups. Many shared personal and painful stories generously, opening their family lives to examination in the hope that there could be learning or change for future generations.

We would specifically like to thank the two Young People's Advisory Groups (YPAG) who have been part of the project for over two-years. Despite the demands on their time and some of the strains individuals were under, they engaged enthusiastically even when exploring difficult topics. While some individuals dropped-out and others dropped-in, all contributed to the shaping of this research. A list of YPAG members is noted below (with their consent).

It would not have been possible to engage with the YPAGs over this time period, and during a global pandemic, without the support of their youth work organisations – Youth Initiatives, Lifford/Clonleigh Resource Centre, Include Youth. A special thank you to Leanne Harte and Johnny Ewan who facilitated the young people's engagement with a strong understanding of their rights to both protection and participation.

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Young People's Advisory Group Members (who consented to be named)

Youth Initiatives, Derry/Londonderry: Conal, Kasey, Keelan, Matthew, Niamh, Olivia, Owen, Roisin, Shane, Thomas.

Lifford/Clonleigh Resource Centre, Include Youth: Aaron, Darragh, Katie, Kirsty, Jessica, Jessica, Shakira, Shania, Tammy, Zara-Lee.

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Executive Summary

‘... to address the consequences of the Troubles. Obviously, that means everyone, from cradle to the grave, and clearly the Troubles and the Conflict hasn’t entirely ended in any case. So, you have young people who are still being affected today, but it’s also the case that young people who aren’t being directly affected today have grown up in households where parents or grandparents were affected.’
(KSI7)

‘It’s simple to know what I would want [for the future], but it’s probably never happening. The likes of religions and stuff, or bomb scares and all this crap, should just be forgot about, but I think ... if that ever is going to happen it will take a good lot more generations ...’ (CYPFG9)

Background to the Project

The 30-year-old period of ethno-political conflict and civil unrest in Northern Ireland, colloquially known as ‘the Troubles’¹, has had a lasting impact on economic, social and cultural life. Children and young people have experienced directly or indirectly decades of conflict, violence and sectarian divisions, and many continue to deal with legacy issues from the region’s ‘troubled’ past. A number of research studies undertaken in recent years have highlighted how the legacy of the Troubles/Conflict continues to affect the lives of children and young people growing up across Northern Ireland, and to a lesser extent, cross-border areas. This study, focusing on the transgenerational² impacts of Conflict legacy on the lives of children and young people and their parents, builds on previous research on transgenerational legacy which, to date, has mainly focused on the transmission of trauma and mental health difficulties (Austin, 2019; Hanna et al., 2012; Merrilees et al., 2011; O’Neill et al., 2015; Shevlin & McGuigan, 2003). Transgenerational legacy, however, extends beyond psychological trauma. Some research, for instance, has examined how social and cultural identities, as well as sectarian prejudice, myths and beliefs,

¹ ‘The ‘Troubles’ is a euphemism that has been historically used to describe the periods of conflict in Northern Ireland. The terms the ‘Troubles’ and the ‘Conflict’ are used interchangeably throughout the report.

² While transgenerational refers to transmission to subsequent generations, i.e. children and grandchildren; intergenerational transmission is from parents to children. Both are often used interchangeably.

have been transmitted to younger generations (Halliday & Ferguson, 2020). It can also be argued that there are socio-economic and structural transgenerational legacies, in that children growing up in some communities (i.e. interface areas, and other socio-economically deprived areas where violence has been frequent and widespread) are negatively affected by residual sectarianism, continued segregation and chronic under-investment in their communities (Horgan, 2005; McAlister et al., 2009). In Northern Ireland's research literature, transgenerational trauma has been mainly the domain of psychology and, to a lesser extent, social psychology (in particular, social identity theory). However, additional research has evidenced how the legacies of the Troubles/Conflict have been transmitted to younger generations, and how some continue to feel the impacts of Conflict first hand.

In 2015, the *Towards a Better Future* study (O'Neill et al., 2015) concluded that the legacy of the Troubles cannot be effectively addressed in isolation, but require a longer-term strategic plan which includes comprehensively recognising and tackling outstanding legacy issues, including their continued impact on children and young people. The report recommended the adoption of a coherent strategy which focuses on supporting interventions with a view to the task of rebuilding a post-conflict community. Central to this strategy is the adoption of a *two-generation approach* as a core principle where the focus is not only on the needs of specific generations but also on the relationships *between* them. This also involves the task of lessening the potential transmission of prejudice and parental Conflict-related traumatic experiences allied to working collaboratively to tackle social, economic and political environmental issues including segregation, sectarianism and paramilitarism³.

The impacts and legacies of the Troubles/Conflict on children's rights to, for example, protection from violence (Art. 19), freedom of expression (Art. 13), freedom of association (Art. 15), access to adequate health care (Art. 24) have been identified and reiterated by the NI Commissioner for Children's Rights (Kilkelly et al., 2004; NICCY, 2009, 2018, 2020), and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Children (2016b). Recognition and involvement of children and young people in conflict transformation, and in tackling transgenerational legacy, has been noted in international literature. Research has highlighted that failing to include the participation and experiences of children and young people in transitional justice processes not only neglects Article 12 of the UNCRC, but can also have a significant impact in the long term transition to peace. Aptel and Ladisch (2011: 1) note that: 'failure to address the concerns of children and youth can undermine

³ While mindful of debates regarding the validity of concepts such as 'paramilitaries' and 'paramilitarism', we utilise these throughout the report as they were frequently employed by research participants in discussing the ongoing violence, and threat of violence, perpetrated by powerful individuals and groups across the island of Ireland.

the long-term recovery of transitional or post-conflict societies. Children and youth need to understand the past to play a constructive role in building the future'.

The central aim of the current project was to investigate the continuing transgenerational impacts of the Troubles/Conflict on the lives of children and young people (aged 14-24) and parents throughout Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The project adopted a 'two-generation approach' exploring and identifying the experiences and needs of current generations of children and young people affected by the Conflict's legacy and their relationships with older generations, many of whom have lived experience of the worst years of the Troubles/Conflict. The analysis examines the ways in which young people learn about the past and their identity and culture, and the impact of their experiences of this learning. It continues to explore the impacts of Conflict legacy across four themes: (1) Divided Space; (2) Health and Well-being; (3) Family Life and Parenting; (4) Paramilitarism and Policing.

Methodology

The project was grounded in a Child Rights Based Approach (CRBA) (Lundy and McEvoy, 2012) which embeds young people's participation in all stages of the project, and incorporates the four elements of Lundy's (2007) model of effective participation: providing a safe '*space*' for children to express their views; methods that facilitate their '*voice*'/views to be expressed; an '*audience*' to hear children's views; and a means through which their views can have an '*influence*'. As such, children and young people were involved throughout the study including in the: design of data collection instruments, use of participatory methods to capture the views and experiences of children and young people, analysis of research findings, and forming of research recommendations. Key to the implementation of the approach was engagement with two Young People's Advisory Groups (YPAGs), who assisted the research team throughout the research process.

In consultation with the Commission for Victims and Survivors NI (CVSNI), the Research Advisory Committee (RAC), the Transgenerational Research Advisory Group (TRAG) and the two youth advisory groups, seven research sites and core research themes were identified and agreed upon. A preliminary review of existing literature was also carried out to inform data collection. The study collected views and experiences from 195 individuals who could speak to the research aims. This included 28 key stakeholders representing relevant sectors and government departments and 45 community workers across the seven research sites. Parents of children and young people aged 14-24 were difficult to access and recruit despite considerable time invested in exploring many recruitment opportunities. Thirteen parents across four research sites participated,

although a number of community representatives also spoke in their capacity as parents of children this age. Interviews explored Conflict-related issues affecting themselves, their community and their families while growing up, as well as the impacts on the community today and young people of their children’s generation. A two-generational approach allowed for an analysis of change and continuity between two generations and focus groups were conducted with 104 children and young people aged 14-24 across the seven research sites.

Using a range of participative tasks designed with the YPAGs, focus groups explored: young people’s knowledge and learning about the past, identity and culture; the ways in which the Conflict still affects communities, young people and their parents (the present); and their hopes for the future. Finally, narrative interviews were conducted with two child-parent dyads to enhance understanding of the transgenerational nature of the impact of the Conflict and to explore this within the context of individual families. Thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyse and report patterns/themes within the data with specific attention to change and continuity across two generations. Discussion of the themes are supported in the full report by excerpts from the data, across all cohorts, with a commitment to presenting the data as told by participants. This ensures we give *voice* to all participants and that the *audience* hears this in the way participants chose to recount their views and experiences. In accordance with the rights-based approach to research with children and young people adopted in the study, the YPAG assisted in the explanation and interpretation of the study’s findings as well as connecting data to recommendations.

Learning the Past: Summary Findings and Recommendations

Young people’s knowledge of the Troubles/Conflict was learned through a range of sources, most notably in the context of school and family accounts. Although their level of understanding was questioned by some adult participants, by virtue of not having lived through the Conflict, young people had considerable knowledge and demonstrated capacity to talk about sensitive and challenging issues. Accounts of learning in the family context varied from families who did not talk about the past, to young people who overheard accounts in adult conversations, to those whose parents, grandparents and other family members recounted detailed stories of the Conflict and its impact on family and communities. Adult participants’ perceived family accounts as the principal source of learning through the recounting of lived experiences across generations. In this way, much of what young people know and think about the Troubles/Conflict is established prior to any formal learning.

Whilst learning in school could fill gaps in detail from other accounts of the Conflict, more typically what was learned, and the way in which it was learned depended on school, subject choices,

teachers' views and the capacity or willingness to engage young people in sensitive and potentially emotive discussions. Such discussion could, of course, be challenging for teachers who have not received adequate training or for whom discussions of the past could act as a trigger, particularly if they have not dealt with their own related issues. Nevertheless, learning in school could be selective, partial, lacking in depth or absent. The analysis demonstrates that despite long standing concerns related to avoidance of teaching of the Conflict, the neglect to address political history in primary schools and a focus on historic societies elsewhere (Barton, 2001a; Barton & McCully, 2010; Bell et al., 2010; NICCY, 2018), children's opportunities to discuss and make sense of 'the Troubles' are limited (NICCY, 2020).

Participants in all groups in the study were aware of the limitations of accounts shared with young people with concerns related to partiality or 'bias' linked most strongly to family accounts, but also to social media and accounts within the community. The potential to glorify or romanticise the past was a key concern where children were not included in discussions about the impact of the Troubles/Conflict in communities and families. Additionally, participants noted that selective or partial accounts may perpetuate sectarian views that can reinforce a divisive mind-set between communities across the generations. This raises questions related to the accounts and source material young people have access to in order to inform their views and perceptions of the past, and suggests that their freedom of expression is compromised which includes: 'freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice' (UNCRC, Art. 13). This points to a need for young people to have access to a range of perspectives and stories of the past in a variety of formats in order to achieve a shared narrative about the Conflict (NICCY, 2018; 2020). There is potential within this for resources such as the Oral History Archive - 'a central place for people from all backgrounds ... to share experiences and narratives related to the Troubles' (Stormont House Agreement, 2014: para. 22) – to inform young people, if supported to engage with the resource in a way which is age appropriate.

It is important to recognise that there were varied views among young people and adults, about whether young people should learn about the past. Some were keen to highlight that the Troubles/Conflict should remain in the past as speaking of the Conflict could have a negative impact on young people's mental health, or influence their attitudes with the potential of intergenerational transmission of sectarian beliefs. These are perhaps not reasons for the avoidance of learning but rather arguments for a different way of learning. Others articulated strong views that learning about the past was important to know about the country's history, to acknowledge the impact on communities and families, to understand how the past shapes the

present and to learn from the past to inform the future. It is important that a focus on learning does not result in an additional divide between those who want to 'move on' and those who feel such an approach silences them, ignores a key part of their identity and fails to acknowledge the past. Attention should perhaps turn to how we can create safe spaces for children and young people to learn about the Conflict, have these sensitive discussions and feel able and safe to acknowledge and/or challenge narratives of the past.

An effective mode of learning which provides a safe space to express different views within two contested political narratives was not evident in participants' accounts. Formal learning focused on exam success does not encourage debate, discussion and the depth of understanding adult participants suggested young people lacked. Learning needs to utilise methods young people find engaging – interactive methods, hearing from those from different perspectives who have lived through Troubles/Conflict and visual media were all noted by young people as particularly memorable and meaningful. Indeed, States are required to ensure children have access to information and material from a diversity of cultural resources (UNCRC, Art. 17). Consideration needs to be given to the age at which formal learning may start and that age appropriate activities are developed. Given the learning evident across the generations as a result of the passing of stories through the community and family, learning should facilitate dialogue between the generations and build young people's capacity to interrogate stories in a safe space. Consultation with children and young people in the development of learning resources and methods is crucial to ensure that they are relevant and appropriate to children's interests and to ensure that their views are taken into account (UNCRC, Art. 12).

Recommendations

- The school curriculum should be revised to consider the delivery of teaching on the Conflict. Consideration should be given to the age at which to introduce learning to ensure this begins before any negative attitudes can be entrenched. It should also be embedded in a subject where there is space for discussion and debate and less focus on rote learning for examination purposes.
- Consultation should take place with parents/guardians and young people in the revision of the curriculum to ensure that learning at home is considered in conjunction with school learning.
- The current training for teachers on the Troubles/Conflict and cross-community issues needs to be expanded to develop their capacity and confidence to facilitate challenging and sensitive topics and to respond to emotion in the classroom. Teachers require

additional support in the teaching of the Conflict, particularly where they are dealing with their own related issues.

- A two generation approach to learning is required, either in school or community settings. Safe spaces need to be created where discussions can be held within and across generations. Parents who want to talk about the Troubles/Conflict with children require support and access to information. Children and young people's capacity should be developed so they can engage in discussion with the older generations and challenge views as they make sense of the past.
- Children and young people should be supported to access a range of accessible sources and information to develop their knowledge and understanding – e.g. the Oral History Archive – but also be involved in the development of child-informed and child friendly sources related to the Conflict.

Learning Culture and Identity: Summary Findings and Recommendations

Young people's views and understanding of identity and cultural expression were explored. Whilst they varied in their willingness to assume a particular identity or label within the focus group setting, young people recognised the importance of identity within their communities, particularly in Northern Ireland but also reflected in the accounts of young people in the Border Region of Ireland. Some drew a generational distinction that claiming an identity was of more significance for older individuals in the community. Concerns were raised by young people and community representatives where identity or community membership was imposed on young people through assumptions made, in their wearing of a school uniform, participation in a cross-community group or imposed as a result of pressure from groups to demonstrate affiliation to the community. This is contrary to their right to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, belief and religion as articulated in UNCRC Arts. 13 and 14.

Most accounts suggested that visible expressions of identity were not a constant but rather intensified at certain times of the year. Association with visual symbols and participation in cultural events did indicate some level of community membership among young people (reinforced in adult accounts) and for them, symbols of identity could indicate a place of belonging and safety. Perhaps the limited elaboration in their accounts of their own identity or culture reflects a struggle to articulate what these terms mean (NIYF, 2019a), as culture becomes associated with the Conflict and the past with 'an absence of new words and phrases more in tune with a post-conflict environment' (NIYF, 2019b: 21). Participation in events such as parades and marches can be important ways to express culture and identity as well as to establish connectedness across generations through the sharing and imparting of tradition. However, ways in which the passing of

tradition may be threatened or questioned raises concerns in relation to children's rights to: freedom of expression (UNCRC, Art.13); freedom of thought, belief and religion (UNCRC, Art. 14); freedom of association (UNCRC, Art.15); and, leisure, play and culture (UNCRC, Art. 31).

Much of the discussion in focus groups was directed towards the expressions of identity connected to the 'other' community which was often interpreted as exclusionary, antagonistic and precipitating fear. Such interpretation can heighten a sense of division and difference and can intensify sectarian attitudes. Such attitudes, according to participants' accounts, were likely to originate in the views and narratives passed down through generations within the family. Whilst young people spoke of a range of sources through which they learnt about the Troubles/Conflict, in relation to identity and culture, the family was the key source of learning, supportive of earlier findings suggesting that, the most important influence on 16 year-olds' views regarding the 'other' main religious community was their family (ARK, 2007). This raises questions regarding the extent to which the State is fulfilling its obligation to direct education to the development of respect for human rights and cultural identity, and the preparation of the child for life in the spirit of peace, tolerance and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religion groups (UNCRC, Art. 29).

The views and attitudes held by parents, grandparents and other older family members were strongly embedded in past experiences of the Conflict. There was the potential for young people to adopt and act upon such narratives through voting practices, identifying difference, feeling fear, and perhaps hatred, towards the 'other' community. Such views could be entrenched at a young age, presenting as a challenge when young people come to engage in cross-community programmes. The transmission of views, without creating a safe space for young people to challenge them or express alternative viewpoints is in contradiction to their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, belief and religion (UNCRC, Arts. 13 & 14).

There were positive accounts, however, of young people inheriting inclusive attitudes across the generations and evidence that some young people were able to resist negative or sectarian attitudes when exposed to them. This does suggest the possibility of breaking the transmission of negative attitudes across generations, particularly when children and young people are provided the safe space to voice their views and have their opinions heard (UNCRC, Art. 12).

Recommendations

- In line with UNCRC Art. 29, education should play a role in developing children's understanding of their own and other cultures and ethno-national identities, to enhance

understanding, integration, respect and tolerance. This should be incorporated into a whole school curriculum, rather than focused on particular subjects. Whilst current education policy, to some extent, provides for such learning (e.g. Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy), evidence of its impact on children's attitudes has been questioned (NICCY, 2020). This calls for a revision of the content and delivery of education – both formal and informal – and an evaluation of its impact on young people's attitudes.

- These findings demonstrate the continued importance of the family in the transmission of attitudes of the 'other' community. Therefore, there is a need for increasing dialogue across the generations to encourage open and collective discussions on interpretations of identity and difference.
- Young people require a safe space to explore their meaning of their own culture and identity and to learn about those of others. They should be provided training to communicate this to others and attain a language to articulate what their culture represents (NIYF, 2019a). This space may differ for children and young people, particularly depending on the impact of the Troubles/Conflict in their lives and those of their family members. Consultation should be conducted with children and young people to gather their views on: how education on culture and identity should be delivered; who they should learn alongside; and, when and how this should be delivered.
- Young people should be consulted about the ways in which they would like to express their culture and identity safely. They should also be equipped with the skills to organise and develop their own events (perhaps alternatives to those traditionally held) to express their culture and identity (NIYF, 2019b).

Divided Space: Summary Findings and Recommendations

The findings demonstrate that young people's lives in Northern Ireland and their communities remain highly segregated in relation to residential segregation, segregated education and engagement in 'single identity' activities, all of which limited the potential to interact with young people from the 'other' community. Young people from communities in the Border Region of Ireland noted that segregated communities were a feature of communities in Northern Ireland, despite their identification of some communities in the Republic of Ireland as clearly 'Republican'. For some young people and adults, segregation in the community can offer a sense of safety, often linked to the impact of hearing about family members' experiences of the past. As a result, some participants (both young and older) reflected concerns about the removal of peace walls, suggesting integration of communities could lead to violence.

More typically, however, participants (particularly young people and community representatives) identified the negative impact of segregation in the community. Their accounts raised implications for a child's right to leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities (UNCRC, Art. 31) and their rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (UNCRC, Art. 15). Noting restrictions on their movements, feeling unable to access play/leisure facilities in certain areas and/or feeling unsafe as they meet peers in public spaces, the analysis illustrates a lack of optimum environment for children to realise their Article 31 rights. As noted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, this should be an environment free from stress, secure from social harm and violence and free from prejudice or discrimination (UN, 2013: para. 6).

Visible signs of segregation such as peace walls had the potential, participants suggested, to increase division by sending a message that communities should not interact. Visible demarcation, along with warnings from older generations, can restrict young people's mobility and interactions with others beyond their own community. These could also contribute to a heightened sense of difference which could intensify feelings of fear and sectarianism. There was a concern, therefore, that by the stage that young people do get to meet and have the potential to integrate, the sense of difference could be too engrained for meaningful interaction to occur.

Whilst there is much continuity across generations, in terms of attitudes towards the 'other' community and restrictions on young people's movement, young people also spoke of navigating the 'other' community as part of their social lives. As a sense of independence developed, and despite warnings from older generations, young people spoke of a willingness to interact with young people from the 'other' community, accessing 'neutral' spaces together but also to socialise in each other's neighbourhoods with some safeguards in place: attention to the way they dressed, the way they spoke and who they were with. Their movement, therefore, was not entirely 'free' nor without reservation. Increased interaction can come with shifts in young people's lives as they gather independence and are able to extend the geographical scope of their social lives, no longer dependent on parents to bring them places, access employment and navigate social lives online which can circumvent physical barriers in the community. In their messages to decision makers, a key request was for more shared spaces (as opposed to 'co-used' places) (Roulston et al., 2017), which can facilitate meaningful interaction between young people across the communities.

Sectarian views and violence do persist, however, linked to fears that had been generated about the 'other' community. Young people's perception, based on what they had been told about the past, however, was that sectarian violence was less pervasive in their communities (views

supported by adult participants), and was concentrated at certain flashpoints in the calendar triggered by cultural or sporting events. Despite its concentration, concerns remained about the perceived normalisation of sectarian violence at these times in the year. During such times, restrictions on movement can be intensified when young people feel more fearful about navigating spaces outside of their community. Additionally, newcomer families who have been placed in social housing in certain communities could also find themselves isolated at these times, with limited understanding of the context and safety concerns.

The majority of young people in research sites in Northern Ireland were, or had been, in segregated education. Young people in the Border Region of Ireland did not describe their schooling as segregated, nevertheless discussions illustrated that their schools were identified along religious lines. A small number of young people noted that segregated education could limit the potential for conflict in school and allowed learning of religion easier. Other participants (both young people and adults) were quicker to note the limitations of the system: that young people did not learn about other religions and respect them; the challenges when young people finally did come together through Shared Education programmes or in Further Education; that it creates and reinforces barriers between young people of different communities; and, it fosters a sense of difference and sectarian attitudes. Adult participants noted that segregated education was one of a number of mechanisms, alongside residential segregation, that could reinforce barriers between young people of different communities – a point reiterated by young people who had been challenged about making friends of a different religion through their experiences of integrated or shared education.

Accounts of engagement in Shared Education did raise the potential for addressing negative or sectarian attitudes but young people did not speak at length about their experiences. Some did reflect on the challenges of meaningful engagement in this context, given the limited interaction with young people across communities outside of such programmes. Whilst the Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 represented a step forward in increasing mixing within the Northern Ireland education system, there remains a number of concerns about the quality of some shared education programmes (UK Children's Commissioners, 2015), especially in regards to the opportunity for all pupils to take part (Haydon, 2020). Ultimately, the programme 'does not address the core issue of a segregated education system' (Haydon, 2020: 77). Thus, in their 2016 Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that the State Party,

actively promote a fully integrated education system and carefully monitor the provision of shared education, with the participation of children, in order to ensure that it facilitates social integration. (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016b: para. 72(e))

Few young people in the study spoke of their experiences of integrated education or personal preferences, although they did note the limitations of the segregated system. Evidence elsewhere, however, would suggest that the support for integration is increasing with 56% of 16 year olds noting they would prefer to send their children to a mixed-religion school (ARK, 2019), yet many are oversubscribed (Haydon, 2020).

Young people had much more to say in relation to their participation in cross-community programmes which, they noted, showed the potential to create safe spaces encouraging discussion, hear 'neutral' accounts, challenge narratives, have their voice heard and, in some cases, foster new relationships across communities. Whilst not all young people remained in contact after programmes, some did describe the potential for lasting friendships, sometimes facilitated by social media interaction. However, there is also limitation to the potential of such programmes whilst young people continue to live in divided contexts as they may struggle to maintain new relationships alongside prejudices within their community. Community representatives noted that the attitudes of parents and grandparents could work against the aims of cross-community programmes and inhibit recruitment of young people. An additional challenge faced by youth workers was a requirement to recruit along religious lines when young people did not identify with a religion. There was also consideration of the focus of programmes given other identities and cultures beyond the 'two communities' and the challenges faced by newcomer families. Short-term funding was often targeted at flashpoints in the calendar and restricted the extent of work that could be achieved with young people whilst geographical provision was unequal with limited programmes in rural communities. Overall, while the young people in this research appeared to have more opportunities and perceive less risk to meeting with the 'other' community than the parent and grandparent generation, their choices and freedom of movement were not without limitation. Elements of integration were often within a wider context of division and young people were reminded of the 'dangers' of integration at particular points in the year.

Recommendations

- The analysis highlights the potential of cross-community programmes to provide a safe space for learning. Further investment in these programmes is required to avoid short-term funding cycles which can impact on recruitment and prolonged engagement with young people. Provision should also be revised geographically to ensure sufficient access to

programmes in rural communities. The findings throughout this report also speak strongly to the need to maintain cross-community and good relations at the forefront of youth programmes.

- Whilst Shared Education has been an important step towards increased mixing within the school environment, the findings in this report support more fundamental changes to the structuring of the community in Northern Ireland. Increasing the provision (and funding) of integrated education, particularly given the increasing demand and oversubscription, is key and thus attention should be given to the UNCRC Concluding Observations in 2016 that a 'fully integrated education system' is actively promoted.
- Issues of division and integration should be explored with parents/guardians with a view to impacting on messages they pass on to their children from an early age. Such support could be delivered in inter-community programmes for children in early years and Key Stage 1 education (Morrow, 2019).
- The findings support an increased need for shared spaces for young people to come together safely without being subject to negative attitudes and to develop greater understanding of the 'other' community and their culture.

Health and Well-Being: Summary Findings and Recommendations

The research reflects some of the experiences and impacts of the Troubles/Conflict on individuals, families and communities across three generations. It demonstrates how, for many of the parent generation, childhood memories lie just below the surface ready to be exposed, often with little prompting. For some, childhood experiences were being made sense of as adults, with memories and pains only recently realised or (re)surfaced as a result of Conflict-related news stories, historical enquiries or more openness in families. The research suggests, therefore, that the outworkings and manifestations of Conflict-related harm can be delayed (see also: CVSNI, 2011), despite impacting negatively on the well-being of individuals and families. As such, it may take considerable time before individuals seek or require help and support. The lasting effects on their well-being of growing up with fear, insecurity, experiencing and/or witnessing violence or loss, were well-recognised by others. The past can impinge upon the present in persistent ways whereby pain, anxiety or hypervigilance are ever present. Many had, like their parents, avoided, buried or minimised their experiences. Having emotionally regulated, 'locked away' feelings and/or dealt with pain or loss over many years, this generation had taken a burden some felt was not recognised in public or political discourse, or in service responses. While similar themes of Conflict-related harms being 'sectioned off' are reflected in other research, this study clearly illuminates the transgenerational nature of these strategies, as the parent generation talk about their own parents, and reflect upon themselves.

The medicalisation of pain during the Troubles/Conflict has also left its mark. Not only are patterns of self-medicating evident among some older people (Jarman and Russam, 2011), but this research would suggest, also among subsequent generations. That is, those at the sharp end of the personal, social and structural legacies of the Conflict. Patterns of silence, internalisation and soothing pain, stress or anxiety through substance use were reiterated across generations, suggesting culturally transmitted coping strategies. While young people spoke at length about high levels of mental ill-health among their peers, they often did not relate this to Conflict legacy. Many of the issues they raised, however - lack of opportunities, lack of appropriate services, the medicalisation of poor mental health, lack of willingness to talk about mental health – are related to Conflict legacy (see also NICCY, 2020). There were suggestions of similar methods of dealing with personal stress and poor mental health among the current generation as was identified in the parent and grandparent generation (e.g. silence, avoidance and self-medicating). The enduring relationship between poverty, the Conflict and poor health is, therefore, impacting the current generation of young people. This is linked to the unresolved nature of Conflict legacy issues, including: ongoing paramilitarism; historical enquiries; ongoing, delayed or undiagnosed trauma among parents; lack of opportunities in some areas; and historical and contemporary under-investment in (mental) health services. The impacts may be exacerbated in rural and cross-border areas where access to services are particularly limited.

Over ten years ago, McMahon and Keenan (2008: 13) pointed to a series of gaps in service provision, including 'the inadequacy of mental health services for children and young people, and the continued under-resourcing in this area of provision'. Recently, NICCY (2018b) updated their analysis of mental health services and supports for children and young people in Northern Ireland. They found that mental health services were not fit for purpose, and that the system was under significant pressure, partly because of chronic under-investment, and historical patterns of funding allocation that do not respond to mental health needs. The findings from this study support NICCY's analysis, reinforcing that these issues make it difficult to respond to children and young people's mental health needs and compromise their rights to effective health care (UNCRC, Art. 24). Poor mental health, combined with lack of access to effective services, can enhance susceptibility to problematic drug and alcohol use. This was identified as a major area of concern among children and young people in this research, and by some adults as a transgenerational coping mechanism in the face of restricted services. Thus, when the right to effective health care is compromised so too can be the right to protection from illicit substances (UNCRC, Art. 33). Responses, therefore, need to be co-ordinated and integrated (see also NICCY, 2018b). More broadly, mental ill-health related to Conflict legacy impacts children's right to survival and development (Art 6, UNCRC), and it is well understood that when one right is not fulfilled, this

impacts on the realisation of other rights. For those who are victims of trauma – either transgenerational or as a result of ongoing Conflict-related violence – they have a right to responses that promote their physical and psychological recovery (Art. 39). If children are not diagnosed as experiencing transgenerational trauma, or if their interactions with paramilitary-style groups are not defined and recognised as abuse, exploitation or victimisation, they are unlikely to have access to services.

While many of the stories shared in this research were those of individuals and families, the Conflict's lasting impact on deprivation, opportunities and investment, under-resourcing of communities and essential services was widely discussed. As such, the need for responses beyond medical interventions framed around individuals was called for. The danger of a narrow focus on Conflict-related trauma and psychopathology has been outlined by Gallagher et al. (2012) who note that this can divert attention from the need for social, economic, political and cultural change. Mental health responses in isolation will not attend to the impacts of Conflict legacy on the health and well-being of the current or future generations of young people. Economic, as well as social and political responses are required to respond to injustices and unresolved issues of the Troubles/Conflict including segregation, ongoing paramilitarism and historical under-investment.

Recommendations

- Given the delayed impacts and understanding of Conflict-related experiences, there is a need for long-term funding of victims services.
- Safe spaces are required to discuss and share Conflict-related experiences. Community-based programmes should be developed (in consultation with communities), and Community workers trained and supported in delivering programmes exploring the Conflict and its impacts. These could be integrated into already existing community-based programmes (e.g. Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) - funded community programmes, the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme).
- To ensure that mental health services are sensitive and responsive to legacy issues, screening tools should be enhanced and training in trauma informed practices a priority. Regional Trauma Network⁴-led research and service delivery provides an opportunity to disseminate learning and best practice across the health and victims sectors.

⁴ The Regional Trauma Network (RTN) is a collaborative initiative between HSC Trusts and Community based health and well-being providers delivering psychological trauma support. See http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/download/Consultations/regional_trauma_network_and_eqia/Regional-Trauma-Network-FAQs.pdf

- There is a need to develop psychological, social, political and economic responses to address the social determinants of health related to conflict.
- CAMHS and DAMHS are not responding to the needs of children and young people, compromising their rights to effective health care and, for some, to survival and development. The recommendations from NICCY's (2018) review of mental health services and supports for children and young people in NI should be implemented.
- The relationship between substance misuse and Conflict legacy is becoming clear. This requires recognition in substance use strategies and responses. There is an urgent requirement to enhance social and educational measures to protect children from substance misuse.
- There is need for future research into the impacts of Conflict-related trauma and poor mental health on physical health.

Parenting, Family Life and Relationships: Summary Findings & Recommendations

Exploring the transgenerational experiences and impacts of the Conflict within families is complex. Many affected in the past continue to live in communities experiencing the coercive control of paramilitary-style groups. Disentangling the impacts of past and present Conflict-related experiences on family life and parenting is, therefore, complicated. Equally, reflecting on the nature of family life growing up as well as considering the parenting of one's own children, is highly personal and emotive. As this research attests, there are few opportunities for such reflection by parents across the generations, and recognition of transgenerational effects is most likely to emerge at crisis points. Realisation of generational impact can be painful given the lengths many go to, to protect their children from the hurts they themselves carry. Feelings of self-blame were poignant, and may explain why silence and numbing have become established coping mechanisms. There was a sense, however, that many 'quietly carry their trauma', 'suffer in silence', or that transgenerational impacts are not yet known by those affected, or not recognised by others.

This research adds to a body of evidence identifying silence as a means of coping, and a strategy employed by parents to avoid passing traumatic experiences to children (e.g. Hanna et al., 2012; Downes et al., 2013; McNally, 2014). The cross generational approach applied demonstrates that strongly linked to 'silence' is 'sensing'. Members of both the parent generation and current generation, reflecting on their family lives, talked of 'sensing' something being wrong. 'Silence' and 'sensing' had led to confusion, half-truths, heightened anxiety and feelings of insecurity among children, some of whom noted that this remained with them into adulthood. Silence, therefore, acted in opposition to its intent and could be a means through which trauma, or the

impacts of Conflict legacy, could be passed on generationally (see also Gilligan, 1997; McEvoy-Levy, 2011). Traditions of silence mean that recognising its existence and impact is difficult. Yet some parents knew, like those in Downes et al.'s (2013) research, that despite efforts to shield their children through silence, they were still affected.

Silence could also impact the nature of relationships between children and parents. Some of the parent generation spoke of a lack of emotionality within their families growing up. Silence through avoidance and denial numbed the pain, but it numbed other feelings also. Additionally, some of the current generation did not want their parent/s to 'sense' that they knew something was wrong with them, as they did not want them to hurt further. Silence, therefore, reproduced silence, with some parents identifying that it had filtered into their own parenting, and some young people noting that their generation were reticent to talk of their problems.

The transgenerational impacts of Conflict legacy were also discussed in terms of children growing up in homes where parents were physically or emotionally unavailable, angry or aggressive and/or overly-protective. Some parents spoke of how their experiences of over-protective parenting as children now caused them to be anxious as parents. This had impacted on their children's mental health, and their freedoms and opportunities. While emanating from a place of care, this could reproduce mistrust of the 'the other' community and fear and insecurity among young people (see also Smyth and McKnight, 2013). There was also evidence that family disruption, aggressive parenting and domestic violence linked to Conflict legacy, could impact the long-term well-being of children, as well as their future relationships with peers, partners and children. Damaging also was the emotional unavailability of some parents who were 'stuck in time', overwhelmed at particular points in their 'grief journey' or who 'numbed' feelings through substance use. As historical enquiries (re)surface pain young people may be faced with parental grief, anger and hurt for the first time.

Supporting research by O'Neill et al. (2015), many in the current study spoke of the impacts of Conflict-related trauma on the ability to parent effectively, and thus on children's well-being. As a result of Conflict-related trauma parental supervision and attachment were difficult for some, manifesting in substance misuse and destructive behaviours among children. Examples were also provided by parents to suggest the reproduction of parental behaviours/experiences among children- poor mental well-being; reduced coping mechanisms; substance misuse; potential relationship difficulties in adulthood. Some parents reflected on their home life while growing up, and the impacts on how they now parented, and some young people reflected on how their parents' poor mental health impacted their well-being. These provide further evidence of

transgenerational Conflict legacy. Stories shared suggest that some young people presenting to CAMHS today, are experiencing poor mental well-being that might in part be attributed to their parents' Conflict-related experiences/ legacies. This may be the case for others, but the connection has not yet been traced.

Despite some of the transgenerational impacts evident within families, such experiences are by no means pre-determined. It is instructive, for example, that parents often identified one child within the family as being most adversely affected. This raises crucial questions about additional stressors that lead to the manifestation of problems, or factors that may make particular children vulnerable (e.g. the first child). Added to this, it is difficult to isolate family effects from those of the community and other factors impacting children's lives.

That said, this research does add to a body of research demonstrating ways in which Conflict legacy can impact families across generations. The consequences for the current generation can be far reaching as parental trauma/ the impacts of conflict on family life can impact family relations, children's development, their feelings of safety and security, their freedom and opportunities, and their sense of well-being. There are of course implications for children's right to family life if their parent/s is not able to care for them or keep them safe, and this research certainly points to the need for further exploration of the relationship between Conflict legacy and children in care. Parents should, however, be provided with the resources and supports to fulfil their responsibilities to children (UNCRC, preamble). While specific reference is made to facilities and services for children, facilities and services for parents (impacted by Conflict legacy) could also support their child-rearing and enhance parental ability to protect and promote children's rights. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016b) in their analysis of compliance with the UNCRC in Great Britain and N. Ireland reiterated the importance of assistance to parents, as provided in Art. 18, recommending that the State Party 'intensify its efforts to render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians, including informal kinship carers, in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities' (para 52a).

While supporting parents to meet their responsibilities to care for children is important, so too is children's rights to access health care services (Art. 24). The mental well-being of some children is negatively impacted as a consequence of their parents' Conflict-related experiences, yet there are significant delays to accessing CAMHS within N. Ireland. Thus, a range of supports are necessary – those focused on young people, those focused on parents and those focused on the family unit.

Recommendations

- The gendered experience of the Conflict, and its legacy, is still relatively unexamined. Little is known about parenting during the Troubles/Conflict. Further research is needed to enhance knowledge and direct service provision.
- The various manifestations of transgenerational Conflict legacy within families, and the potential impacts on children, should be shared widely with health professionals. This could enhance recognition of symptoms in children and signposting to relevant services.
- That many do not identify as 'victims' or recognise the issues they experience as Conflict-related is further evidence of the need for long-term population-wide mental health initiatives like the Regional Trauma Network.
- Some of the current generation are exposed to parental pain, anger, numbness for the first time, or in more obvious ways. This may mean that increasing numbers of young people require support:
 - VSS-funded transgenerational and youth services will require additional funding to enhance programmes to support children and young people in recognition of the transgenerational impacts of trauma and Conflict legacy.
 - There is potential within the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme initiatives (e.g. Communities in Transition; Women's Involved in Community Transformation; youth programmes) to explore some of the issues identified in this research: understanding and breaking cycles of silence; recognising transgenerational trauma and its impacts on family life and parenting; recognising negative coping mechanisms and identifying alternatives. A trauma-informed approach is necessary for work of this nature, as is support for the staff involved in programme delivery.
 - The findings of this research should be widely disseminated as a form of awareness raising, and information provided to the youth and community, and children and families sectors, regarding support services (e.g. how to refer to the RTN and relevant VSS-funded services).
 - Timely and holistic family therapeutic interventions are required.
- There is a need to encourage recognition and help-seeking behaviour, particularly among those living with the consequences of trauma and adversity experienced as young people. This might be done through increased public and political discourse which both destigmatises and 'denormalises' Conflict-related trauma.
- Given the persistence of silence as a harmful (transgenerational) coping mechanism we endorse Hanna et al's (2012:10) recommendation that services support survivors '...in communicating their trauma experiences in appropriate and adaptive ways, in therapy and within their families.'

- Learning from existing parent support programmes and resources developed from similar programmes (e.g. Parenting in a Divided Society/ 'We'll never be the same' – see Burrows and Keenan, 2004) should be collated to inform future community-based parenting programmes.
- The potential relationship between Conflict legacy and children entering the care system in Northern Ireland requires further investigation.

'Paramilitarism' and Policing: Summary Findings and Recommendations

While this research demonstrates that many are still impacted by the *legacies* of violence, it also points to Conflict-related violence as a feature of many communities *today*. Some families are dealing with the pains of past violence (experienced during the Conflict) in combination with the fear, threat and/or experience of current violence. In this context, the concepts of 'Conflict legacy' and 'post conflict society' were felt to overshadow the reality that victims are still being created.

Knowledge of the existence and actions of so-called paramilitary-style groups was pervasive, and 'paramilitary talk' among young people within some communities was commonplace. The presence of paramilitaries meant the potential for violence was ever present. Recent events – the shooting of Lyra McKee, the implications of Brexit, the charging of Solider F - demonstrated to young people that violence could erupt at any time, and threats to perceived culture and identity were still used to politicise and recruit. The sense of insecurity and undercurrent of suspicion expressed by some young people was reminiscent of reflections of parents growing up in Conflict-affected communities 30- 40 years ago.

Since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, consistent concerns have been raised about continued paramilitary-style violence and its impacts on the child's right to freedom from all forms of violence (Art. 19, UNCRC) and protection from 'torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' (Art. 37a, UNCRC). In their Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016b) reported concern that:

In Northern Ireland, children face violence, including shootings, carried out by non-State actors involved in paramilitary-style attacks, and recruitment by such non-State actors (para. 48).

Five years on, and over twenty years after the ceasefires and peace agreements, this research demonstrates that the intimidation, abuse and exploitation of children by paramilitary-style groups remains a reality. Vivid accounts of abuses against children, young people, and their families were

shared. The volume and scope of these demonstrates the myriad of ways in which children, young people, families and communities continue to experience coercive control. Reflective of the relative invisibility of the impacts of violence on women and girls during the Troubles/Conflict, little is known today about how young women experience violence related to Conflict legacy. Research by McAlister et al. (2021) confirms this, identifying the processes by which young women's experiences of paramilitary-style violence are 'silently silenced'.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recognise that 'securing children's rights to survival, dignity, well-being, health, development, participation and non-discrimination ... are threatened by violence' (UNCRC General Comment No. 13, para. 13), and that 'preventing violence in one generation reduces its likelihood in the next' (ibid., para. 14). Conflict-related violence has far-reaching effects on individuals, families and communities, and its impacts can be felt by future generations. Experiences within some of the communities involved in this research (and others not included), suggest that a new generation of victims is being created. Abuses on individuals, be it children, parents or siblings, rarely have isolated effects, and this research demonstrates the need for whole-family and whole-community responses. While some young people alluded to the impact of paramilitary presence and violence on their mental health, more often this manifested in fear, insecurity, paranoia and coping mechanisms employed to preserve psychological and physical well-being (e.g. mental and physical avoidance). Parents, youth and community workers could identify more vividly the impacts – bed-wetting; anxiety; evidence of trauma; substance use as a coping mechanism; destructive behaviours.

Concern was also expressed that living in violent environments created a culture of violence. There was clear evidence from young people's accounts that violence was normalised, but not that it was an accepted cultural norm. Normalising enables coping, managing and surviving in the context of conflict (see Cairns, 1987). Violence continues because it serves a purpose. It maintains power for some and is reproductive in the context of limited opportunities. The pathways and drivers into these groups for young people attest to this – it is not the pull of violence but the search for identity, belonging, status or safety that is significant (see also McAlister et al., 2018). That these groups provide one of the only means through which some young people feel they can achieve this, is an indictment of the post-conflict narrative. Indeed it is in recognition of the link between paramilitarism and social deprivation that the Tackling Paramilitarism Action Plan (2015) emphasises the need to address systemic issues - material deprivation, social and economic stability, education and employment opportunities. Yet in the first review of implementation of the Action Plan, it was some of these systemic issues that were highlighted as requiring further action (IRC, 2018). The Independent Reporting Commission

(2019: 9) have since reiterated the importance of tackling '...systemic, socio-economic issues facing the communities where the paramilitaries operate ...', and enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes for young people (Rec. D1), which in their view 'is one of the most critical elements of the entire Executive Action Plan aimed at ending paramilitarism' (ibid: 105).

Despite recent public awareness campaigns and evolving programmes of work to tackle paramilitarism (since 2017), the political silence post-Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, failure to define acts against children as child abuse, and invest in and support communities in the transition from conflict, has caused what Smyth (2017) refers to as a 'societal shrug'. Ignoring the issue, rationalising it or locating responsibility for dealing with it elsewhere. It is unsurprising, therefore, that within families and communities silence is deeply embedded. Paramilitary violence is silenced through fear and coercion, cultures that stigmatise 'touting', and lack of police legitimacy but also through normalisation, denial or avoidance (McAlister et al., 2021). Normalisation and avoidance appeared ways of coping with and managing a threat that while ever present, would 'not come for you' if you kept your head down. It was employed by parents in the current context as well as young people, again implying learned behaviours. These techniques are similar to those identified as coping strategies among adults and children *during* the Conflict (Cairns, 1987). This would point to transgenerational patterns, and a learned cultural response among this generation, and within the 'new Northern Ireland'.

As demonstrated consistently, silence and avoidance have negative implications personally, and within families (e.g. McNally, 2014; Smyth et al., 2004). This extends to communities and wider society. Lack of reporting of paramilitary abuse within communities, the media, by political representatives, and downplaying or sidelining the effects on individuals, communities and society, can impact attitudes and responses. If the extent of the issue and its impact is unknown, the case for community resources and specialised services is weakened. One of the consequences, as identified in this research, is that the burden to respond falls on individuals and services within the very communities most affected. Meanwhile, it is not perceived as a societal issue, but one of certain individuals in certain areas – a problem of and for 'these communities'.

Recommendations

- The State must uphold their duty to action the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016b) and the UN Committee Against Torture (2019):
 - The Committee recommends that the State party: Take immediate and effective measures to protect children from violence by non-State actors involved in paramilitary-style attacks as well as from recruitment by such actors into violent

activities, including through measures relating to transitional and criminal justice (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016b, para. 48c).

- The State party should: (a) Strengthen its efforts to promptly and effectively investigate cases of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland, including against children, ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with appropriate sanctions, and ensure that victims have access to effective protection and can obtain redress; (b) Intensify its efforts to prevent the recruitment of children by paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland (UN Committee Against Torture, 2019, para 43).
- While there are positive moves to re-define paramilitarism as criminal activity, the historical and political disputes that feed into such activity should not be ignored. It is these that destabilise peace and energise support for these groups at particular times. Addressing paramilitarism requires addressing legacy issues.
- Attending to the push and pull factors that combine to draw some young people into paramilitary-style groups will require targeted work with children in 'at risk' families, community programmes and supports, and addressing underinvestment and lack of opportunities in the communities most affected.
- There is a need for sustained efforts to inform public debate and discourse, and for those in positions of influence to use the language of child abuse and child exploitation when referring to the experiences of children.
- Greater resourcing, extension and sustainability of neighbourhood policing is required in communities most impacted by paramilitarism. Paramilitary threats and violence against children must be treated by the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) as child abuse.
- Young women should be more visible in the actions, implementation and analysis of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme.
- Family support initiatives should feature more prominently in the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme of work. Programmes directed towards young people alone will be limited in their potential.
- Paramilitarism is more visible in some areas than others. There is a particular need for supports in rural communities, and communities in the Border Region of Ireland. The Communities in Transitions project (Action B4) should extend beyond the eight geographic areas in which it is currently targeted.
- There should be increased focus on processes of grooming and exploitation (within this context), in schools and youth programmes. The value of 'real-life' examples was reiterated by young people.

- There is a need for specific research into how young women experience this type of violence.
- While some of the physical impacts of paramilitary violence are known, less is known about the psychological effects. Further research to examine the long-term psycho-social impacts of paramilitary abuse is required.
- There appears some connection between families victimised by paramilitary-style groups today, and those who experienced violence, disruption or trauma within their families during the Conflict. Further research is needed to examine the family backgrounds of young people targeted by paramilitary-style groups.

Giving Voice to Future Hopes: Children and Young People's Key Messages to Government

Article 12 of the UNCRC states that children have the right to an opinion and to have that opinion heard. Many young people understood that their voice should be heard and that decision makers need to take their viewpoints and experiences into account.

Their key messages to Government are summarised below:

- Give young people the opportunity to engage in a meaningful way with decision makers. Decision makers must explain the purpose, aim and potential outcomes of policy decisions, particularly those which will impact on the lives of young people.
- Invest in a more holistic approach to the development of child and adolescent mental health services, including building awareness of the reach of mental ill-health, its causes and impact, as well as creating visible and well-supported provisions.
- Increase investment in youth provisions and youth centres/youth groups, particularly in rural areas.
- Invest in better transport links and increase opportunities to access appropriate accommodation/housing.
- Develop integration across a range of areas including education, family and local communities.
- Build a more cohesive society and protect children and young people from the violent legacy of the Conflict.

1 Transgenerational Impact of Conflict Legacy on Children and Young People: A Review of Literature

1.1 Introduction

Children and young people have featured in much research about the Conflict/Troubles⁵ and its legacies. Within this chapter we bring together the often disparate research on children and young people under the broad themes of health and well-being, family life and parenting, community and education. In so doing we draw out changes and continuity in research findings over time, and note relevant children's rights implications. Before this thematic overview, the chapter begins by outlining some of the key concepts and definitional issues and debates surrounding the study, as well as the children's rights and policy context.

1.2 Key Concepts and Definitions

1.2.1 Conflict Legacy

The Conflict resulted in extensive human, social, psychological, and economic costs to individuals, families and communities. Over 3,600 individuals died from Troubles-related deaths with an additional 40,000 injured (Fay et al., 1999; McKittrick et al., 2007), tens of thousands were displaced from their homes (Browne & Asprooth-Jackson, 2019; Moffett et al., 2020), and thousands experienced psychological suffering (O'Reilly & Stevenson, 2003). There was also a deepening of the segregation of the two main ethno-national communities, in terms of where people live, go to school, engage in recreational activities, access services and socialise (Jarman & Bell, 2018; Poole & Doherty, 1996; Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006; Shuttleworth & Lloyd, 2009). As well as an increase of sectarian prejudice and attitudes (Connolly & Healy, 2004) and the aggravation of economic difficulties and poverty for many families (Hillyard, Roulston & Tomlinson, 2005). In a study on poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland, half of all household respondents said they knew someone who had been killed in the Conflict (Hillyard et

⁵ As noted, 'The 'Troubles' is a euphemism that has been historically used to describe the periods of conflict in Northern Ireland. The terms the 'Troubles' and the 'Conflict' are used interchangeably throughout the report.

al., 2003). More recently, a survey in 2017 found that 26% of the Northern Ireland population said that either they or a family member continued to be impacted by a Conflict-related event (CVSNI, 2019).

Children and young people in Northern Ireland have also experienced directly or indirectly decades of political conflict and violence. By 1998, nearly 26% of all those killed in the Conflict were aged 21 or under, and young people aged 18-23 years had experienced the highest death rate for any age group in Northern Ireland (25% of all deaths; n=898) (Smyth, 1998). In addition, children lost parents and other family members; they witnessed bomb explosions and shootings, and had their houses attacked with petrol bombs and stones (Cairns, 1987).

Despite political and social developments since the peace process, the effects of the Conflict are not all in the past. Sectarian divisions continue to permeate Northern Irish society. These are manifested in prolonged residential and school segregation, 'paramilitary-style' violence, political instability and culture wars (around flag-flying, bonfires, parading, etc.), prejudice and sectarian violence, high prevalence of mental health problems and socio-economic inequalities, poverty and social exclusion. An increasing body of evidence has revealed how rates of long-term sickness and disability are related to the Troubles (Gray et al., 2018).

In 2017, the Belfast Interface Project identified 116 interface barriers still remaining in Northern Ireland. In 2017/2018, 286 people were accepted as homeless due to intimidation by paramilitaries⁶. In 2001, it was found that paramilitary-style attacks on children and young people had increased since 1998 (Kennedy, 2001). Between 1999 and 2009, there were 1,958 recorded casualties as a result of 'paramilitary-style' shootings and assaults (PSNI, 2009 cited in McAlister, Scraton & Haydon, 2009), and between 2008 and 2010, 47% of the 272 casualties resulting from paramilitary-style attacks were carried out against young people aged under 25 years (Haydon, McAlister & Scraton, 2012). Three years later, 2013 was identified as 'a year of brutality' for attacks on young men (Kilpatrick, 2013 cited in Harland and McCready, 2014). There have been, on average, 83 paramilitary-style attacks each year in the years 2013-2018⁷. The continued incidence of these and experiences and impacts on young people and communities will be explored in the following sections.

Geographically, however, the Conflict and its legacy has not been experienced equally. Six postal areas accounted for 58% of Conflict-related children's deaths (Smyth, 1998). The areas that were

⁶ NI Housing Executive statistics 2017-2018.

⁷ PSNI statistics between 2013-2018.

most affected by violence (and are still affected by the legacy of the Conflict) are also some of the most economically deprived. For instance, the majority of Conflict-related deaths occurred in North and West Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, the Border Region and the Craigavon–Portadown area, while coastal areas were less affected (Fay et al., 1999; Smyth et al., 2004). Interface⁸ and enclave areas in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry were particularly affected by political violence during the early days of the Troubles, and again when high levels of post-ceasefire violence were experienced (Jarman, 2004). Within these areas, a range of issues are/ have been commonplace, including: paramilitary-style intimidation and attack; strained relationships between the community and the police; rioting; significant mental health problems; chronic physical ill-health and high rates of disability; increased suicide; high rates of drug/ substance misuse; and poverty and social exclusion (Browne & Dwyer, 2014; Connolly & Maginn, 1999; Gallagher, 2004a; Healey, 2004; Horgan, 2011; Kennedy, 2001; Leonard, 2006b; McAlister, Scraton & Haydon, 2009; Smyth et al., 2004).

1.2.2 Transgenerational Legacy and Transgenerational Trauma

In Northern Ireland, many children whose Conflict-related experiences and past trauma went unrecognised are now parents themselves. This has led to concerns about the potential impacts on the current generation of children and young people. Research on the transgenerational legacy of the Conflict has mainly focused on the transmission of trauma and mental health difficulties (Austin, 2019; Hanna et al., 2012; Merrilees et al., 2011; O'Neill et al., 2015; Shevlin & McGuigan, 2003). The nature of transgenerational trauma has been the focus of substantial research and policy in Northern Ireland in the last ten years (CVSNI, 2019; Hanna et al., 2012; McLaughlin & Swain, 2016; O'Neill et al., 2015). Hanna et al. (2012: 20) define transgenerational trauma as 'the poor psychological health of children that appears to result (partially) from the consequences of the trauma experienced by parents, resulting in detrimental effects on the interactions between parents and children'.

The theory of the transgenerational transmission of trauma⁹ emerged from studies of Holocaust survivors and their children and grandchildren. According to these (over 400 papers published in three decades), the psychological problems of Holocaust survivors might be passed on to their offspring, despite a lack of robust empirical evidence fully confirming this assumption (Kellermann, 2001). The authors suggested that survivors of war can project their fear and anger onto their children, and transmit their mental health problems (acquired as a direct result of their

⁸ Interfaces are the common boundaries between two neighbouring segregated areas (O'Halloran & McIntyre, 1998)

⁹ While transgenerational refers to transmission to subsequent generations, i.e. children and grandchildren; intergenerational transmission is from parents to children. Both are often used interchangeably.

experiences of violent conflict) onto subsequent generations that have not been directly affected (Daud, Skoglund & Rydelius, 2005; Fonagy, 1999; Srouf, 2005). The mechanisms of how this occurs have been hypothesised as: through direct communication of the traumatic event/s; through the child's identification with the parent and their trauma; through the consequences of the traumatic event/s disrupting family life and parenting practices; and through genetic disposition (Hanna et al., 2012).

In Northern Ireland, due to a 'culture of silence' surrounding the Conflict and its impacts, transgenerational trauma has been linked to the notion of 'transgenerational haunting' which suggests that children could be 'carriers of the phantom' (McEvoy-Levy, 2011). This is the belief that they may carry the trauma of something they did not experience or know about. According to Abraham and Torok (1994 cited in McEvoy-Levy, 2011), people are haunted by the 'unspeakable', 'a secret buried alive', or the 'concealed shame of their families'. In Northern Ireland, this can be linked to the legacy of the Conflict in families, where stories are too painful to talk about (McEvoy-Levy, 2011), and silence is alleged to be a central mechanism in passing trauma from one generation to the next (Gilligan, 1997). Burrows and Keenan (2004: 121) claimed that '[u]nresolved and intergenerational trauma can freeze people and groups in the past, and make transformation to more just, equal and peaceful society less possible'.

While hugely important, there is evidently more to transgenerational legacy than psychological trauma/ transgenerational trauma. Much research has revealed that social and cultural identities, as well as sectarian prejudice, myths and beliefs, have been transmitted to younger generations (e.g. Halliday & Ferguson, 2020). Related to this are the socio-economic and structural legacies of underinvestment in communities and the legacies of divided space that continue to impact the current generation of children and young people. While transgenerational trauma has been the focus of much of the recent research, the following sections of this literature review, and the primary research presented in this report, demonstrate that the transgenerational legacy of the Conflict is broader than psychological impacts.

1.2.3 'Victims'

The concept of victimhood is contested in Northern Ireland, as it is in other societies transitioning from conflict. The largest difficulty lies in how to define victims, especially who should be included or excluded from the definition (Berastegi & Hearty, 2019). Partly because of the irreconcilably opposed perceptions and rationalisations of the violence and the Conflict itself (Baumann, 2010), distinctions and hierarchies of victimhood tend to surface – with terms such as 'good victims', 'worthy victims', 'deserving victims', 'real victims' and 'innocent victims' versus 'non-innocent' or

'undeserving' ones (Hearty, 2019; Kulle, 2001). These distinctions are problematic when trying to address the harmful impact of the Conflict and its legacy on the lives of so many, and can reproduce political divisions from the past.

The distinction between 'victims' and 'perpetrators' is also problematic. The same individual can be a 'victim' and a 'perpetrator' at different times in their life, especially in conflicted societies, as these are not static categories (McEvoy & McConnachie, 2012). In Northern Ireland, children and young people have been both victims of violence and engaged in Conflict-related violence. In addition, not all people (young and old) that have suffered directly or indirectly from violence identify themselves as 'victims'. In fact, according to a survey of 1,000 adults, most did not consider themselves to be victims of the Troubles (Cairns et al., 2003). Only 12% thought of themselves in this way on a regular basis. Many who refused to see themselves as victims argued that the concept 'traps them in a specific moment when they experienced loss and it reduces their identification to that experience' (Hamber et al., 2001: 10).

Debates about how to deal with the past and with victims of the Conflict have not yet been settled in Northern Ireland but the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order developed an inclusive definition. Contested because of its inclusiveness, this defines a victim or survivor as:

someone who is or has been physically or psychologically injured as a result of or in consequence of a Conflict-related incident; (b) someone who provides a substantial amount of care on a regular basis for an individual mentioned in paragraph (a); or (c) someone who has been bereaved as a result of or in consequence of a Conflict-related incident (The Victims and Survivors [Northern Ireland] Order 2006, Article 3).

While the harms of children and young people may ostensibly be covered in this inclusive definition, neither this nor wider discourses about victims of the Conflict explicitly recognise the suffering of children. However, many of the definitions and discourses of victimisation do not appear to recognise the suffering of children and young people as a result of Conflict legacy. Children and young people were not only directly victimised during the Conflict (being killed, injured, bereaved, traumatised etc.), but many are still directly affected by its legacy. Some are, for example, subjected to fear and intimidation, sectarian violence and/ or paramilitary-style abuse (Convery et al., 2008; McAlister et al., 2018; McAlister, Haydon & Scraton, 2013); growing up with absent parents – imprisoned or on the run (Kilkelly et al., 2004) or who had taken their own lives (O'Neill & O'Connor, 2020; Tomlinson, 2012) or experience Conflict-related poor mental health (O'Neill et al., 2015); experiencing income and social deprivation, discrimination, and the effects

of segregation (Haydon, 2008; Morrow, 2019; NICCY, 2018a); suffering significant mental health problems (NICCY, 2018b).

Recognising the existence and potential impact of some of these issues, the Strategy for Victims and Survivors (2009: 10) recognised the need for the Commission for Victims and Survivors to carry out 'further research work in relation to specific areas of need such as the impact of the Conflict on children and young people'. It also notes the need to address 'the inter-generational impact of the Troubles on children and young people and the need to promote cross-community work with children and young people' (ibid: 12).

1.3 Policy Context

Since the beginnings of the peace process, there have been various political agreements in which the legacy of the Conflict has featured, yet children and young people have been rarely mentioned. The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement (1998), representing plans for the future governance of Northern Ireland, for example, does not contain the word 'children'. It does, however, mention 'young people' once in its section on Reconciliation and Victims of Violence:

It is recognised that victims have a right to remember as well as to contribute to a changed society. The achievement of a peaceful and just society would be the true memorial to the victims of violence. The participants particularly recognise that young people from areas affected by the Troubles face particular difficulties and will support the development of special community-based initiatives based on international best practice (Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity, para. 12).

Following a period of suspension of the NI Assembly and political stagnation from 2002, the St Andrews Agreement brought and restored devolution to NI and dealt with many unresolved political issues, however reference to children and young people remained absent from the text. It was not until the Hillsborough Agreement 2010 which allowed for the controversial issue of devolution of policing and justice to NI that children and young people are explicitly considered within ongoing political concerns albeit with reference to those in conflict with the law. It notes that necessary actions were needed including a,

Review of how children and young people are processed at all stages of the criminal justice system, including detention, to ensure compliance with international obligations and best practice (Section 1 Policing and Justice, para. 7).

However, many issues relating to the legacy of the Conflict remained unresolved and in 2015 the Stormont House Agreement was published with the intention of resolving ongoing challenging issues on dealing with the past in relation to identity, welfare reform and victims' rights. The document does not mention children and young people explicitly. However, the need to acknowledge and address 'the suffering of victims and survivors' is forefronted. In order to do this, it states that:

The Executive will take steps to ensure that Victims and Survivors have access to high quality services, respecting the principles of choice and need (para. 26).

The Commission for Victims and Survivors' recommendation for a comprehensive Mental Trauma Service will be implemented. This will operate within the NHS but will work closely with the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS), and other organisations and groups who work directly with victims and survivors.

Building on previous political agreements and following significant disagreements on the issues within the Stormont House Agreement (SHA), A Fresh Start - The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan 2015 (also referred to as the 'Fresh Start Agreement') was developed to meet the commitments set out in SHA and to facilitate its implementation. This agreement set out the government's goal to end paramilitarism and associated criminality and its commitment to develop a strategy to disband paramilitary groups. It also set up the Fresh Start Agreement panel (an independent three-person panel) to make recommendations on the disbandment of paramilitary groups. Their report Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime - an Executive Action Plan was published in June 2016. It contains 43 commitments in response to the Panel's recommendations, 38 of which are being delivered by Executive departments. One of the key actions is addressing systemic issues, and is here that children are explicitly mentioned, in relation to tackling inequality in the education system:

The Executive should prioritise steps to significantly and measurably improve the educational and employment prospects of children and young people in deprived communities, focusing particularly on those who are at greatest risk of educational under-attainment (Rec. D1).

Young people feature in the document more extensively. One of the recommendations was the Early Intervention Programme Board to 'take forward work to develop a cross-departmental programme to prevent vulnerable young people being drawn into paramilitary activity' (2016: 4). As part of this programme, it was suggested that the Executive would 'commission appropriate

initiatives aimed at promoting lawfulness in schools and through youth work in communities'. In July 2017, the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme published its four long-term outcomes. These are to ensure:

- paramilitarism has no place.
- the public support and have increasing confidence in the justice system.
- a society where citizens and communities feel safe and confident.
- support is available for those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures.

In order to achieve them, it set out four approaches to delivery:

- long-term prevention.
- building confidence in the justice system.
- strategies and powers to tackle criminal activity.
- building capacity to support transition.

Thus, the programme focuses on implementing long-term prevention measures, addressing social issues affecting communities, robust law enforcement, and building confidence in the justice system. Over 55 organisations from the public sector and local communities have been working together on the programme, and a total of £50m had been pledged over five years (2016-2021) to support its delivery.

As part of the restructuring arrangements agreed under the Fresh Start Agreement, the Children and Young People's Strategy Team moved to the Department of Education from Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). Thus, the Department of Education has led the development of the new ten-year strategy. The aim of the Children and Young People's Strategy (CYPS) 2019-2029 is, 'To work together to improve the well-being of all children and young people in Northern Ireland - delivering positive long lasting outcomes'.

The strategy was developed in the context of the Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015 (CSCA). Under the CSCA, the Executive must adopt a strategy to improve the well-being of children and young people, which should consider the relevant provision of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CSCA defined the wellbeing of children and young people as comprising: physical and mental health; living in safety and with stability; learning and achievement; economic and environmental well-being; the enjoyment of play and leisure; living in

a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted; the making by children and young people of a positive contribution to society; and living in a society which respects their rights. The Strategy was set out as aiming to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people aligning with all eight wellbeing characteristics in the Act.

The 2019-2029 Strategy had been devised and published in the absence of a working devolved government. Following its return in January 2020 the NI Executive subsequently set about developing further the Children and Young People's Strategy. The Department of Education (working on behalf of the Executive) continued to devise a strategy in line with the eight characteristics of the CSCA NI (2015), with the aim of improving, 'the well-being of all children and young people in NI delivering long lasting outcomes' (CYPS, 2020-2030). The new 2020-2030 Strategy (which now replaces the 2019-2029 Strategy) was approved by the NI Executive on the 10 December 2020. The Strategy is designed to provide an overarching holistic structure to drive forward and monitor how departments are progressing the eight outcomes to improve the well-being of children and young people (CYPS, 2020-2030). The focus is to support the rights of all children and progress issues in the areas of early intervention, emotional well-being and mental health, bullying, education achievement, inclusion of children with disabilities and supporting those who experience any forms of discrimination.

Ongoing legacy issues also continue to set core priorities, which include supporting those children and young people who are 'exposed to the intergenerational impact of the Troubles' (CYPS, 2020-2030). Further and related to the commitments set out in the Fresh Start Agreement, the Strategy focuses on the residual impact of paramilitaries on children and young people, giving commitment to protect and support children and young people at risk of crime and paramilitary activities. Moving forward this new Children's Strategy will be aligned with the New Programme for Government. A revised strategic Programme for Government is to be developed for 2021/22 and will undertake an outcome based approach guided by the New Decade New Approach Agreement.

The New Decade New Approach Agreement provided the basis for the restoration of the NI Assembly and Executive following a further collapse in 2017. Published in January 2020 and building on previous political agreements, this wide-ranging agreement includes more than eighty commitments and provides timeframes for implementing commitments on health, environment, language and legacy issues. Whilst not explicitly mentioning children and young people this agreement made commitments which could play a significant role on the key issues impacting the

lives of children and young people, particularly in regards to legacy issues. For example it sets out:

The Government affirms its commitment to working with the UK Government to support the establishment of the Stormont House Agreement legacy institutions as a matter of urgency, including by introducing necessary implementing legislation in the Oireachtas, to deal with the legacy of the Troubles and support reconciliation, meeting the legitimate needs and expectations of victims and survivors (2020: 62).

The Agreement sets out the importance of the need to address legacy of the past and provided a commitment to introduce legislation within '100 days' to implement the Stormont House Agreement. However, the British government introduced new plans in March 2020 which departed from the commitments made in the New Decade New Approach and to date no progress has been made on legacy issues.

Parallel to these agreements, there are a number of significant community relations policies have been developed over the years. Following a consultation paper in 2003 and initiated by the direct-rule government, the community relations policy A Shared Future: Improving Relations in Northern Ireland was published in 2005 (OFMDFM, 2005). The document recognised that Northern Irish society was divided, and it advocated for 'sharing over separation'. After the restoration of devolution in May 2007, the Northern Ireland Executive claimed that it was committed to developing a new strategy for community relations in Northern Ireland. However, the policy framework A Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (OFMDFM, 2010) was not released for public consultation until July 2010. Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) was then published in 2013 as the successor community relations strategy. Within this strategy, four key priorities were specified: shared community, safe community, cultural expression, and children and young people. It also included seven 'headline actions', which were:

1. establishing ten new shared education campuses;
2. getting 10,000 young people, not in education, employment or training, a place on the new United Youth volunteering programme;
3. establishing ten new shared housing schemes;
4. developing four urban village schemes;
5. developing a significant programme of cross-community sporting events;
6. removing interface barriers by 2023; and
7. pilot 100 shared summer schools by 2015.

However, whilst this strategy was designed to facilitate a more united and shared society, it appeared to avoid explicitly more controversial issues, such as flags, marches, the Parades Commission, and dealing with the past. These were to be dealt with via separate mechanisms (Devine & Robinson, 2014).

1.4 Children's Rights

A children's rights approach recognises children's agency, their rights to protection but also to autonomy and participation. In addition, it does not treat children as a collective and undifferentiated class, but recognises the importance of gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and cultural variations (Freeman, 1998). As Freeman (2007) argues, rights are:

- inclusive and universal;
- invisible and inter-dependent (i.e. they comprise civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights – thus rejecting certain rights undermine other rights);
- a valuable advocacy tool to be used in the fight to gain recognition;
- important because their bearers (i.e. those who have rights) can exercise agency, that is they can make decisions, can negotiate with others, and can participate and make their own lives.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (UNCRC), together with other international human rights treaties, strengthens the notion that children are individual rights-holders with equivalent entitlements to adults and requiring special consideration due to their unique status (Turpel-Lafond, 2012). The UK government signed the UNCRC in April 1990 and ratified the Convention in December 1991, and the Irish Government signed the UNCRC in September 1990 and ratified in September 1992. Both governments, therefore, are legally bound by the Convention. Within this framework,

The State along with non-state responsibility-holders (parents, guardians, care-givers) are duty bearers – that is, they have duties and obligations under the CRC, legally binding them to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights. Children up to 18 years of age are considered rights holders and active participants in child rights realisation, who must be empowered to make claims and hold duty bearers to account for upholding children's rights (European Commission)¹⁰.

¹⁰ <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/sites/default/files/learning/Child-rights/2.8.html>

The UNCRC contains 54 articles, including 14 relating to dissemination, monitoring, and reporting procedures; and 40 establishing a range of civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights for all children, as well as articulating entitlements for specific groups. Conceptually, the UNCRC is commonly divided into the 'three Ps' - provision, protection and participation rights. In terms of transgenerational Conflict legacy, a child rights approach aims to highlight the international obligations both governments must consider in the development of policy and the allocation of resources in order to challenge and alleviate negative impacts on, and outcomes for children and young people.

In their audits of children's rights in Northern Ireland, the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) highlighted Conflict legacy as a significant children's rights issue. Kilkelly et al's. (2004) review emphasised the legacy of the Conflict and poverty as cross-cutting themes. The second review also recognised the impact of the 'multifaceted' legacy of the Troubles on children and young people, including 'exposure to sectarian comments, attitudes and behaviours, limitations on one's geographical movements, restrictions on what clothing one can wear in certain locations (including school uniforms) and direct sectarian violence' (NICCY, 2009: 110). McMahon and Keenan (2008) found that there was a systemic and widespread failure among public bodies to implement the general principles of the UNCRC in legislation, policy and service provision. This was reiterated in the UK report of the UK Children's Commissioners to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2015 (UK Children's Commissioners, 2015).

In addition to reports commissioned/compiled by NICCY, the Northern Ireland NGO Alternative Report (2015) submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (who periodically examine compliance with the UNCRC) noted the implications for children's rights of Northern Ireland remaining 'a society in transition from conflict'. Conflict legacy was also raised in NICCY's (2018c) submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. This noted that the impact of the 'Troubles' on children and young people is still heavily felt, significantly contributing to negative life outcomes for many children. The Commissioner pointed to the residual legacy of the Conflict and the continuation of segregation and community division experienced as part of daily life, coupled with paramilitary style attacks, which continue to be a regular feature in many children and young people's lives.

Thus, as a result of the Conflict and its legacy, children and young people have had a range of rights infringed or compromised, including: the right to life (Art. 6), the right to protection from violence, abuse and neglect (Art. 19), the right to be protected and cared for when affected by war and armed conflict (Art. 38), the right to receive special support to help them recover from trauma

(Art. 39), the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in the matters that affect them (Art. 12), the right to freedom of expression (Art. 13), the right to freedom of thought, belief and religion (Art. 14), the right to freedom of association (Art. 15), the right to an adequate standard of living (Art. 27), the right to health and health services (Art. 24), the right to education (Art. 28), and the right to leisure, play and culture (Art. 31). The multiple impacts of Conflict legacy on children's rights is raised in two statements of children's rights in Northern Ireland (NICCY, 2018, 2020). In 2020 NICCY reported 'little progress' on the recommendations it set out to government two years previously. These read:

Government must urgently address the impact of the legacy of the Conflict on children and young people through:

- 1. Ensuring the full and effective protection of children and young people from trauma, violence or mistreatment in their communities, including from all forms of violence by non-State forces as well as from recruitment by such forces;*
- 2. Addressing the continuing impacts of the Conflict, including mental ill health, family breakdown, child poverty and educational under attainment and the provision of adequate support services to children and young people in their communities;*
- 3. Supporting children and young people to play a central role in building a peaceful future in Northern Ireland, recognising that over many years, children have acted as human rights defenders; and*
- 4. Information about the Conflict should be provided to children and young people with a view to achieving a shared narrative about the Conflict.*

Recognition and involvement of children and young people in the conflict transformation, and in tackling transgenerational legacy, has been noted in international literature. Particularly relevant here is the role and participation of children and young people in the development and implementation of transitional justice processes and mechanisms. Understood as processes used to engage and deal with the legacy of Conflict related abuses, key elements of transitional justice processes may include institutional reform, criminal prosecutions, truth telling, memorialisation and reparations.

Research has highlighted that failing to include the participation and experiences of children and young people in transitional justice processes not only neglects Article 12 of the CRC, but it can also have a significant impact in the long term transition to peace. Aptel and Ladisch (2011: 1) note that, 'failure to address the concerns of children and youth can undermine the long-term

recovery of transitional or post-conflict societies. Children and youth need to understand the past to play a constructive role in building the future'.

Alongside academic research a number of UN papers set out the importance of children and young people in transitional justice mechanisms. A Key Principles for Children and Transitional Justice document has been devised to inform the participation of children in transitional justice processes. It notes the crucial role children have 'as participants in post-conflict peace, justice, truth-seeking, reconciliation and reconstruction' (Parmar et al., 2010; See also UN Approach to Justice for Children, 2008). The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children has emphasised that the participation of children and adolescents in home, school and community life can promote conflict resolution, tolerance and democratic principles. The human rights approach in reconciliation, in education and economic reform, and in transitional justice processes, can lay a foundation for a more stable future, contributing to nation-building and providing the opportunities that children and young people so desperately need (Santos Pais, 2009).

Parmar et al.'s (2010) edited collection on Transitional Justice and Children draws together significant research which examines transitional justice through a child rights lens. The authors in the collection set out key debates, legislative and policy discussions as well as strategies undertaken in a range of jurisdictions. It highlights how children and young people can be protected in transitional justice processes whilst allowing for their participation and voices to be heard. It is noted that, 'not only do children have the right to participate in decisions and in the administration of judicial procedure that affect them but also their view and experience provide unique and critical contribution to these processes' (ibid: xviii - xix). As a consequence of the impact of Conflict and legacy issues on children and young people it is clearly fundamental to include children's experiences and foster their participation in conflict transformation processes.

The remainder of this chapter will highlight how research within the past ten years, and more historically, points to ways in which children's rights are compromised as a consequence of Conflict legacy issues. Within each theme we identify relevant children's rights, review some of the research literature prior to 2010 and more recent literature/studies undertaken since 2010. In so doing this chapter provides a framework through which the findings from the current research can be viewed. This will enable the identification of similarities and differences with related research, and importantly continuity and change as well as outstanding children's rights implications.

1.5 Health and Wellbeing

Much of the literature reviewed in this section comes from the field of psychology, and is focused on assessing and exploring psychological need, and identifying risk and protective factors. There has been little research linking children's health, particularly mental health and the Conflict, which emphasises children's agency or children's rights. Much of the literature reviewed in this section also crosses over with Section 1.6 (Family and Parenting) in that there is a growing body of research which has examined the impacts of the Conflict on parents' health, and subsequently on family relationships, parenting, and the health and well-being of children. Rather than split this literature across the two sections, it is located here and discussed under the broad theme of transgenerational trauma.

1.5.1 Health, Wellbeing and Children's Rights

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has been fundamental to developing and promoting the right to health and health care, and includes specific rights for people with mental illness. The WHO Constitution (1946) foresees '... the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental right of every human being'. States have an obligation to support the right to health by ensuring access to timely, affordable and good quality health care; and by providing for the underlying determinants of health, such as safe and potable water, sanitation, food, housing, etc.

Article 25 of the United Nations' (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

- 1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family [sic], including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*
- 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.*

Health is cited in various articles of the UNCRC. Article 6 states that 'every child has the inherent right to life', and that 'state parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child'. The child's right to life, survival and development (Art. 6) is then supplemented by the right to access information (Art. 17) and the right to effective health and health care services (Art. 24). Thus, while Article 17 states the child's right to access information that is pertinent to her/his physical and mental health and wellbeing, Article 24 establishes the

child's right to enjoy 'the highest attainable standard' of health and access to such health care facilities/services. Other relevant articles are:

Article 27 – 'States Parties recognise the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development'

Article 33 – 'States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties'

Article 39 – 'States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.'

Also relevant is General Comment No. 20 on the implementation of the Rights of the Child during Adolescence:

States should adopt an approach based on public health and psychosocial support rather than over medicalization and institutionalization. A comprehensive multi-sectoral response is needed, through integrated systems of adolescent mental health care that involve parents, peers, the wider family and schools and the provision of support and assistance through trained staff (UN, 2016a: para. 58).

Recently in Northern Ireland, the ten-year Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-30 (DoE, 2021: i) was published, providing a strategic framework 'To work together to improve the well-being of all children and young people in Northern Ireland - delivering positive long lasting outcomes.' Similar to the subsided 2019-2029 Strategy, this Strategy is rooted in the UNCRC. One of the main outcomes identified is that children are physically and mentally healthy. As set by the Strategy, the focus of work in this area is: infants and early years, children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing, children and young people with a disability and/or complex health needs, and children and young people living in areas of deprivation. The Strategy states that tackling health inequalities together with a shift towards prevention and early intervention would be central to their approach. Stated outcomes of the Strategy include: work to ensure a greater awareness of, and focus on, children and young people's mental health and emotional well-being; ensure children and young people are aware of where they can find help

and support and work to reduce the stigma and taboos associated with mental health issues; ensure intervention and effective help and support is provided in a timely way; work to address the emotional well-being and mental health needs of groups of children and young people whom evidence has shown to be at greater risk of poor mental health (see NIE, 2021: 37-38).

Despite the recognition of children and young people's right to life and health, a range of policies and legislative frameworks, there is strong evidence of high levels of mental health problems, self-harm and suicide among young people in Northern Ireland, particularly in economically deprived and marginalised communities¹¹, compared to other regions of the UK and other western countries (Gallagher & Hamber, 2015; Schubotz, 2010; Shevlin et al., 2013)¹². There is also strong evidence of gaps in service provision, lack of adequate mental health services and effective government policy (NICCY, 2018b; O'Neill et al., 2015; O'Neill, Heenan & Betts, 2019). It is unsurprising therefore, that in their Concluding Observation, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended to:

Rigorously invest in child and adolescent mental health services and develop strategies at the national and devolved levels, with clear time frames, targets, measurable indicators, effective monitoring mechanisms and sufficient human, technical and financial resources. Such strategy should include measures to ensure availability, accessibility, acceptability, quality and stability of such services, with particular attention to children at greater risk, including children living in poverty, children in care and children in contact with the criminal justice system (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016b: para. 61).

Within the remainder of this section, we draw on research which suggests an association between the high rates of mental ill-health in Northern Ireland, Conflict legacy and the related lack of investment in services.

1.5.2 Themes and Developments in Historical Research (Pre-2010)

Earlier studies in Northern Ireland reflected the emotional health impacts that Conflict-related violence had for children, young people and adults who directly or indirectly experienced it. Internationally, a review of 14 quantitative studies on the impact of political violence on

¹¹ These are the very communities most adversely affected by the conflict and its legacy.

¹² The most recent Samaritans report (2019) confirmed that the suicide rate in Northern Ireland is the highest in the UK, with young men aged 25-29 being the most likely to take their own lives. In addition, epidemiological evidence suggests that 20% of children will develop significant mental health problems (UK Children's Commissioners, 2015). The Young Life and Times (YLT) Survey (yearly survey of 16 year olds in NI) found that those who come from socially deprived backgrounds are more likely to suffer from poorer mental health (Schubotz, 2010). More recently, a survey of 11–16 year-olds found that 35% (n=990) had concerns or worries about their mental health (NISRA, 2016).

adolescents found that the large majority concluded that exposure to violence was associated with higher levels of poor psychological wellbeing (Barber & Schluterman, 2009). However, while in the early years, it was suggested that children's psychological wellbeing had been severely affected by the Conflict (Fraser, 1974; Lyons, 1979), from the 1980s onwards, it was argued that most children (and adults) had been able to cope effectively with the violence, through denial (i.e. reluctance to perceive that there is a high level of violence in their area) and/or habituation (i.e. becoming so used to the violence to be able to see it as a normal aspect of everyday life) (Cairns, 1987).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, evidence began to be collected on the long-term effects and psychological suffering of adults due to the Conflict (Gallagher, 2004a; Morrissey & Smyth, 2002; O'Reilly & Stevenson, 2003). O'Reilly and Stevenson (2003: 491), for example, reported 'a positive and graded relation between the extent to which people and areas were affected by the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the likelihood of suffering from significant mental health problems'. There was also recognition that although the Conflict had officially ended, community violence¹³ was ongoing in some areas. Thus, a range of studies were pointing to the emotional/psychological effects of exposure to community/ sectarian violence among children and young people in 'post-conflict' Northern Ireland (e.g. depression, low self-esteem, risk of suicide, substance misuse, etc.) (McAloney et al., 2009; Muldoon & Trew, 2000). The Belfast Youth Development Study, for instance, found that 77% of their 15 to 16 year old participants had experienced community violence, and that exposure was associated with depression and substance abuse (McAloney et al., 2009).

Research also began to examine how children and young people were affected when their parent/s had been psychologically scarred by the violence. Fraser (1974) and Lyons (1979) had already highlighted the importance of parents' reactions to the violence of the Troubles for their children's mental health. Smyth (1998) also argued that witnessing the effect of violent event/s or loss on the parent/s might be very damaging for the child's psychological wellbeing, and that the relationship between the parent and the child could become severely affected:

The disempowering and traumatic effect of trauma on the adult parent directly impacts on their relationships with the children in several obvious ways. The avoidance of discussion about the trauma places a constraint on the parent-child relationship. Children also avoid raising painful subjects, in the belief that to do so will protect parents from distress. In some cases, the excessive

¹³ Community violence involves deliberate acts of interpersonal violence committed in public areas. It includes weapon assaults, fights between gangs and other groups, and homicides.

use of – or dependence on – alcohol or drugs complicates the picture, and becomes a way of maintaining the avoidance within the family of painful topics (Smyth, 1998: 36).

The idea of transgenerational trauma (see also 1.2.1) was also explored in a few early studies in Northern Ireland. McGuigan and Shevlin's (2010) study of the families of the Bloody Sunday victims is one example illustrating the long-term psychological impact of violence on different generations. They found that 30 years after the event, the victims' family members (including their children) showed clinically significant levels of psychological distress.

Despite the high levels of psychological need discussed across studies at this time, it was consistently noted that the provision of services, particularly mental health services, was seriously deficient (e.g. Kilkelly et al., 2004; McAlister, Scraton & Haydon, 2009).

1.5.3 Recent Developments in Research

Within the last decade, research studies have continued to explore the link between exposure to the Conflict and mental health, self-harm, suicide and suicidal thoughts (Ferry et al., 2014; McLafferty et al., 2016; O'Neill et al., 2014). This has been a significant concern, as prevalence of mental health problems and population suicide rates are significantly higher in Northern Ireland than in England, and one of the highest in the world (Bunting et al., 2013; Gallagher et al., 2012; O'Neill & O'Connor, 2020; Tomlinson, 2012). The suicide rate has doubled since the mid-1990s, from 143 registered suicides in 1996 to 313 in 2010 and 318 in 2015, with mental illness, trauma, exposure to the Troubles and deprivation being identified as risk factors (O'Neill & O'Connor, 2020). In fact, it has been revealed that more people died by suicide in Northern Ireland in the 20 years since the 1998 Agreement than in the violence of the Conflict (NISRA, 2018). The suicide rate has been found to have increased most among men who were aged between five and 24 during the 1970s (the height of the Conflict) (Tomlinson, 2012). Among children and young people, the five-year average rates of suicide in Northern Ireland in 2012 were four times higher than England and Wales for 15–19 year olds, and 17 times higher for 10–14 year olds (cited in UK Children's Commissioners, 2015). In their Concluding Observations in 2016, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child noted its concern that the number of child suicides had been steadily increasing in Northern Ireland in the previous past ten years.

Evidence of the mental health difficulties suffered by adults who were affected by the Conflict as children has continued to be collected (Bunting et al., 2013; Duffy et al., 2015; McLafferty et al., 2016), and mental health problems and suicide risk has been linked to childhood adversities (which would have been prevalent for individuals growing up with the violence of the Conflict)

(McLafferty et al., 2018). These adults are now parents, thus the argument for intergenerational, transgenerational or multigenerational trauma continues to be present (O'Neill et al., 2015). A study that explored the relationship between parental Conflict-related experiences and its impact on their children's mental health is a longitudinal study (frequently mentioned in this review) of mother-child dyads. The authors found that the impact of the Troubles on the mothers, their families and the communities in which they resided, increased psychological distress, which subsequently impacted their children's mental health in post-conflict Northern Ireland (Merrilees et al., 2011).

As noted in Section 1.2., a key argument of research on transgenerational trauma is that exposure to Conflict-related traumatic experiences impact negatively on parenting and family practices¹⁴. Results from the Northern Ireland Study of Health and Stress appeared to confirm this hypothesis, as the authors found 'a significant relationship between patterns of parental psychopathology, aggressive parenting behaviours and experiences of Conflict related trauma' (O'Neill et al., 2015: 67). This idea was explored qualitatively in two studies. In one, a study of four mothers who were severely affected by the Conflict, it was argued that their trauma was having/had an impact on their children (Downes et al., 2013). This occurred despite them dealing with their trauma silently by hiding the truth or through affective avoidance (i.e. trying to avoid difficult emotions). However, the mothers recognised that their traumatic experiences impacted on the ways in which they parented their children. In another study (Hanna et al., 2012), six participants were interviewed, three parents with direct experience of the Troubles and their children. The parents reported a 'parenting-style marked by a hyper-developed instinct to shield and protect their children' and their children described the 'overwhelming presence of silence' and how these events had been communicated in complex ways (ibid.: 24).

Fargas-Malet and Dillenburg (2016) did not examine parenting practices but focused on the communication between children and their parents¹⁵. In order to explore children's understanding of Northern Ireland's recent past, school children were asked to draw a picture of what Northern Ireland was like before they were born (i.e. when their parents were growing up). The authors reported that children who had drawn violence in their picture were more likely to have parents who had talked to them about the Conflict. Over half of the parents who completed the questionnaire had talked with their children about their experience of the Conflict fully and openly;

¹⁴ In the international literature, there has been some evidence that maternal communication about trauma has a larger impact than paternal communication (Sorscher & Cohen, 1997), but there are few comparisons between mothers' and fathers' parenting styles and their effects on children's mental health in societies in transition from conflict.

¹⁵ Parents of the children who took part in the research completed a questionnaire about their experience of the Conflict and whether they talked about it with their children.

and children whose parents had done so appeared to be significantly less likely to have peer relationship problems. It was also found that children of parents who found it difficult to talk about the Conflict were more likely to display emotional symptoms and more behavioural and emotional difficulties. While in this case, talking about their experience of the Troubles was found to be protective for children, McAlister, Haydon and Scraton (2013) found that young people in economically deprived areas attributed the passing on of particular stories in families and communities as continuous reminders of the past, which could perpetuate sectarian violence in the present-day.

As noted in previous sections, despite the end of the Conflict, community violence (e.g. paramilitary-style attacks, rioting, sectarian intimidation and attacks) still occurs in some areas, impacting on the emotional wellbeing of children and young people. In a survey of 3596 school pupils, O'Connor, Ramussen and Hawton (2014) found that 10% of their respondents reported self-harm, with exposure to the Conflict being one of the risk factors, among others like physical and sexual abuse or anxiety and impulsivity. In 'Cummings et al.'s (2013) longitudinal study of mother-child dyads, found that children's involvement in sectarian community violence (e.g. stones or objects thrown over walls, name calling by people from the 'other' community, deaths or serious injury caused by the 'other' community) was associated with the adolescents' emotional and behavioural health difficulties across the four years of the study. More recently, in their study conducted in communities with a continued paramilitary presence, McAlister, Dwyer and Carr (2018) found that paramilitary presence, threats and attacks had an impact on some of the young people's wellbeing, including reports of anger, fear of leaving the house, and feeling suicidal. It also appeared, for some, to have contributed to an increase in drug and/or alcohol use. Coulter and Mullin (2012) also highlighted the profound emotional impact that a paramilitary assault had on two children of one family.

This review of research over the past 50 years demonstrates not only changes in the focus of research over time, and a move to considering the potential transgenerational impacts of Conflict-related trauma, but also some consistent themes. Across time, cohorts and indeed generations, some key issues regarding silence, shielding, avoidance and denial emerge in relation to the impacts on mental health and well-being. Disproportionately high levels of poor mental health are also consistently reported in Northern Ireland in comparison to the rest of the UK, and in those areas experiencing Conflict-related violence and Conflict legacy. The persistence of some findings over time may, therefore, suggest some generational patterns within communities, families and at a wider societal level.

Some of the issues identified in the research presented here, emerge again in the current study and are reported on in Chapters 6 and 7. Hence demonstrating the potential cross-generational impacts of the Conflict and its legacy (i.e. across three generations) on health and well-being.

1.6 Family and Parenting

Research on the impacts of the Conflict on families, family life and parenting has tended to fall into two broad categories. Firstly, that discussed in Section 1.5 on the impacts of Conflict-related trauma on parenting and/or children's mental health, and secondly, the transmission of sectarian attitudes, beliefs and prejudice within families. Much of the latter is influenced by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1981), which has been used as a theoretical framework in many studies (Cairns & Mercer, 1984; Trew, 2004). While some research has explored the impact of violent conflict on parenting, noted above, there is still relatively little Northern Ireland-based research examining the impact on parent-child relationships, the impact of injury/bereavement of family members (e.g. child taking on caring or economic role, having to leave education), and the impact of family breakdown related to conflict, and child abuse. This is despite the fact that over 40% of children are growing up with parents who report having 'high' or 'moderate' experience of the Conflict (Tomlinson, 2012).

1.6.1 Children's Rights and the Family

The central role of parents in supporting the realisation of children's rights is noted in the preamble of the UNCRC which recognises that:

the family, as the fundamental group in society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.

Also

that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

Other Articles within the Convention relate specifically to the right to family life and to parental responsibilities. More broadly, the role of parenting/ families is referenced in 23 of the UNCRC Articles (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights¹⁶).

¹⁶ See - <https://www.togetherscotland.org.uk/pdfs/Parenting%20and%20the%20UNCRC%20v2.pdf>

Article 18 of the UNCRC concerns the balance of responsibilities between the State and the parent/s in the upbringing and development of the child, emphasising the role of the State in supporting parents to perform these responsibilities. This is crucial in the context of Conflict legacy given how poverty, trauma, problematic coping mechanisms can combine to impact families and parenting ability. The implications for the realisation of children's rights could be far reaching. Thus, when parenting is negatively affected and support for parents not available, there are potential strains on the promotion and protection of children's rights at a broad level.

Article 5 of the UNCRC also relates to parental responsibility and is relevant in the context of Conflict legacy. This relates to parent/family responsibility '... to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention' (Art. 5, UNCRC). As noted below, it is often from parents that children learn about the Conflict, their own and other cultures. Within the context of Conflict legacy there is concern about the transgenerational transmission of negative attitudes about the 'other'.

To this end the State have a responsibility to inform and educate parents about their responsibilities, and to support them in their realisation. UN General Comment No. 7 states, in relation to the implementation of children's rights in early childhood, the need to assist parents, when needed, through the provision of 'parenting education, parent counselling and other quality services ...'. Additional measures to support parents and families can impact positively on the realisation of children's rights including material assistance, and as noted below, ensuring access to health care services for both parents and children in the context of Conflict legacy.

1.6.2 Themes and Developments in Historical Research (Pre-2010)

A range of early local studies (Cairns, 1980; Cairns & Mercer, 1984; Jahoda & Harrison, 1975), mainly conducted by developmental psychologists, focused on children's awareness and use of social categories, the development of their social identity, and tendencies to discriminate against out-groups and favour their own group. These found that although children often showed some understanding of the denominational categories of Catholic and Protestant at the age of five or six, the majority were not able to categorise on a denominational basis until aged ten or eleven (Cairns, 1987). Others suggested children started to develop an understanding much younger, from around age three (Connolly and Maginn, 1999).

Despite this initial focus on psychological development, subsequent research highlighted the importance of the social context in children's views. Connolly and Healy (2004), for example,

carried out research with children aged 3-11 living in four areas of Belfast - two that had experienced high levels of violence and two with very little Conflict-related violence. They found that children tended to either develop a partial and one-sided understanding of aspects of the politics and history of Northern Ireland (particularly the case for children in the areas which experienced high levels of violence), or tended to be mostly unmindful to the key local historical and political events altogether (particularly the case for children in the areas with barely any experience of the Troubles). Additional research with children born in 1997 found that they tended to develop 'in-group preferences' (strong attachment to their own community), and out-group prejudices (negative attitudes to the 'other' community) (Connolly, Muldoon & Kehoe, 2007). Muldoon et al. (2007) also found that nationality was still an important feature of the identities of young people living on the border. They reported that young people showed strong oppositional identification, in other words, a clear sense of what they were not rather than what they were. Trew (2004: 519) argued that:

the research agenda has been constrained by a narrow focus on intergroup processes. This may account for the absence of longitudinal studies or research that looks at the relationship between the views of children and their parents.

However, since then, a considerable number of studies have uncovered how relevant this relationship is, suggesting that parents and family are crucial actors in the process of socialisation (Kelly, 2002). In these studies, children and young people have acknowledged their parents' influence on their own views. For instance, in a study of 1,732 children aged between 11-15 in Northern Ireland and 880 of their parents, it was found that parental attitudes explained over a third of the variance in children's group attitudes (Stringer et al., 2010). The results suggested that parents might be a strong influence on children's attitudes, as they have a direct role in the socialisation process and in selecting their child's school. This strong influence was also recognised by the 261 participants of the aforementioned study of 13-16 years olds living along the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Muldoon et al., 2007). They were asked to write essays on the meaning of their national identity and the influence of parents and families on national and religious identity. Most young people acknowledged the importance of parents in shaping their children's beliefs and opinions. Young people saw the transmission of negative values from generation to generation as inevitable, and they seemed to believe that the transmission of positive values regarding their own group and the 'other' group required a proactive stance on the part of parents.

Similarly, half of all 16 year-olds that took part in the YLT Survey reported that the most important influence on their views regarding the other main religious community was their family, followed by 19% that felt it was their friends, and 12% that believed it was their school (ARK, 2007). Smyth et al. (2004) found that 60% of the young people they surveyed claimed that parents or other family members had taught them negative attitudes towards people from the 'other' community. Kelly (2002: 68) reported how in three talk-shops held in schools in Derry/Londonderry, young people (aged 16 and 17 years old) 'unanimously agreed that sectarian attitudes prevailed in Northern Ireland mainly because of the influence of parents who encouraged young people to develop sectarian attitudes'. Some explained how their parents had encouraged them to participate in local riots, showed them how to make petrol bombs, or had supported negative views of people from the 'other' community. Smyth et al. (2004) reported that many of the young people they interviewed described how their parents had been crucial in introducing them to the Troubles, and providing them with an interpretation of the Conflict. They argue: 'By telling children about their own past experiences and those of their community, parents ensure that their experiences are woven into the narratives available to the next generation' (ibid.: 24). Thus, as some young participants in McAlister, Scraton and Haydon's (2009) study point out, stories about the past are constantly passed down in families and communities, which could feed sectarian attitudes among younger generations and perpetuate conflict.

Some research relating to the impacts of the Conflict on family life, and parenting is noted in Section 1.5. Additional research focused on the experiences of children in families of former combatants, the police or security forces. Black's (2004) research on the impact of the Conflict on the children (aged 5-18) of police officers, for example, identified a range of stress factors. These included home and school moves, changes of peer groups, inconsistent presence of a parent, and their parent being the target of terrorist attacks. As noted above, research focusing on the impacts of Conflict legacy on family life is a more recent development. While Hanna et al. (2012) found that Conflict-related parental trauma could have a negative impact on children, they also noted the need for further research in this area.

1.6.3 Recent Developments in Research

Family life may be significantly impacted by the continuing legacy of the Conflict. As highlighted in Section 1.2.1, many families live in areas that are still experiencing segregation, sectarianism, violence, threat, and social deprivation. The importance of a strong familial bond cannot be underestimated, as Taylor et al. (2019: 622) state 'in times of uncertainty or threat, youth may turn to their families to decide how to navigate the path of on-going sectarianism or conflict transformation'. However, research also continues to suggest transmission of sectarianism within

families, sometimes through influencing and limiting exposure to the 'other' community (McMullan, 2018). Taylor and McKeown (2019: 406), in their study of 466 young people born after the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, report among other things, that family ethnic/cultural socialisation 'promoting ingroup pride and knowledge, may have unintended negative consequences in a setting of protracted intergroup conflict.' Their research revealed that parental influence/response could have a mediating effect (positive or negative) between exposure to sectarianism and participation in sectarianism. As such, they suggest that interventions aimed at reducing young people's involvement in sectarian violence should include a family element.

Also based on research with young people born in 'post-conflict' Northern Ireland, Halliday and Ferguson (2020) explored the concept of post-memory. In this context, the concept of post-memory reflects the way children 'remember' the experiences of their parents, as powerful narratives and images repeated over time, which constitute memories in their own right, and are alive in the consciousness of the young people (despite the fact that they did not experience them themselves). In this qualitative study with youths (aged 15-24) in East Belfast, they found that collective memory influences and plays an important part in shaping the identities of young people via the formation of post-memory; which in turn affects the experiences and social relationships of young people within East Belfast (ibid.: 68). They argued that this post-memory might be key in the continuation of sectarian attitudes and violence among these youth. Young people, in fact, attributed their sectarian attitudes to family and community influence. They also expressed fear that unresolved issues around the Conflict remained in East Belfast and beyond, creating the potential for past traumas to be passed down generations.

Some researchers have also focused on parents, particularly mothers and how they deal with daily life in Conflict affected areas of Northern Ireland. Smyth (2017), for instance, focused on maternal anxiety about risks posed to children in segregated and deeply divided urban areas. She interviewed 39 Catholic and Protestant mothers of pre-school aged children in North and East Belfast. These mothers frequently expressed anxiety about their own and their children's safety. They worried about being able to keep their children away from sectarian rioting and other 'anti-social' activities, paramilitary violence and police attention. They also talked about their different parenting strategies towards these risks and how they managed their anxieties. Based on data from the same study, Smyth and McKnight (2013: 310) argued that parenting in deeply divided situations such as inner-city Belfast necessarily involves reproducing sectarian attitudes as children need to be educated about ethno-national boundaries and behaviour for their own safety.

Linked to risk and concerns for their children's safety Coulter and Mullin (2012: 101) note that 'parenting in a paramilitary controlled area has a number of additional challenges'. This may lead to heightened control, authoritative parenting or emotional unavailability among parents due to with their environment and/ or related traumas. Indeed, parenting has been explored in other studies and from different perspectives. For instance, McAlister, Haydon and Scraton's (2013) study identified family violence (as well as other forms of violence) as a potential risk to young people living in socio-economically deprived areas. Community representatives in their study spoke of the prevalence of 'aggressive parenting' as a result of the pressure parents were under in communities in transition from conflict. Devaney and McConville (2016) also argued that the poverty (which is particularly prevalent in areas heavily affected by the Conflict), places added stress on families, and might be a symptom of other issues, such as parents' inability to work due to substance misuse/mental health problems. Thus, poverty is likely to affect parenting, at times even leading to child neglect.

Parenting has also been examined from more psychological perspectives. In an aforementioned study where mother-child dyads were interviewed (n=773) in Belfast, Merrilees et al. (2011) focused on parental attempts to control youth's exposure to community violence. They found that mother's higher use of behavioural and psychological control strategies over time was related to children's reduced exposure to non-sectarian violence. In addition, mothers' behavioural control strategies were linked to their children's reduced exposure to non-sectarian and sectarian violence over time, but psychological control was not associated with reduced exposure. This same study also found that experience with sectarian violence predicted aggression in adolescents, but this was buffered by a cohesive family environment; and being female and having a more cohesive family were related to lower levels of youth's participation in sectarian violence (Taylor et al., 2016).

This review of research over the past 50 years demonstrates the continued importance of the family in the transmission of attitudes and information about the Conflict, and the 'other' community. It also demonstrates, to some extent, the impacts of Conflict legacy on families. Importantly, however, is the complexity of the relationship between parenting and child/ youth attitudes, behaviours and outcomes, and the potential disjuncture between intentions and impacts. While some the quantitative research demonstrates the potential (positive) mediating effects of parenting (mothering) for children living in high conflict areas, qualitative studies highlight some of the difficulties facing parents – poverty, parenting stress, fear, Conflict-related trauma. More recent research has seen an increased focus on mothers. There appears a distinct gap in research with fathers or that which disaggregates parental behaviour and influence.

Further, there appears a dearth of research on the impacts of paramilitary abuse on family life, despite the number of young people still subjected to threat or attack.

Some of the issues identified in the research presented here, emerge again in the current study and are reported on in Chapters 6 and 7. Here we expand upon some of the emerging research on the impacts of Conflict legacy on family life, particularly those families most adversely affected. We also explore, from young people and parents' perspectives, ways in which parenting influences children's attitudes and knowledge about the Conflict, their own and others culture and identity.

1.7 Community: Segregation, Sectarianism and Paramilitary Violence

The community impact of the Conflict has been recognised in a number of areas, including violence, segregation, deprivation, policing and sectarianism (in symbols, such as flags, etc.). In this section, the issues discussed have poverty and social deprivation as a cross-running theme. As noted throughout this literature review, this is because the legacy of the Conflict has been felt particularly in areas of high social and economic deprivation.

1.7.1 Violence, Community Relations and Children's Rights

The legacy of the Conflict is having a lasting impact on the daily lives of young people living in particular communities. Chronic sectarianism, segregation, violence and differential policing (real or perceived) are very much part of this legacy. These issues impact negatively on the realisation of children's rights, including: the right to protection from violence (Art. 19), torture or other cruel treatment (Art 37); the right to freedom of expression (Art. 13); the right to freedom of thought, belief and religion (Art. 14); the right to freedom of association (Art. 15); and the right to leisure, play and culture (Art. 31). Article 19 of the UNCRC states that:

States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

Related to this, Article 37 (a) notes:

States Parties shall ensure that a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In addition, UNCRC General Comment No 13 (para. 5) makes clear States obligations to: prevent violence; protect child victims and witnesses; investigate and punish those responsible; provide access to redress.

The most recent Children and Young People's Strategy 2019-2029 highlights the presence of paramilitaries as an ongoing legacy of the Troubles, recognising that organised crime and paramilitary intimidation affect young people living in certain areas. The Executive has committed 'to ending paramilitarism, tackling organised crime and challenging paramilitary attempts to control communities' (DoE, 2019: 66). In addition, in the Strategy document, the Department of Education (2019: 66) vows to 'continue to work together to prevent vulnerable young people from being drawn into organised crime and paramilitary activities', and to 'support the initiatives within the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme which focus on children and young people'.

Segregation and the threat of sectarian or paramilitary-style violence can have a clear impact on the rights defined in Article 31 (the right to play and leisure) and Article 15 (freedom of assembly and association), as children and young people may be/feel unable to access play and leisure facilities in particular areas, feel unsafe participating in cultural activities and/ or meeting with peers in public spaces due to intimidation and threat. Added to this, research has found that young people in interface areas, as well as other communities most affected by the Conflict, report a lack of social infrastructure (i.e. recreational space, social activities) in their neighbourhoods, which leads to boredom, and potential 'antisocial behaviour' (e.g. drinking, rioting, and other criminal behaviour) (Cummings et al., 2016; Hargie et al., 2011). This reality impacts children's right to leisure, play and culture (Art. 31). Indeed, in its 2016 Concluding Comments, the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted concern about 'the underfunding of play and leisure policies in Northern Ireland'.

As noted in Section 1.3 there have been a range of policies and programmes aimed at addressing sectarianism in Northern Ireland. Most recently, Hamilton and McArdle (2020) note the development of nineteen reconciliation and peacebuilding policies and initiatives. The good relations strategy 'Together: Building a United Community' (commonly shortened to T:BUC) contains four key priority areas with 22 commitments under each (Gray et al., 2018), and the new Children and Young People's Strategy also notes community relations and tackling community segregation as an important area of work to tackle the legacy of the Conflict. In this respect, the government pledges to:

continue to work to provide children and young people with more opportunities to learn and socialise together, and build respect for themselves and each other through policies and

programmes such as Together: Building a United Community, the Uniting Communities sport and creativity programme, shared and integrated education, and the promotion of shared spaces (2020: 92).

Despite these policies and related cross-community initiatives, evidence of their impacts has been mixed. There is some evidence, for example, that increased cross-community contact is related to more positive attitudes towards the 'other' community and more support for peace building and civic engagement (McKeown & Taylor, 2017; McKnight & Schubotz, 2017). However, there appears to be still a range of structural barriers for young people to fully benefit from these, and they might not be enough to tackle the disadvantages experienced by young people in interface and other materially and resource deprived areas. working-class or less-off areas. Children and young people, as noted below, and within Chapters 5 and 8 of this report, also continue to report barriers to accessing provision, the limitations of current provision and the persistent impacts of segregation and residual violence on their lives.

1.7.2 Themes and Developments in Historical Research (Pre-2010)

1.7.2.1 Space, Safety and Segregation

Northern Ireland has been characterised by segregation, as people usually attend separate schools, worship in separate places, socialise within their own communities, and largely live in separate residential areas (O'Halloran & McIntyre, 1998). The impacts of division on children and young people have been well-researched. Many have been found to limit their movements, avoiding areas where the 'other' community live, where they feel unsafe/in danger/at risk (Hamilton, Bell, & Hansson, 2008; Healy, 2006; Jarman & Bell, 2009; Leonard, 2006b; Roche, 2008). Thus, for many children in working-class, or interface/enclave areas, their movements have tended to be intra-area movements and they have been 'cocooned' into never leaving or having to leave their own communities (Roche, 2008). Children and young people have reported being concerned about a lack of safety and quality of public spaces in which they play and socialise (Kilkelly et al., 2004). In addition, their fear and concern for their own safety has prevented young people then seeking work in areas where the 'other' community lives, further intensifying the social exclusion to which they were already exposed (Hargie, Dickson, & O'Donnell, 2006). These experiences have been often reported as gendered, as in some studies, young males felt more at risk than girls (Jarman & Bell, 2009), although girls also felt that paramilitary activity and community unrest were part of their daily lives (Healy, 2006).

Perceptions of safety appear, at least in part, informed by actual experiences of sectarianism or paramilitary-style violence. Children in past research, for example, have described experiencing

sectarian abuse on their journeys to/from school, as their religion was identifiable from their school uniforms (Kilkelly et al., 2004; Leonard, 2006a). Some also felt that their school uniform prevented them from venturing into particular shops or shopping centres within their towns, or those perceived to be used more by the 'other' community (Jarman & Bell, 2009). Leonard (2007) found that between one-third to one-half of the teenagers from three of the four participating schools in her study, who lived in North Belfast, defined their homes as unsafe. In particular, those living at the edge of the interface provided accounts of their homes having been attacked. Although schools have been described as places of safety, teenagers also identified their journeys to and from school, and the school itself as potentially risky. That was particularly the case among those attending schools closest to the interface (Leonard, 2006a). The teenagers' perceptions were based on their frequent experiences of being physically or verbally attacked on their way to school and within school grounds. A small number of those who took part in the study had difficulties coping with these experiences; they had nightmares, were afraid of the dark, or were on medication to help them sleep.

1.7.2.2 Sectarian and Paramilitary Violence

As previously argued, sectarian and paramilitary violence has continued to affect young people after the 1998 Agreement. In 2003, 65% (599) of children in primary schools in Belfast reported considerable experience with political violence, seven per cent having been picked up by the police, 31% being caught up in a riot, 37% seeing/hearing people shooting guns; and 38% hearing a bomb go off (Muldoon, Cassidy, & McCullough, 2009). In 2004, 30% of YLT respondents had a family member or friend that had been injured as a result of a sectarian incident and eight per cent of respondents had been threatened by a paramilitary group (Morrow, 2008). The same survey revealed that two per cent of young people had been a victim of a 'paramilitary beating' and 16% had a member of their family or a close friend who had been injured in a paramilitary attack (McMahon & Keenan, 2008). As argued by Haydon, McAlister and Scraton (2012), an adult perception of a 'policing vacuum' post-1998 Agreement, and continued community mistrust of the police, has meant that some young people are still 'policed' and 'punished' by paramilitary-style groups.

Smyth and Campbell (2005) reported that violence from both sides of the community, either organised by paramilitary groups or perpetrated by young people engaged in rioting, continued after the 1994 ceasefires, particularly along interfaces and at particular times of the year. They talked about violence between rival groups of young people, with confrontations along interfaces sometimes involving the use of petrol bombs. Some have referred to the continuation of sectarian rioting among children and young people as 'recreational rioting' (e.g. Jarman, 2001). Others have

suggested, however, that this conceptualization negates the social, cultural and historical context of the communities within which this behaviour takes place (Haydon, McAlister and Scraton, 2012; McAlister, Haydon and Scraton, 2013). In a study of 14 year olds, Leonard (2004) found that, as well as being exciting and an escape from boredom, the young people saw rioting as a way of expressing their religious/political identity. McAlister, Scraton and Haydon (2009) also noted that sectarian rioting and rioting against the police was expressed by some young people in their research as a means of defending space, asserting identity and expressing resistance. They also noted the role of paramilitary-style groups in inciting violence towards the 'other' community and/or the police among children and young people in some communities. Related to this, Muldoon et al. (2008) explored the perceived motivations of young people's engagement in paramilitary activity, with 14-16 year olds (n=74) living in the Border Region of Ireland. The most frequent explanations young people gave relied on social identification issues (e.g. patriotism and collective action) and highlighted perceived group inequities and grievances, which continued to exist in Northern Ireland.

1.7.3 Recent Developments in Research

1.7.3.1 Space, Safety and Segregation

As previously noted, because of the legacy of the Conflict, many children and young people continue to grow up in segregated communities, where they never or barely ever socialise with people from the 'other' community (Browne & Dwyer, 2014; McAlister, Haydon and Scraton, 2013; McMullan, 2018). In McMullan's (2018) study, young people spoke of navigating their way through divided spaces, using a range of strategies to ensure their safety. Bell's study of young people in Belfast interfaces also found participants talk about developing a knowledge of where to go and not to go from those close to them, including parents, friends and wider family (Bell, 2013b), although they did not always uncritically accept their narratives (Bell, 2013a). In addition, many were unwilling to 'venture' into areas where the 'other' community lived, especially young males who were afraid of being 'beaten up' if they crossed the interface (ibid.). As in other historic studies, Bell (ibid.) found that young people's limited and restricted mobility had a negative impact on their ability to access services and shops.

GPS devices have been used in some recent research to track people's everyday movements and understand their micro-geographies (e.g. Davies et al., 2017; Roulston & Young, 2013). From their small-scale study examining the movements of pupils from Post-Primary Schools in Coleraine, Roulston et al. (2017) argued that living in a deeply divided society impacted the movements and mobility of young people. They found that usage patterns of each area, for either Catholic or Protestant young people, depended on whether the area was where one side of the

community or the other lived. There was also evidence showing that the young people were using cars to cross arterial routes around and through these housing areas separately. Thus, they were better described as 'co-used', rather than 'shared'. It was, however, also recognised that there appeared to be routes used by both communities, although their use may not have been concurrent in time.

In terms of attitudes and preference towards segregation, since 2003, the YLT survey of 16 year olds in NI has been asking young respondents whether they would prefer to live in a religiously mixed neighbourhood, work in a religiously mixed workplace and send their children to religiously mixed schools. In 2018, 21%, 9%, and 32% of 16-year-olds stated they preferred to live, go to work, and send their children to school with people of the same identity respectively (ARK, 2018). Based on the YLT survey results from 2003 to 2009¹⁷, Devine and Schubotz (2014) found that religious and national identities were the strongest predictors of segregation preferences among the participants, followed by gender, urban/rural area, experience of segregation, and whether they identified themselves as Protestant or Catholic. Thus, 16 year olds who were more religious and whose national and religious identity was very important to them were more likely to prefer to live, work and go to school with people of the same religious/community background. In addition, 16 year olds living in rural areas of Northern Ireland were more supportive of segregation, whereas being female or having lived outside NI was associated with lower levels of support for segregation.

1.7.3.2 Sectarian and Paramilitary Violence

In recent studies, paramilitary activity and sectarian violence has been reported as continuing to affect young people, particularly in working class communities and socio-economically deprived, mostly urban and interface, areas (Bell, 2013a; Cummings et al., 2016; Harland & McCready, 2012, 2014; McAlister, Dwyer & Carr, 2018; McAlister, Haydon & Scraton, 2013; Morrow & Byrne, 2020; Napier, Gallagher & Wilson, 2017). Regarding the persistence of paramilitary influence and control, of 1,081 adult respondents to the 2017 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey, 14 per cent agreed and three per cent strongly agreed that young people are being influenced too much by paramilitary groups in their area (18% neither agreed nor disagreed) (Duncan & Browne, 2019). The YLT Survey from the same year reported that eight per cent of young people agreed and three per cent strongly agreed that paramilitary groups had a controlling influence in their area. However, fewer young people than adults perceived that young people were being

¹⁷ In 2009, 24%, 10%, and 40% of 16-year-olds stated they preferred to live, go to work, and send their children to school with people of the same identity respectively (Devine & Schubotz, 2014).

influenced too much by paramilitaries in their area (two per cent strongly agreed, and seven per cent agreed) (ARK, 2017).

Recently, in Morrow and Byrne's (2020: 67) study, youth workers and members of youth organisations that took part corroborated 'the continuing, pervasive nature and relative tolerance of "paramilitary (armed group) activity" in certain areas'. Indeed, in McAlister, Dwyer and Carr's (2018) study, many respondents felt that paramilitaries still controlled some communities and particularly targeting young people. They interviewed 38 young women and men aged 16 to 25 and 29 adult service providers in three areas of Northern Ireland (one predominantly Catholic/Nationalist, one predominantly Protestant/Unionist and an interface area). All of the young people interviewed had indirect experience of paramilitaries (e.g. knowing friends or family members who had been targeted or involved in these groups) and over half also had direct experiences (e.g. witnessing or experiencing shootings, beatings or personal threats). As a result, young people often felt fearful and unsafe in their communities. They also linked attacks on young people with poor mental health, problematic drug and alcohol use (as a coping mechanism), and suicide. Indeed, some research has explored the link between paramilitary intimidation with male suicides. Of the 402 deaths recorded as suicides between 2007-2009, Mallon et al. (2019) found that for 19 male suicides, there were incidents of paramilitary intimidation in the twelve months prior to death.

McAlister and Rodgers (2019), drawing on a range of research and practice experience, argue that 'children experiencing paramilitary violence in the form of intimidation and threats (mental violence), physical attacks and witnessing attacks on others, constitutes a breach of [their] rights'¹⁸. Particularly their rights to protection from violence and exploitation (Art. 19), but also their rights to freedom of association (Art. 15), to play and leisure (Art. 31), to education (Art. 28), to survival and development (Art. 6) due to the impacts of violence on many aspects of their lives. They report young people themselves questioning the State's ability and willingness to 'protect, prohibit and respond to' (para. 11a, UNCRC General Comment No. 13 cited in *ibid.*) paramilitary abuse. Low clear-up rates and lack of supports for children and young people, affected (i.e. redress), possibly because many do not report their experiences, is further evidence of the State not meeting their obligations.

Hargie, O'Donnell and McMullan (2011) have found that paramilitary-style groups also play a role in contributing to social exclusion. They interviewed young people from deprived interface areas of Belfast. Their findings suggested that the existence of paramilitary groups rendered cross-

¹⁸ Blogpost from - <https://participationforprotection.wordpress.com/>

community socializing non-existent, as they discouraged young people from engaging with the community on the other side of the walls, and they posed a very real danger to anyone from the 'other' community if they visited their area. Young people in the study were reluctant to travel outside of their neighbourhoods to socialise or seek employment.

There have also been studies examining young people's exposure to different types of violence, including sectarian and paramilitary violence (e.g. Cummings et al., 2016; McAlister, Haydon & Scraton, 2013). Qualitative and quantitative findings from a large longitudinal study of child/mother dyads in Belfast interface areas indicated that young people perceived greater risk of being exposed to violence within their own communities (i.e. being assaulted or abused by members of their own community) rather than within the 'other' community. In addition, a few participants – mostly older ones (15-18 year olds) – also talked about taking part in violent activities themselves, including criminal damage (Cummings et al., 2016). The authors also found that for young people that were engaging in sectarian behaviours (mostly older – aged 15-18), these activities usually took the form of rioting with the 'other' community, and their reasons behind it included 'defence of the area'. Despite low levels of exposure to sectarian violence, 51 percent of the participants felt at least some insecurity about their community, and this affected their mental health (ibid).

In another study conducted in six different economically deprived neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland, young people experienced/were involved in different types of violence, including sectarian violence, rioting and racist violence (all perceived as part of defending their neighbourhoods) as well as experiencing paramilitary-related violence. Overall, many experienced and/or witnessed high levels of community violence, which they felt was part of community life (McAlister, Haydon & Scraton, 2013). Significant numbers reported feeling unsafe in particular spaces or at particular times. The authors of this study highlighted the association between gender and violence, as adult interviewees often discussed the enduring relationship between violence, lack of opportunities and masculine identity in Northern Ireland.

The relationship between masculinity and violence in Northern Ireland has been described in several other studies – both since 2010 (Ashe & Harland, 2014; Harland, 2011; Harland & McCready, 2015) and prior to 2010 (Harland, 2009; Jarman & Bell, 2009). Some studies have focused exclusively on young men, while many other fail to disaggregate gender in their analysis¹⁹. For instance, in a five-year longitudinal study of adolescent boys in socio-economically deprived areas, Harland and McCready (2014) found that these boys were concerned about their

¹⁹ Few studies have focused exclusively on young women. Notable exceptions are Gray and Neill (2011), Marshall (2012), McAlister and Neill (2007), and Jarman (2005b).

own personal safety, as they experienced different forms of violence and reported ongoing incidences of sectarianism and racism in their communities. They were in constant conflict with the police while simultaneously being hassled by paramilitaries, who carried out threats and attacks on them and their peers for so called anti-social behaviour. However, the young men in this study felt that there was no one they could talk to about their victimization, with 49 per cent of those who were a victim of violence not talking to anyone about it when interviewed aged 11-13, and even a higher percentage – i.e. 68 per cent – not talking about it either during mid-adolescence (age 14–16) (ibid). Similarly, in a study involving 32 young men aged 16-20 in focus groups, Walsh and Schubotz (2019) found that they were often worried about their personal safety and, during late adolescence, started to adopt strategies to avoid violent crime. The authors also found 'clear evidence for continuing spatial inequality which overlaps with socio-religious segregation, inequality and social exclusion' (ibid.: 14), as in the urban areas worst affected by the Troubles, young men's lives remained most affected by violence and crime, while those in more rural and more affluent urban areas tended to be considerably less affected.

1.7.3.3 *Community Relations and Culture*

The term 'culture wars' has been utilised frequently in recent years to refer to a range of issues in Northern Ireland, including flags, bonfires, parades and language rights. Indeed, it has been argued that the political conflict has changed into a cultural one (Gray et al., 2018). In Northern Ireland, culture has been used to compare, defend or denigrate identities and traditions, and collective identities are entangled with emotional and intangible dimensions and attachments to symbols and traditions (McKnight & Schubotz, 2017). Thus, flags, murals and kerbstone paintings are key markers of ethno-national identity. This was evident in the prolonged Loyalist protests and unrest that followed Belfast City Council's decision, in December 2012, to fly the Union flag over Belfast City Hall on 18 designated days, rather than every day (ibid.). Durrer et al. (2020) explored Northern Irish 16-year olds' perceptions and understandings of what counts as culture through a set of questions in the YLT survey and additional focus groups. They found that young people only attribute cultural value to activities that 'are attached to heritage, tradition, family, religion and/or local identity' and thus those that are, 'to a degree, reflective of the history and the contested nature of culture in Northern Ireland' (ibid.: 14).

In Bell's (2013a) study of young people living in Belfast interface areas, it was found that events like parades, the flying of flags, and soccer matches appeared to increase tensions in the youth's communities. Marching season was also described as a time of heightened tension. In another study of teenagers' perceptions and experiences of growing up in interface areas in Belfast, young people tended to experience Orangefest and St Patrick's parades as single identity events

aimed at one or other community, which reflected competing rights to city centre space (Leonard & McKnight, 2015). Many young people appeared to feel pride in their respective exclusive identities and this feeling was intensified when attending these parades, while they often felt disinclined to participate in what was perceived as the 'other community's celebration of an exclusive identity' (ibid: 204).

When comparing community relations attitudes between adults and 16 year olds in the YLT surveys, McKnight and Schubotz (2017) found that young people's attitudes to community relations were more pessimistic than adults' in almost all years between 2003 and 2015. The most recent results from the YLT (i.e. results for 2019) also suggest that 16 year olds appear to have grown more pessimistic in the last few years regarding future community relations. Considering community relations in five years' time, only 34% believed that they will be better, compared to 50% in 2011 or 45% in 2016 and 2014. Indeed, 15% believed they will be worse (compared to 6% in 2011 and 7% in 2016 and 2014). When examining the qualitative responses to an open-ended question in the YLT regarding community relations in 2008, 2013, and 2016, Kelly (2018) divided the comments left by 16 year olds into three broad themes: 'good, getting there', 'more needs to be done', and 'not good, still divided'. The positive comments (i.e. 'good, getting there') dropped from 28% in 2008 to 10% in 2013 and 15% in 2016. She also found that 'respondents who thought more work was required included references to increasing opportunities for more cross-community integration; forgetting the past; and the need for more respect' (ibid.: 6). In addition, those who made negative comments across the three years often mentioned damaging generational influences, as well as disillusionment with politicians and the political system.

This overview of past and more recent research demonstrates that persistent segregation continues to impact the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland, particularly those living in interface, and under-resourced single identity areas. It impacts their choices and opportunities, their movements and feelings of safety, and their opportunities to meet with those from the 'other' community. While it is unclear if the impacts of segregation have lessened over time, recent research does demonstrate that some children and young people are impacted in similar ways to previous generations. Added to this, recent survey findings also demonstrate that a significant number of young people have a preference for segregated living and education (21% and 32% respectively) (ARK, 2018). This might suggest the normalcy of segregation among some. It is also evident that attitudes are impacted by the socio-political context of the time. This is demonstrated by the fluctuation, over time, in young people's belief that community relations will be better/ worse in the future. While it is disappointing that over the past five years increasing

proportions of young people think that community relations will be worse in the future, this speaks to the reality of what they currently grow up in, and what they view as their future.

Another consistent theme, over time, is children's exposure to Conflict-related violence. While some research demonstrates that paramilitary-style activity today is different to twenty years ago (see Napier et al., 2017), an increasing body of research is highlighting the continued impacts on communities, families, children and young people. Only recently has this begun to be framed as a child rights issue, with the physical and mental health impacts of hearing, witnessing or personally experiencing intimidation and abuse considered. The framing of children and young people affected by paramilitarism as victims of Conflict-related violence is in its relative infancy. More broadly, the longer term impacts are yet unknown, and some areas have not been fully explored, including: the particular experiences and impacts on young women; the impacts on families (parents and siblings) of children being threatened and abused; the impacts on children and the wider family of parents being threatened and abused. Some of these issues emerge, to an extent, in the current research and are reported on in Chapters 5 and 8.

1.8 Education

The research literature on the impact of the Conflict on education and the formal education system in Northern Ireland has mainly focused on the segregated school system (including shared education and integrated education), history teaching (or the lack of formal teaching on the history of the Troubles) and citizenship education. Some (but less) focus has been given to the impact of Conflict and sectarian violence on school achievement, particularly for young people living in marginalised and socio-economically deprived areas.

1.8.1 Education and Children's Rights

Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC refer to children's right to education – broadly, access to education and development through education. In Northern Ireland, the education system is highly divided, along religious lines and through academic selection. There are many types of schools, including Catholic Maintained, Controlled, integrated schools, Irish-medium schools, single sex, grammar, secondary (non-grammar) schools, etc. The existence of so many schools is partly a result of the divided past and its legacy. In 2019/20, most pupils continue to attend segregated schools, i.e. either in the 'controlled' sector (mostly attended by Protestant children) or the 'maintained' sector (mostly attended by Catholic children), and only seven per cent attend integrated schools²⁰. The Department of Education has publicly aimed to promote and facilitate shared education, where pupils continue to attend their own schools but participate in joint

²⁰ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-northern-ireland-summary-data>

classes and activities with pupils from other school types. As of May 2018, there had been over 583 educational settings from across all sectors engaged in the delivery of Shared Education to more than 59,000 pupils (ibid.). The Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 represented a step forward in embedding sharing within the Northern Ireland education system. However, according to the UK Children's Commissioners (2015), concerns have been raised about the quality of some shared education initiatives, the opportunity for all pupils to take part and the sustainability of shared education. Thus, in their 2016 Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that the State Party:

actively promote a fully integrated education system and carefully monitor the provision of shared education, with the participation of children, in order to ensure that it facilitates social integration.

In addition, Northern Ireland's education system displays marked inequalities, with particular groups of children more likely or at risk of underachieving, including Traveller children, children from ethnic backgrounds and children from disadvantaged areas (see in particular research on educational underachievement and protestant working class males, see McManus 2015; Purvis et al. 2011). NICCY (2018c) identified educational inequalities as one of their nine key priority areas of work, and they argue that: 'It is unclear whether children and young people in Northern Ireland are getting an effective education in line with Article 29(1) of the UNCRC'.

Drawing on an example from their research, McAlister, Dwyer and Carr (2018) also demonstrate how young people's right to access education (UNCRC, Art 28) can be impacted if they are under paramilitary threat, as they can be excluded from college on the basis that their presence is a threat to the safety of others. More broadly, some have argued that political conflict and sectarian violence can have a negative impact on academic achievement and young people's educational aspirations (e.g. Cairns, 1996; Connolly & Neill, 2001). Thus, the child's right to learning and development through education is key in the context of conflict legacy. Art. 29, (1) of the UNCRC, for example, states:

States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;*
- (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;*

- (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;*
- (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;*
- (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.*

Education, therefore, should play a role in developing children's understanding of their own and other cultures and ethno-national identities, to enhance understanding, integration, respect and tolerance. On this basis, and in the context of NI, it could be argued that schools have a role to play in teaching about the Conflict, and about culture and ethno-national identity. Some of these issues arise in the literature reviewed below, although they tend not to be framed in the context of children's rights.

1.8.2 Themes and Developments in Historical Research (Pre-2010)

1.8.2.1 Segregated Education

As is the case with other ethno-nationally divided societies, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, the school system in Northern Ireland is highly segregated along sectarian lines, but also in terms of academic achievement. Most children attend either maintained (Catholic) or controlled (mostly Protestant) schools, both publicly funded. This segregation appears to be resistant to change, and it has been well entrenched in Northern Irish people's outlooks. Thus, most recent figures provided by the DoE show that 65 per cent of pupils who attend (primary, secondary and grammar) controlled schools are Protestant and 95 per cent of pupils at Catholic maintained schools are Catholic (DoE, 2021).

Segregation in the school system in Northern Ireland, as in other societies affected by conflict like Cyprus (Zembylas, 2010), could be considered both a symptom of conflict, but as perpetuating division and conflict. In fact, a segregated denominational education system already existed long before period colloquially known as 'the Troubles', and was often blamed as contributing to community division and helping reproduce conflict (Gallagher, 2004b). Since then, three different theories have been offered to explain the impact of segregated education in Northern Ireland's society (ibid.). The 'cultural hypothesis' emphasises differences in the curriculum of the segregated schools, as enhancing community divisions. The 'social hypothesis' claims that a segregated schooling system encourages mutual ignorance and mutual suspicion, by

emphasising group differences, regardless of the curriculum. Finally, the third perspective suggests that segregated education is irrelevant and that the Conflict is mainly explained by material inequalities and injustice. Since a consensus was never reached among educationalists, three large intervention strategies were followed to help promote reconciliation and tolerance among pupils. The first consisted of introducing curricular initiatives within the existing education system. One of these initiatives is the Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) programme, initiated in 1983, which encouraged schools to bring in themes related to community relations as part of their curriculum. The second strategy involved contact programmes between pupils in Protestant and Catholic schools, and the third involved developing integrated schools.

All three main strategic approaches have been supported by the government, through the measures contained in the Education Reform Order (ERO) (1989). ERO, which took effect in 1991, introduced a statutory common curriculum for all schools, which included two compulsory 'cross-curricular themes' related to the issue of community relations: Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage. Under these themes, schools have been encouraged, although not required, to be involved in contact programmes. These initiatives have been formalised and financed by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) through the Schools Community Relations Programme (SCRCP). Although there have been exemplars of good practice, research evidence suggests 'that the success of such cross-community contact schemes, and in particular the SCRCP, is rather limited', due to 'the lack of a coherent definition of community relations and the often selective nature of the pupils participating in the programmes' (McEvoy, 2007: 138). In turn, it has also been acknowledged by DENI that EMU was ineffective in managing issues concerning social justice and political education, probably due to overemphasising the nature of individual prejudice, failing to acknowledge the political nature of the Conflict and lacking any reference to human rights principles (Boyle, 1996; McEvoy and Lundy, 2006; McEvoy, 2007).

In order to improve on these initiatives and with an added reconciliation agenda, the Sharing Education Programme (SEP), managed by Queen's University Belfast, was funded originally for three years (SEP1, 2007-2010) 'to encourage schools to make cross-sectoral collaborations an integral part of school life, creating enhanced educational development opportunities for everyone involved' (QUB, 2011). SEP1 and its follow-up SEP2 (2009-2013) involved 158 schools in 54 partnerships, with around 35,800 pupils taking part in about 28,300 hours of shared activity (Gray et al., 2018). Shared education involves denominational schools collaborating and offering lessons or activities for mixed groups of pupils. Pupils move between the schools to attend these shared classes, and contact is meant to occur at least weekly. In addition, the ERO included

provisions to support the development of integrated education. This led to the Department funding the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), and the creation of mechanisms in legislation to transform existing schools to integrated status.

The role of integrated education in addressing community divisions in Northern Ireland has been the focus of a plethora of studies. That is despite the fact that such research faces considerable difficulties, as integrated schools are over-researched (constituting only a small number of schools), pupils are difficult to track down when conducting longitudinal research, and segregated schools are likely to be less keen in taking part in studies about integrated versus segregated education (McGlynn et al., 2004). In general, research findings from these studies suggest a positive effect of integrated education on children and young people's sectarian attitudes (ibid., 2004), as well as long-term benefits on the adult population in promoting positive community relations (Hayes & McAllister, 2009).

Despite developments as a direct result of the ERO (1989) Gallagher (2004b: 128) argued that 'there remain some difficulties regarding the quality of the activity and its direct impact on community relations objectives'. Evaluations of these initiatives revealed that they often 'failed to address issues of division and conflict', by merely reproducing 'the degree of "polite" contact that existed in the wider society' (ibid.: 128). Furthermore, the implementation of cross-curricular themes in schools was greatly varied, with potentially divisive issues being regularly avoided by teachers who were already dealing with an overloaded curriculum and did not feel adequately trained for such work (Smith & Robinson, 1996, cited in McGlynn et al. 2004).

Some research had also been carried out into young people's attitudes towards segregated education. For instance, in 2009, the YLT survey found that if they had a choice, 60% of 16 year olds would prefer to live in a mixed-religion neighbourhood; 74% would prefer to work in a mixed-religion workplace; but only 45% would send their own children to a mixed-religion school (ARK, 2009). This latter percentage had reduced slightly from 2007, when 49% of the 16 year olds said that they would prefer to send their children to a mixed-religion school (ARK, 2007).

1.8.2.2 History Teaching

A key consequence of the 1989 Order was the introduction of a common history curriculum. Prior to 1989, schools had been free to choose what they taught in history lessons which are compulsory for children between 5-14 years old. After the introduction of a common curriculum, it was argued that 'a significant number of schools, if they could, avoided teaching about Northern Ireland's recent past altogether as it was felt to be too controversial a topic' (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010: 25). In fact, at a primary level, the curriculum evades political history altogether

(Barton & McCully, 2010), by focusing on historic societies in Ireland and elsewhere, far removed in time or space (Barton, 2001a). The focus in these stages is on understanding 'what life was like at the time, rather than on studying how the events of a given period led to the structure of contemporary society' (Barton, 2001b: 99).

National political history is taught in the first three years of post-primary school, featuring a core module, each year, focusing on a particular period: the Normans on the mediaeval world; the English conquest and colonization of Ireland in the 16th and 17th centuries; and the growth of Irish nationalism and unionism from the Act of Union to Partition, within the context of European nationalist movements and World War I (Barton & McCully, 2005). Thus, as Barton & McCully (2005: 9-10) note:

the required curriculum in Northern Ireland ends with partition in 1921; unless students elect to study history at a higher level, they will have no exposure to most of the events of the past 80 years, and therefore connections between past and present will necessarily remain indirect.

This is not exceptional in deeply divided societies emerging from violent conflicts, as reforming the curriculum can be a contentious matter, and historical narratives are often closely attached to each separate community's identity and sense of victimisation (Cole & Barsalou, 2006). However, research has suggested that many young people are interested in being taught controversial and sensitive topics, such as the Troubles, in school (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010; Conway, 2006).

In a study of a selection of history textbooks produced to meet the aims of the common curriculum, Kitson (2007: 149) found that 'they tend to stop short of asking more challenging questions' or addressing more sensitive aspects of the past, and it is very much left to the individual history teachers (McCully, 2010). Kitson (2007) concluded that despite having a common curriculum, the history that was taught in each of the participating schools was distinctive and unique, in terms of teachers differing levels of readiness to explore past-present connections and different historical perspectives with their pupils. In other studies, children and young people have talked about teachers actively avoiding talking about the Troubles in class (Magill, Smith & Hamber, 2009). These studies not only raise questions about the nature, quality and parity of education/learning, but support and training for teachers, including: 'How can teachers be trained or prepared to address these subjects, and how can they be supported and protected in

environments where disagreements over history might give rise to violence?' (Cole & Barsalou, 2006: 3).

Barton and McCully (2003) also highlighted two crucial issues that were not explicitly addressed in the history curriculum in Northern Ireland. Firstly, there is no attempt to bring students to formulate their own identities in historical terms; and secondly, connections between historical events and contemporary issues were not pointed out. Thus, students were not presented with an alternative common official narrative aiming to justify the present situation or explain current concerns, but with a different way of approaching history, i.e. a 'rationalistic approach' involving a distanced, analytical perspective that balanced conflicting, competing viewpoints (Barton & McCully, 2010). The curriculum was revised again in 2007, and it further consolidated the enquiry dimension within history while strengthening the focus on the subject's social utility in a post-conflict context. For instance, current provision requires teachers to explore with pupils 'the impact of history on their sense of identity, culture and lifestyle, its role in influencing stereotypes and the way the past can be used and abused in contemporary politics (CCEA, 2007 cited in McCully & Reilly, 2017: 306). Consequently, children might be learning one kind of history at school, while simultaneously learning a separate form of historical knowledge associated with sectarian memories and political conflict from other sources, such as parents and other relatives, or even murals or marches (Barton & McCully, 2003).

It has been recognised that 'the teaching of history is of particular significance in contested societies and stands out as an area of the curriculum particularly open to charges of bias and prejudice' (Smith & Vaux, 2003: 31). Some research has been conducted with young people on their perceptions of history education in Northern Ireland (i.e. Barton, 2001a, 2001b; Barton & McCully, 2005, 2010; Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010). A study conducted between 2009 and 2010, which consisted of a survey of 958 young people and focus groups with 238 young people, explored the way young people learned about the past and where their understandings of history came from (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010). The authors found that young people tended to distinguish very clearly between two interpretations of the word 'history': history as an academic subject (which seemed to be more abstract and largely less important to their lives); and the idea of history as directly relevant to people now, i.e. the past that had affected local people and even family members (e.g the Troubles). Making connections between the past and the present, the research found that:

For some, the Troubles have not finished and ongoing segregation and sectarianism were visible examples of the legacy of the past for a number of young people who lived in particular locations and in particular communities (McCaffery & Hansson, 2011: 44).

The findings from the survey revealed three main influences on young people's knowledge and understanding of the past: parents (52%), school (47%) and relatives (25%) (ibid.). Although just 31 per cent of respondents found history in school 'enjoyable', the majority recognised the importance of learning about history and many welcomed the opportunity to learn about the recent past through formal education. Young people and educators felt that talking about the very recent past could generate 'heated debate' and had 'the potential to offend' (ibid.). However, as discussed previously, they believed these subjects should be addressed and discussed in schools. The authors also found that young people's knowledge acquired through school (especially if they had studied history for longer into GCSEs or A Levels) tended to differ from their 'social' knowledge of events (McCaffery & Hansson, 2011).

1.8.3 Recent Developments in Research

1.8.3.1 Impact on Educational Outcomes

While some past research has examined, or alluded to, the combined impacts of deprivation and the Conflict on educational outcomes (e.g. Connolly & Neill, 2001), this has been an area of continued investigation given the enduring legacies of the Conflict. Horgan (2011), for example, in noting the relationship between poverty, conflict legacy and ill-health/disability pointed to the disproportionate numbers of children from families in receipt of benefits leaving school with no qualifications. Additionally, longitudinal research with 378 adolescent boys (Harland and McCready, 2012) highlighted the extent to which violence, including paramilitarism, was the backdrop to the lives of many. While not drawing a direct correlation between conflict legacy and educational underachievement, the issue was certainly acknowledged as an influencing factor. In a study of 770 mother-child dyads (already mentioned in previous sections), Goeke-Morey et al. (2013) also found that educational outcomes were particularly poor for young people living in socially and economically deprived areas. Several factors were identified as exerting some influence on academic achievement, school behaviour problems, and educational attainment expectations. Family factors were particularly relevant, and the research found a significant association between family conflict plus poor family cohesion and poor academic achievement. It also found that behavioural problems in school, particularly extreme externalising ones leading to being suspended or expelled, were associated with awareness of sectarian and non-sectarian antisocial behaviour in their neighbourhood.

A more recent study focused on the barriers to participation and progression in education, training and employment for young people, aged 16-24, at risk of involvement in paramilitary organisations (Lucas, Sturgeon & Jarman, 2019). The most commonly identified barriers were economic. The authors also highlighted the considerable amount of chaos characterising the lives

of young people in the study, as well as the high level of special educational needs, which schools and other educational outlets were ill-equipped for. Other important issues were mental health and often associated substance abuse or addiction, heavily disrupting their learning opportunities; poor experiences of mainstream schooling, impacting on their confidence and self-esteem; and their concerns in relation to a lack of job opportunities and low pay. The 'post-conflict' environment also added barriers, such as youth being reluctant to go into certain areas for training or work opportunities because they did not feel at ease or safe.

1.8.3.2 Segregated Education

In terms of the segregation of the education system, over the years, additional policy and legislative frameworks have advocated for, and promoted the development of, shared and integrated education. As noted above, in 1989, the Education Reform Order (ERO) (NI) gave the Department of Education (DE) a duty to 'encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education'. The Education Act (Northern Ireland) (2014) created additional duties on the Education Authority to 'encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education', while a similar responsibility has been allocated to the Department of Education through the Shared Education Act (2016). These, and additional developments, demonstrate a need and desire to address some of the potentially negative impacts of segregated education.

More recent studies have expanded the evidence for categorisation and contact theory²¹. Thus, studies comparing children attending denominational schools with children in integrated schools have found the latter to 'have more positive attitudes towards the out group, more moderate positions on political and constitutional issues and greater respect for the other group's culture and religion' (Gallagher et al., 2019: 11). It is suggested that these differences are caused by the opportunity for contact in integrated schools and more frequent and positive encounters with peers from the 'other' community (ibid.). Research on shared education has revealed similar findings, whereby pupils participating in shared education had higher numbers of cross-group friendships (ibid.).

Regarding shared education, in 2014, the government and Atlantic Philanthropies funded a Shared Education Signature Project (SESP) over a four-year period. This aimed to engage most schools and pupils across NI in substantive shared education. In addition, in 2016, the Special EU Programmes Body provided funding from the PEACE IV Programme to the;

provision of direct, sustained, curriculum based contact between pupils and teachers from all backgrounds through collaboration between schools from different sectors in order to

²¹ Contact theory (Allport, 1954) has evolved from the premise that, under certain conditions, intergroup contact can reduce hostility and improve intergroup relations.

promote good relations and enhance children's skills and attitudes to contribute to a cohesive society (Gray et al., 2018).

In the Department of Education's School Omnibus Survey (2016), 58 per cent of respondents (242 schools) stated that they had partnered in shared education. The most common types of shared activities were 'projects with pupils from other schools' (72%), 'shared resources' (47%), and 'shared classes with pupils from other schools' (42%). Duffy and Gallagher (2014) argued that 'effective collaboration between schools in Northern Ireland mitigates the potentially negative impacts of educating children separately', 'providing enhanced learning opportunities for pupils' (2014: 1). In addition, in a recent study using social network analysis, Robinson et al. (2020) found that through shared education initiatives, teachers were able to utilise network opportunities for themselves and their pupils, and establish professional and informal networks. Another recent study reported that the use of a virtual learning environment (VLE) in shared education programmes had 'the greatest impact on pupils' knowledge and attitudes towards each other' (Austin & Turner, 2020: 1). Teachers claimed that a 'blended learning' approach 'made a positive impact on friendship development, the capacity of children to work together, respect for difference and normalising relations between their pupils' (ibid.).

Despite a good degree of evidence pointing to the positive outcomes of shared education (e.g. Borooah & Knox, 2013; Hughes et al., 2012; Loader & Hughes, 2017a), some studies have shown that it does not necessarily lead to more meaningful cross-community contact between pupils from the two backgrounds. For instance, Loader and Hughes (2017b) found that most of the pupils that took part in their research did not develop friendships with those from the school with whom they had shared the same classroom for a year or more. Only ten out of 60 participants formed close inter-personal relationships through shared classes and activities (ibid.). Thus, Roulston and Hansson argue that:

Shared Education may not always produce effective cross-community contact; and meeting with the out-group 'at least once a week' may be insufficient for the affective relationships to emerge, particularly as most of these students return to highly segregated lives outside their schools (2019: 18).

Other studies point to the limited impact or ability of shared education in the context of deep divisions and ongoing hostilities in certain segregated areas of Northern Ireland. For instance, in a qualitative study exploring social identities and intergroup attitudes among children in a State-controlled Protestant school, Hughes (2011) found that most children had minimal contact with the

'other' community, and probably due to that, expressed considerably prejudiced and stereotypical views. She highlighted the interconnectedness between the school and the local community, the reluctance among teachers to challenge negative aspects of in-group identity and sectarianism, and the school's ambiguity on the issue of identity and its unwillingness to engage with this.

In terms of children and young people's attitudes towards segregated education, recent surveys have shown increasingly progressive attitudes towards integration and shared education. In the Integrated Education Fund's (2015) survey of 1,075 young people aged 16 to 24, for example, the majority agreed that an integrated education system would help combat sectarianism (84%). Over two-thirds (67%) would have liked their school experience to include children from different traditions/background, and almost three-quarters would prefer their own children (if they ever had some) to go to a school with children of all traditions/backgrounds. The figures are, however, lower in the YLT survey, whereby 56% of respondents in the 2019 survey reported that they would prefer to send their child to a 'mixed school'; 32% still reported a preference for a single-identity school (ARK, 2019).

1.8.3.3 History and Citizenship Education

Recent years have seen developments in the teaching of history in schools. Two history teaching initiatives aimed at Key Stage 3 pupils have been evaluated: the 'Facing Our History, Shaping the Future' (FOHSF) initiative and the 'Teaching Divided Histories' (TDH) project. In their analysis of the projects, McCully and Reilly (2017: 314) concluded that:

both projects might be accused of drawing on, yet failing to exploit, the potential for improved intergroup relations, which might be achieved by history teaching incorporating an approach more explicitly informed by social psychology.

They argued that TDH does not appear to fully explore the multiple and complex nature of social identities and FOHSTF advocates that individuals should fight prejudice with compassion. Another initiative, which involved pupils directly engaging with Loyalist and Republican former prisoners, was evaluated by Emerson (2012). Her conclusions were more optimistic about the programme, entitled From Prison to Peace: Learning From the Experience of Political Ex-Prisoners, in terms of its 'potential to assist young people in exploring the complexity of conflict and the intricacies of transition' (p.277).

Niens and Reilly (2012) explored primary and post-primary pupils' understandings of global citizenship in Northern Ireland. Their focus groups with Year 5 and Year 9 students concentrated

on finding out: what they had learned about global issues; as part of which subjects; which materials had been used; and the impact on their views of global citizenship. They found that although young people in the study did not display any racist or sectarian views, 'there was also no evidence of connecting learning about racism and conflict with sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland' (ibid.: 114). More recently, O'Connor et al. (2019) studied the development and implementation of Local and Global Citizenship (LGC) to the Northern Ireland curriculum in 2007. They interviewed a range of key stakeholders directly involved in the design and delivery of the citizenship curriculum. They found that the current educational climate, which emphasises and prioritises quantifiable and rankable outputs, school league tables, exam results and parental choice, hinders any possible innovation. As such, the profile of the LGC curriculum appears to be shrinking and the possibility of it maintaining an innovative profile and regaining any academic foothold looks challenging. The authors, thus, concluded that 'it is clear that its introduction was flawed, its curriculum position is uncertain and, in the current policy environment, radical change is unlikely' (ibid.: 3).

This broad review of research on education and Conflict legacy demonstrates the continued impacts of segregated schooling on children and young people with regards to school choice, opportunities to meet those from the 'other' community and young people's own attitudes towards integrated/ segregated education. Given recognition of the potentially negative consequences of segregated education, a range of policies and interventions have been introduced over the year to enhance shared education and cross-community contact. While many have been found to yield some positive outcomes, difficulties remain in terms of the degree, depth and longevity of integration some initiatives yield. The limitations of shared education initiatives within a wider context of division (e.g. residential segregation; political divisions) has also been raised.

The literature review also demonstrates recognition of the importance of children learning culture, identity and local history (i.e. the Conflict) in schools, and some of the initiatives to address this. Again, while some interventions have been positively evaluated, the long-term impacts are unclear and there appears a lack of consistency in how policies are implemented, and thus experienced.

Many of the issues identified in previous research emerge again in the current research whereby young people discuss their experiences of learning about the Conflict in schools – characterised in their view by selectiveness, partiality or absence – and their views and experiences of segregated education and shared education programmes.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview to some of the key themes that define the research – Conflict legacy; transgenerational legacy; children's rights. A range of policy relating to Conflict legacy and to children and young people is noted. It is evident that (children's) rights are central to many of these. In examining current and past research in relation to key areas of children's lives, however, there remain areas where children's rights are compromised as a result of the Conflict and its legacies.

This review of literature allowed us to identify, at an early stage in the project, the differential experiences and attitudes of young people over time. In many instances, however, it pointed to more continuities than long-term changes. There is also evidence of developments in our understanding of transgenerational impacts, particularly in relation to families and parenting.

The key themes that frame the literature review informed the primary research undertaken with children and young people, parents, community representatives and key stakeholders. In the forthcoming chapters we draw on their accounts to consider change and continuity across two (and sometimes three) generations with regards to the impacts of Conflict legacy on: learning and expressing culture and identity; segregation and sectarianism; health and well-being; family life and parenting; attitudes towards and experiences of paramilitarism and policing. Twenty-three years after the Good Friday/ Belfast Agreement, we consider outstanding rights implications for children, young people and families living in communities heavily impacted by the Conflict.

2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological approach adopted in the study, including methods of data collection and data analysis. We highlight, in particular, the merits associated with a Child Rights Based Approach to research and the efforts to maintain this in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The central aim of the project was to investigate the continuing transgenerational impact of the Troubles/Conflict on the lives of children and young people and parents throughout Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. Building on recommendations from earlier research commissioned by CVSNI (O'Neill et al., 2015) the project adopted a 'two-generation approach' exploring and identifying the experiences and needs of current generations of children and young people and the parent generation, many of whom have lived experiences of the worst years of the Conflict, and the relationships between them.

The study's specific objectives were to:

- Investigate the transgenerational impact of the Conflict's legacy on the lives of children and young people and the parent generation throughout Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland;
- Elicit the views and changing attitudes and perceptions towards the continuing impact of Conflict legacy issues on them and the people around them;
- Examine the nature and extent to which the lives of children and young people and parents are affected by Conflict legacy issues two decades following the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement.

2.2 Methodological Approach: Rights-Based Research

The project was grounded in a Child Rights Based Approach (CRBA) to research developed at the Centre for Children's Rights, Queen's University Belfast (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012). Central to the approach is a commitment to Article 12 of the UNCRC which states that children have the right to an opinion and to have that opinion heard. As such, our starting point in examining the transgenerational impact of the Conflict was to work closely with young people in defining their experiences. Embedding participation in all stages of the project, and reflecting Lundy's (2007)

model of effective participation, the project design and ethos incorporated four elements: providing a safe 'space' for children to express their views; methods that facilitate their 'voice'/views to be expressed; an 'audience' to hear children's views; and a means through which their views can have an 'influence'. As such, children and young people were involved throughout the study including in the: design of data collection instruments, use of participatory methods to capture the views and experiences of children and young people, analysis of research findings, and forming of research recommendations. Key to the implementation of the approach was engagement with Young People's Advisory Groups (YPAGs) who assisted the research team throughout the research process.

2.3 Embedding Expert Voices

2.3.1 Young People's Advisory Groups

Two YPAGs were established at the early stages in the research process. The two groups were recruited from pre-established youth programmes working on issues related to the research aims. This was important for practical and ethical reasons, given the sensitivity of the topic. To ensure representation of cross border/cross-community young people within the cohort, two main areas were identified for the recruitment of participants, Lifford and Derry/Londonderry and a commitment expressed by two youth/community groups, Lifford/Clonleigh Resource Centre and Youth Initiatives. After clarifying organisational consent to recruit young people, two YPAGs were formed with a total of 13 young people across two groups. Eighteen sessions were completed with the YPAGs, nine sessions with each group.²² In addition to sessions focusing on aspects of the research, we also built in visits to maintain relationships over time, and to acknowledge their contribution to the research. On the imposition of Covid-19 restrictions which prohibited face-to-face engagement with young people, sessions were delivered in an online format, with additional sessions undertaken to assist engagement with young people at a distance. One risk of engagement with young people over the period of two years is that some will not remain in the project until completion. This risk was heightened with Covid-19 due to potential reluctance to engage in an online format. As a result, three additional young people were recruited to the Derry/Londonderry YPAG and four young people to the Lifford Group. This was to address the fact that some of those from the original groups were unable/ unwilling to participate online.

²² At the time of writing we are still working with some of these young people to inform the production of a young person's summary of this report.

Sessions were delivered in the same way to both groups. Meeting with the YPAGs intensively at the beginning of the project was important to create a safe *space* for their *voices* to be expressed, captured and implemented in project design. Three sessions with each group, therefore, were built into the first stage of engagement with the YPAGs. The first of these focused on attaining informed consent and introducing the research project and the second sessions were capacity-building, involving detailed discussion on children's rights and why the research was premised on a rights-based approach. The third sessions focused on the co-design of research tools, including interactive research methods to collect data, consent forms and information leaflets, consideration on the use of language and tone of engagement with children and young people, and consultation of planned topics for discussion.

The second stage of engagement with the two YPAGs entailed preparing for data collection, maintaining contact and data sharing. The first session focused on reporting back on how the QUB team had implemented young people's suggestions on designing the research documents and tools – acting as the *audience* for their views and demonstrating how their views had *influence* on the research design.



Following this, the research team were focused on data collection. Given that feedback is a core aspect of the child rights based approach to research, the young advisors were informed of processes, progress and decisions. As both YPAGs expressed a desire to visit QUB when they first became engaged in the project, a feedback and celebration event was arranged to mark their one year involvement, including the presentation of a certificate of participation presented by Judith Thompson (former NI Commissioner for Victims and Survivors). This was an important reminder that the process of their involvement extends beyond *voice* (asking) and listening, and that their views have an *audience* (the Commission) and *influence* (informing future work of the Commission). It, therefore, illustrates our child right based methodology in action.

The final stages of engagement with the YPAGs focused on enhancing young advisors' knowledge and skills in data analysis, in line with the centrality of capacity building to a rights-based approach. We facilitated a number of analysis workshops, enabling the groups to identify

themes related to the data, and a workshop focusing on linking recommendations to the data. Our intention was to further this work by bringing the two groups together and to focus more on recommendations framing and dissemination. Our ability to work with the groups, however, was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 restrictions. The implications were that our engagement had to move to an online forum and we were dependent on youth workers to facilitate this for us, who were extremely supportive and flexible in this regard. The online format restricted the level of work we could engage young people with and impacted their ability to work collaboratively. Additionally, given the sensitive nature of the data we were discussing at this stage, we were acutely aware that young people were often by themselves in the home and did not have the usual support they would if we were in their youth group setting. Therefore, youth workers remained present in the online forum and stayed on with young people after the sessions.

2.3.2 Adult Expert Voices

In addition to the two YPAGs, the research team also benefited from the guidance and advice of two adult research advisory groups: the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) and the Transgenerational Research Advisory Group (TRAG) both established by CVSNI. The RAC and TRAG had input at various points in the research process. In the research design phase they advised on the identification of research sites, the proposed sample, research themes and issues regarding sensitivity and safety. In later stages of the project, meetings provided the research team the opportunity to discuss challenges in terms of gaps in data collection, and to seek the advice of members regarding potential contacts for recruitment. Where possible, members followed up with contact details although in many cases this did not lead to recruitment and the research teams continued to rely on their own existing and new contacts in the research sites. Similar to engagement with YPAGs, meetings with the two adult advisory groups changed to an online format in the context of Covid-19 restrictions. Discussions at this point focused on draft versions of this report, requesting feedback and incorporating this into the final version.

In addition to the two adult advisory groups associated with the project, the research team have also, on CVSNI's request, engaged with the Victims' Practitioners Group on two occasions to provide an overview of the project. This was an opportunity to engage with the sector and to discuss potential for recruitment of research participants. The research team also took the opportunity to formally record the views of participants on the impacts of the Conflict on the lives of young people, and after gaining ethical approval and consent from participants, were able to include this to the data collected in the project. The research team were also requested to engage

with the Victims and Survivors Forum, where much of the discussion focused on recruitment of participants and how the research team could ensure a sensitive approach to data collection.

2.4 Research Site Selection

Initial stages of the project involved the identification of research sites in consultation with the RAC and the TRAG as well as with a number of community and voluntary sector organisations and youth workers. Identification of research sites were informed by the following criteria:

- communities disproportionately impacted by the Conflict and its legacy (e.g. communities that experienced high levels of securitisation, bereavement, border check points, raids on homes, witnessing violence);
- pre-existing contacts and location of Peace IV funded youth projects;
- geographical spread - urban and rural communities, across NI and Border Region of Ireland counties; and ethno-national identity;
- suggestions made by key stakeholders.

Based on the above consultation and criteria, six research sites were identified and agreed with the CVSNI and the research team progressed with recruiting participants across all research sites. Initial access to communities, children and young people and parents across all research sites was negotiated through pre-existing connections with community and youth organisations, the identification of projects being run as part of the Peace IV child and youth programme and in consultation with the TRAG and RAC. Recruitment was a protracted process involving several challenges but nevertheless progressed in five of the six research sites. In one research site, despite prolonged engagement with gatekeepers who indicated support of the study, recruitment of research participants did not progress. The research team followed the advice of gatekeepers in the area who indicated that they could facilitate contact with research participants, however, this did not materialise. Whilst the research team pursued every possibility, it was agreed that a change in research site was necessary in order to progress the research and given the considerable effort and time that had been invested by the research team by this point. Recruitment activities therefore ceased and two new research sites within the same county were introduced to ensure we recruited young people across ethno-national identity within that county. Additionally, in Co. Donegal, despite significant effort on the part of the gatekeeper who had facilitated a number of groups, we had to introduce a neighbouring area to recruit one focus group in Co. Tyrone to ensure representation across age range of young people in the area. As young people's lives crossed over these two areas (e.g. living in one area and attending school in the other) these are considered one research site in the study. Overall therefore, at the end of recruitment, the research extended to seven research sites in the following counties: Co. Antrim

(x 2), Co. Armagh, Co. Derry/Londonderry, Co. Donegal/Tyrone, Co. Louth and Co. Monaghan²³. Whilst we spoke to participants through youth groups based in cities and large towns, young people themselves lived in both urban and rural locations, a number travelling to access their nearest youth group setting.

2.5 Data Collection

As outlined below, the study involved collecting views and experiences from a range of individuals who could speak to the research aims: departmental representatives, key stakeholders, community/youth workers, the current generation of children and young people, and the parent generation. Each individual, regardless of what group they represent, comes to the research with their own perspectives, steeped in personal and historical experiences in communities and families. This is true of our adult participants as well as the children and young people. All participants' views are presented in the study, all equally valid with impact on their feeling, attitudes and behaviours. Some are able to recount 'direct' experiences of the Conflict while others reflect language, attitudes and histories considered 'learned'. While we note some as perceptions and others as experiences, all are real in their impact.

2.5.1 Views from Above: Engaging Key Stakeholders

This stage of the study aimed to engage with departmental representatives, across sectors such as health, education and justice, and key stakeholders representing children's/rights sector, the victims sector, the health sector, to speak to policy developments and service provisions, including identifying ways forward which helped inform research recommendations. Individuals and sectors to target for inclusion in the research were identified in consultation with the CVSNI, the RAC and the TRAG with a number of contacts provided for departmental representatives, regional and statutory bodies whilst a number of organisations contacted the research team directly. Recruiting departmental representatives proved challenging and time consuming until one individual working on a cross-departmental programme was able to host a focus group representative of seven departments.

Interest in participation among key stakeholders was greater than anticipated and the research team invested extra time into interviewing all who wished to have their views included. This was important to ensure a feeling of inclusivity in research that would have an impact on future victim and survivor strategies/ areas of work, and also helped to ensure representation across a number of sectors and regions. In addition, and as noted in Section 2.3.2, the research team engaged with

²³ The exact research site location within each country remains confidential to protect the anonymity of the participants.

the Victims' Practitioners Group on two occasions and collected 16 consultation responses on the impact of conflict legacy in their community; the impact of Conflict legacy on children and young people; and gaps in services for children and young people. Engagement with departmental representatives and key stakeholders is summarised in Table 1. Overall, 28 individuals participated in this stage of the research which was twice the anticipated number in the research design.

TABLE 1

Sector	Number of Participants
Government/ Departmental representatives (TEO, NIO, DOH, DOJ, DfC, DfE, DE) ²⁴	12
Victims and survivors	3 (<i>plus 16 consultation responses</i>)
Children, young people and/ or families	7
Health	3
Peace and reconciliation	2
Legal/justice	1
TOTAL	28

2.5.2 Views from Below: Youth and Community Workers' Perspectives and Experiences

The aim of this stage of the study was to include the views and experiences of those working with and for communities across the research sites. Young people often speak from their experience but may not have an understanding of the wider historical factors or issues that contextualise that experience (McAlister, Scraton & Haydon, 2009). Youth and community workers regularly work in the communities in which they grew up. They have, therefore, a deep understanding not only of the issues for those they work with currently, but also of changes (or lack thereof) over time. As such, they can provide vital context to the issues that young people discuss. Interviews and focus groups with youth and community workers therefore focused on their understanding of: the impacts of conflict legacy on children and families; the needs of the community; service provision; and, gaps in services.

²⁴ Departments represented: The Executive Office, Northern Ireland Office, Department of Health, Department of Justice, Department for Communities, Department for the Economy, Department of Education.

We aimed to speak with 20 community representatives across the research sites. In the first instance youth and community organisations were identified in each site, and information about the research sent to a selection of these. The aim was to recruit participants working in predominantly Catholic/Nationalist and predominantly Protestant/Unionist communities, hence a strategic approach to sampling was applied. Given the research team's previous work and contacts in a number of the research sites in Northern Ireland, good progress was made in accessing and recruiting community representatives. Levels of uptake were greater in some areas/communities than others, and thus more targeted recruitment methods were required to fill some gaps and to ensure representation of both ethno-national communities in some areas. Where recruitment was a challenge and there were gaps in representation, we returned to the TRAG for support and attained a range of individuals who could speak to specific/ community based issues, as well as those impacting young people. In order to facilitate participants, the research team adopted a flexible approach offering to conduct individual and paired interviews or focus groups with organisations/groups working within and across communities. Overall, 45 community representatives took part in the research – more than double than initially planned – including youth workers, community development workers, health workers and family support workers. The number of participants in each research site is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Research site	Number of participants
Co. Antrim	11
Co. Armagh	7
Co. Derry/Londonderry	11
Co. Donegal/Tyrone	3
Co. Louth	9
Co. Monaghan	4
TOTAL	45

2.5.3 Views and Experiences of the Parent Generation

Our intention was to recruit 30 parents of a child/young person aged 14-24 across all research sites to participate in a focus group or interview²⁵. The aim was for parents to reflect on Conflict-related issues affecting themselves, their community and their families while they were growing up, and to consider if and how Conflict legacy impacts the community today and young people of their children's generation. It was, therefore, here that we hoped to explore transgenerational legacy in its broadest sense, including but beyond transgenerational trauma.

Parents were our most difficult group to access and recruit, most likely because there are no/few pre-formed parenting groups in existence for those who have children aged 14-24 years. While we contacted family and parenting organisations (e.g. Parent's Advice Centre, Family Support Hubs, local parenting groups) we either had no response, or a response informing us that they worked with parents of children in the early years. The support of victims' services, local youth organisations, schools, youth and community workers and GAA clubs in Border Region areas was sought to identify and recruit parents, but to a large extent were unsuccessful. We were aware accessing parents of our target age group would be difficult, and raised this with the CVSNI, RAC and TRAG early on. Even with their support and following their suggestions, recruitment of parents did not significantly progress. This perhaps points to the hidden nature of many of those considered victims within the current parent generation. The research team were still engaged in recruitment strategies at the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions. Given the sensitive nature of the topic and that those parents we did speak with were not usually in contact with support services, it was agreed it was not appropriate to continue recruitment via an online platform as we would not be able to ensure follow up with any participants who may suffer distress during engagement.

In total, 13 parents across four research areas participated in the study before data collection had to cease – four individual interviews and two focus groups. In addition to the parents who took part in interviews/focus groups, a number of community representatives who participated in the research noted that they had children within our target age group and could reflect on some of our questions as parents. As such, we had more data than that from the parent sample alone to draw on in analysing generational impact, continuity and change. What the small number of interviews/focus groups with parents did reveal, however, is that few have been asked to reflect on these issues prior to taking part in the research. While they could reflect upon their own experiences, and discuss the similarities/differences in growing up for their own children, they often found it difficult to identify ways in which their personal experiences might directly impact upon their

²⁵ The parents recruited to the study did not have to be a parent of a child/young person who was also a participant in the study.

children. Given that the research was often the first time they had reflected on this, discussions were sometimes difficult and emotive with some adopting a self-blaming and responsibilising narrative, as explored in later chapters.

2.5.4 Exploring the Perspectives of Children and Young People

In order to elicit (potential) changing attitudes to the Conflict and issues associated with it, and explore the enduring effect of Conflict legacy issues on the health and social wellbeing of children and young people, a two-generational approach was adopted, allowing for an analysis of change and continuity between two generations. Children and young people were recruited via pre-existing groups who meet regularly. This meant that there was familiarity among members of the focus group which can aid discussion and also that supports were available to young people after focus groups, if required. A number of the focus groups were recruited via youth organisations, youth clubs and projects being run as part of the Peace IV child and youth programme. These were all useful contacts given their geographical spread across border areas and areas disproportionately impacted by the Conflict, and their work with young people who can speak to the themes of this research. Some participants, therefore, were used to discussing Conflict-related issues as part of group work. However, to ensure we engaged with a diverse group of young people, focus groups were also recruited via groups not funded through the Peace IV initiative and therefore not all participants were necessarily interested in Conflict-related issues nor had engage in related programme work.

The study aimed to recruit between 80-100 children and young people across all research sites. Attention was given in each site to represent young people across the age range of 14-24, and also, where relevant, to reflect community background within the research sites. However, the research team did not request information on community background from individual participants and information was only provided by the gatekeeper where possible, a number of whom did not record or have access to this information. Like other stages of the research, the recruitment process required considerable persistence from the research team to maximise focus groups participation and to ensure representation of all groups. The research team also relied on the support of a number of youth workers who acted as gatekeepers and invested considerable time and effort in informing young people about the research and organising focus groups within their projects. Many youth groups were in principle willing to facilitate the research, but for some it was not possible within the timeframe due to low numbers of young people engaging or requiring the time to build rapport and trust with new groups before introducing a research project on such sensitive issues. On a number of occasions, planned focus groups needed to be rescheduled and others were cancelled.

Once focus groups were established, consent was revisited and only in a minority of cases did some children and young people decide they no longer wanted to participate. A number expressed this before focus groups commenced after hearing more about the project and returned to the other activities in the youth setting. Within one group, made up primarily of care leavers, two young people asked for a break during a discussion of the impact of conflict on parenting and chose not to return. Their worker informed us that they had found the discussion too difficult. This reminds us that while there may not have been a lot of detailed or personal discussion of these issues, this should not imply that young people are not affected. Involvement in research has the potential to retraumatise a participant, hence great care was taken (see Section 2.7 for ethical considerations).

Focus groups were planned according to two age ranges – 14-18 years and 19-24 years – in recognition of the differing experiences, needs and capacities of these broad age groups. Given the profile of young people who attend youth organisations, youth projects and youth clubs, young people in the younger age group (14-18 years) were more easily recruited across all research sites. Accessing those aged 19-24 proved more difficult given that many had moved on from involvement in youth groups. This seemed to be more the case in communities identified as predominantly Protestant/Unionist. Where there were gaps, advice was sought from the two adult advisory groups, and the YPAGs on additional contacts/strategies to address these. At the time of Covid-19 restrictions coming into force in March 2020, the team were still focusing on recruiting young people to address some small gaps. Given the restrictions, any final stages of data collection ceased as it was agreed inappropriate to engage young people to speak on such sensitive topics over an online forum, particularly as we had already exceeded our initial target of recruiting 80-100 young people.

Overall, 104 children and young people participated in a focus group, as illustrated in Table 3. The sample has good representation across research sites, age range and community background. Recruitment numbers were necessarily larger in Co. Antrim, Co. Derry/Londonderry and Co. Armagh to ensure sufficient representation across both ethno-national identities, which was not an issue for the research sites in the Border Region of Ireland.

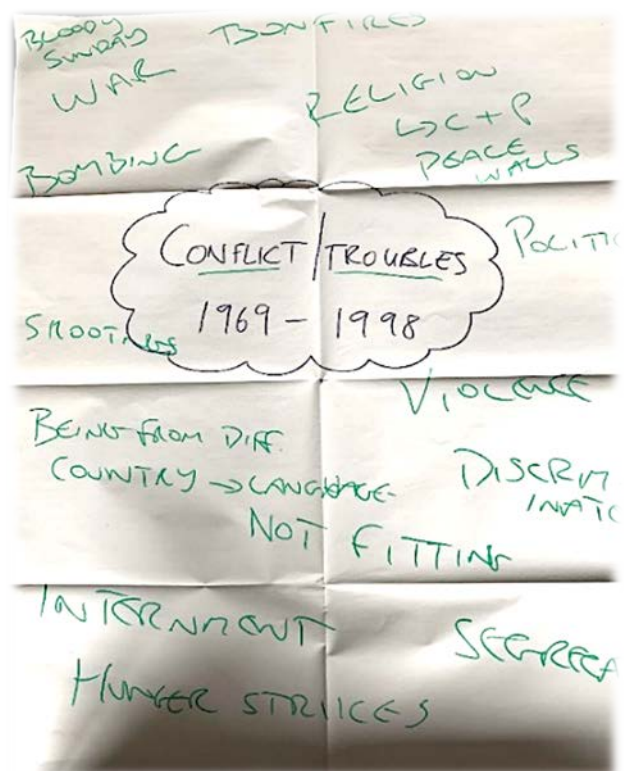
TABLE 3: YOUTH SAMPLE

County	Young People aged 14-18	Young People aged 19-24	Total Number of Young People
Antrim	22	6	28
Derry/Londonderry	13	12	25
Armagh	14	4	18
Donegal/Tyrone	8	6	14
Monaghan	8	4	12
Louth	7	0	7
Total	72	32	104

Focus groups²⁶ were employed as their key aim is to explore and understand a specific issue from the perspective of the participant group (Liamputtong, 2011). As such, these were well suited to the aims of this research which sought the views and experiences of children and young people about issues relating to the trans-generational impacts of the Conflict. They are particularly valuable with children and young people, as they can be less intimidating than one-to-one interviews, and provide young people with the space for 'collective conversations' with their peers (Liamputtong, 2011). Focus groups, and youth-centred methods can also reduce some of the power imbalances in social research given the ratio of young people to adults, and the ability of participants to direct the conversation (Health et al., 2011). However, the group setting may also not be a safe space for young people to talk in depth about direct experiences related to sensitive issues and therefore they were discouraged from talking about personal experiences and rather to talk to the experiences of a generation.

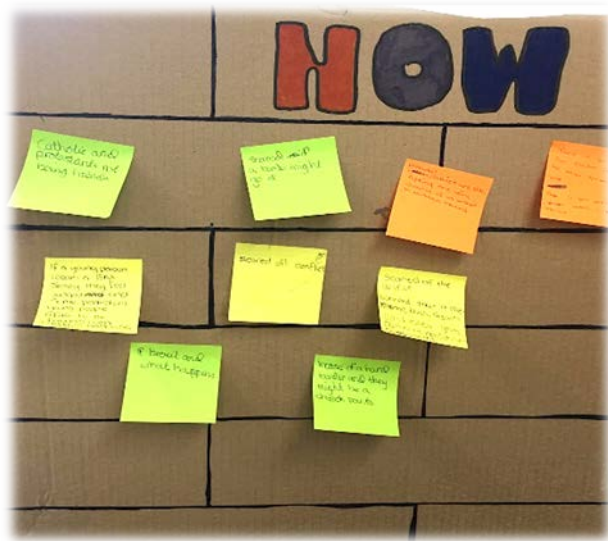
²⁶ Recognising focus groups may not be appropriate for all young people, we advised all gatekeepers that young people could also choose to participate in an individual interview if they felt more comfortable doing so. No young people availed of this option.

As with all research with a focus group design, each group had more dominant and reticent participants but in most groups all participants made a contribution – this was facilitated by varied methods which allowed for more private contributions if preferred. The research team did note, however, in a number of focus groups with male/female participants (as was the case for most focus groups), there were evident gender dynamics where girls/young women did not speak as openly as their male counterparts. It was felt that they had more to contribute but perhaps felt unable to do so in this context. This points to a need for research which focuses specifically on experiences of girls/young women to ensure their voices are given space to be heard²⁷.



The research team worked with both YPAGs to design tools to ensure that discussions were both engaging and relevant and sought their advice on how to discuss particularly sensitive topics. Focus groups included a combination of participative/ interactive tasks to provide stimulus for discussion (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999) as well as facilitated discussion. The focus group discussion was broadly structured into the Past, Present and Future. The 'Past' explored young people's understanding and knowledge of the Conflict using a flip chart with the words 'the Conflict', 'the Troubles' and the dates (1969-1998) asking young people for word association and then followed by more in-depth discussion on sources of learning and the impact of the Conflict on the parent/grandparent generation and community.

²⁷ Given the impact of gender dynamics in group settings we offered to facilitate single-gender groups, but no organisation took us up on this offer.



A 'Graffiti Wall' – where participants wrote on a post-it and put it on the wall - was used to ask participants about how the Conflict still affects communities, young people and their parents (the present) and their hopes for the future for their community or Northern Ireland. Direct questions were also used to probe on themes such as community relation programmes, segregation, identity, ongoing violence, mental health and services/supports. Using a mix of methods allowed those participants who may not be willing to speak out in a group to still have their opinion heard – maximising the safe

space for young people to express their *voice*. Discussions concluded with a speech bubble activity where participants were asked to write a message to decisions makers on the most important thing they wanted them to know. On completion of the focus groups, young people were provided with a pack of resources which included information provided by NICCY on children's rights, a leaflet of support available tailored to their location and including contact details, a pen and lanyard. This was offered to those who participated in focus groups as well as those who withdrew consent at the outset.

2.5.5 Parent-Child Dyads: Interviews with parents and children

A small number of interviews were conducted with young people aged 14-24 alongside an interview with one of their parents. Dyadic interviewing is most often used when the topic of research is a shared experience (Eisikovits and Koren, 2010). It was adopted here to enhance understanding of the transgenerational nature of the impact of the Conflict and to explore this within the context of individual families. Although the interviews focused on the main themes of the research, a key aim was to generate accounts of personal experiences of the impact of the Conflict on family life and on the relationships between generations. Dyadic interviews can take a number of formats but in research on sensitive topics, separate interviews are considered the most appropriate, allowing each participant to tell their story from their own perspective without having to consider the reaction of the other (Eisikovits and Koren, 2010).

We aimed to recruit five child-parent participants in dyad interviews to be interviewed separately on how the Conflict has impacted on their lives and their family's life. The criteria to be included

for dyad interviews was discussed and agreed with the RAC and TRAG. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- Young person to be aged 14-24;
- The family must have been impacted by the Conflict;
- Both young person and the parent must consent for the interviews to take place.

Advice was sought from both advisory groups regarding the inclusion criteria and it was agreed that 'have been impacted by the Conflict' could be interpreted in a variety of ways, not exclusive to bereavement, injury or imprisonment. If a family were accessing support for conflict-related issues they were eligible for recruitment or if they self-defined as 'victims of the Conflict' through responding to one of our advertisements, they would also be included in the research.

Given the personal and sensitive nature of this stage of the research and the likelihood that participants could be living with trauma associated with past events, it was essential that the research team accessed participants via services/organisations already supporting them in relation to Conflict-related issues. This approach was adopted to allow gatekeepers to identify participants who were in a position to speak to the research aims – and to avoid researchers approaching individuals who might be in a too vulnerable position to speak – and to ensure that participants had access to appropriate support on completion of the interviews if required.

The research team did envisage the challenges that would be associated with recruiting participants for dyad interviews given the sensitive topic, that many individuals may not be in a position to talk to their experiences and that consent was required from a child and parent within the same family. It had been noted at the outset, therefore, that the research team would rely on the assistance of members of both advisory groups and VSS organisations to facilitate recruitment and offer the required support for participants. Two families participated in dyad interviews – one making contact via a VSS service and the second was recruited through the research team's own contact established during an earlier phase of the data collection²⁸. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, further recruitment for dyad interviews was not possible. Given the sensitive nature of these interviews, the direct experiences of individuals and the appropriate supports that need to be in place, the research team and CVSNI agreed that the interviews could not take place in an online format.

²⁸ A third family had agreed to participate but only the parent interview was completed before Covid-19 restrictions interrupted data collection. A fourth family had been accessed via a community organisation but the team were unable to proceed as the young person was aged 16 and it was not clear if he or his family had supports at this time. It would have been unethical for us to proceed with these interviews without the appropriate supports in place.

Whilst we did not reach our target of five families, nonetheless, the nature of the narrative interview did generate rich, detailed data which speaks to the research aims. Participants spoke in depth about: the ways in which the Conflict directly impacted their family/family life; impact of Conflict on family members' mental health; their relationship with older/younger generations in the family; supports/services accessed by them or family members; their hopes for the future.

2.6 Data Analysis

In total, the research project engaged with 195 research participants utilising qualitative methods which generated large amounts of data. All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate representation of participants' views and experiences. Once a transcript was received, it was cleaned by the research team by filling in gaps, correcting any errors and ensuring all data was anonymised. Thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyse and report patterns/themes within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Specific attention was given to:

- Attitudes on the current and future effect of Conflict legacy issues on the health and well-being of children and young people (including accounts of segregation, sectarianism, paramilitarism and policing);
- Young people's relationships with their parents and older generations whose lives have been affected by the Conflict;
- Change and continuity across two generations;
- The ways in which the Conflict's legacy influences community life;
- Perceptions on current levels of support and service provision and to what extent this meets the needs of young people, parents and the community;
- Implications for children's rights.

Discussion of the themes are supported by excerpts from the data, across all cohorts. Whilst the use of some words/terms or interpretation of events and their impacts may be contested or challenged, we present the data as told by participants. This ensures we give *voice* to all participants and that the *audience* hears this in the way participants chose to recount their views and experiences²⁹.

In accordance with the rights-based approach to research with children and young people adopted in the study, the YPAG assisted in the explanation and interpretation of the study's findings. Capacity-building is part of a rights-based approach and time needs to be taken with advisors to enhance their knowledge and skills in data analysis. With this in mind, we carried out a

²⁹ Each quote is followed by a code to indicate the group the participant belongs to. For example, CRFG refers to a community representative speaking in a focus group. See Appendix A for a list of codes.

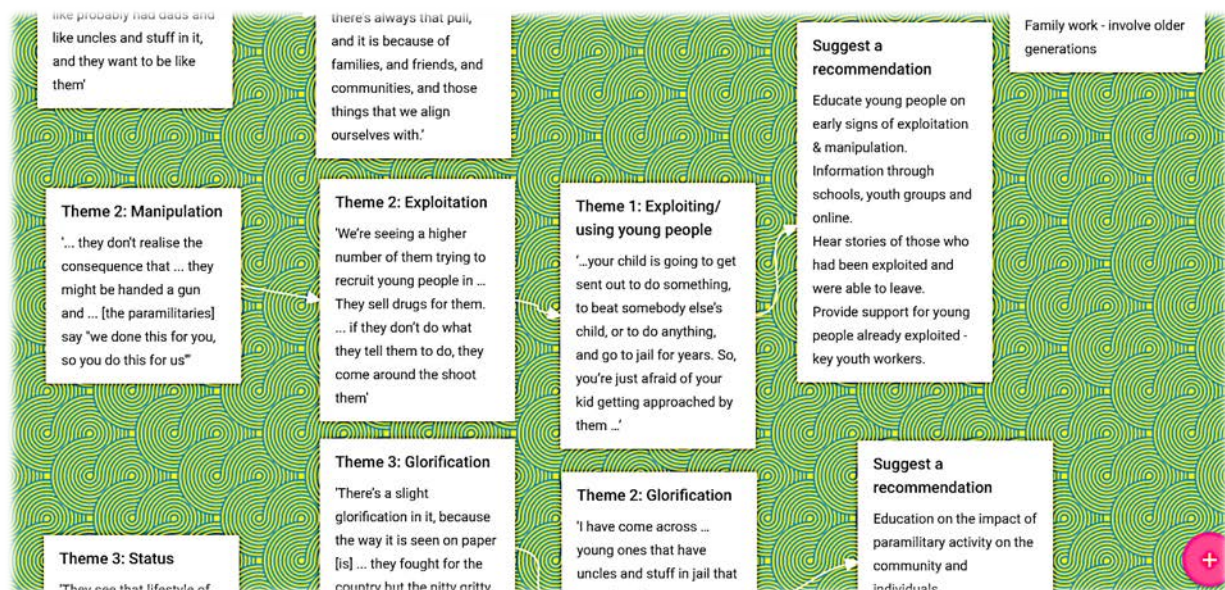
preliminary analysis workshop with each of our advisory groups. The aim was to introduce them to some data and to start a process of coding, categorising and considering meaning. They started the process of coding and thematic analysis from scratch with a manageable amount of data, identifying categories/themes, discussing interpretation and summarise recurring issues. The YPAGs found the tasks engaging and were interested to hear and read more of the young people's data.



They often related the quotations and themes to their own lives and communities. This was important for demonstrating a sense of shared experience among young people across place.

As noted earlier, the impact of Covid-19 restrictions interrupted face-to-face contact with the YPAGs and the research team had to adopt a different approach to later data analysis workshops which were online and much shorter, thus we were unable to carry out all the tasks and offer the level of support that would be usual at this stage. Therefore, we adopted the approach that the research team would complete analysis of the data and we returned to the YPAGs to discuss interpretation virtually. We also started to think about how research data could be connected to rights. Finally, the young advisors engaged in a 'data to recommendations' workshop, where they considered data across three datasets (young people, parents, community representatives) and explored how to move from themes into making recommendations.

Whilst not in the format we had originally planned due to Covid-19, these final workshops with young people went some way to ensure they have *influence* in shaping research recommendations, and that their *voice*/views are embedded throughout the project.



Two online presentations were also delivered to two groups of adult stakeholders – the TRAG with additional invited stakeholders and representatives from the Youth Network for Peace groups. Following a presentation of research findings and key messages, participants were offered feedback in relation to: their reflections on the findings and whether this was consistent with/different to existent knowledge; and, recommendations for practice and policy.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of the research and that it entailed engaging with 'vulnerable groups' (young people, and victims), there are very particular ethical issues that were considered. Protocols and procedures were devised to ensure robust measures and safeguards were in place to minimise the risk of harm to participants (and/or researchers) and to ensure their needs and rights were protected concerning: the risks of traumatisation or re-traumatisation; informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity of research participants; as well as data protection and management. Ethical approval was attained from the School Research Ethics Committee in the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, QUB. Guidance was also sought throughout the project from the two adult advisory groups, CVSNI and VSS. We also worked closely with two youth workers who supported the YPAGs.

All participants were fully informed about the focus and purpose of the research. Detailed participant information sheets and consent forms were prepared for the different groups of participants. In consultation with the YPAGs, information sheets and consent forms for young people were designed in a manner accessible to the young person, taking account of varying

levels of literacy. While all participants received these in advance, the research team took time to talk through them and answer any questions prior to any data collection exercise commencing. Additionally, participants were advised on the right to withdraw from the research in the information sheet and at the outset of an interview/focus group. It was made explicit that this would not impact on any services they receive from the gatekeeper organisations or from the Commission for Victims and Survivors. As noted above, at this stage a small number of young people chose not to participate and two young people chose to withdraw during a focus group. Where young people were aged under 16, parental/guardian consent was attained via the appropriate gatekeeper.

Participants were reminded not to reveal individual or (paramilitary-style) group identity by name and time was taken in focus groups to discuss sharing in a group context. The use of stimulus materials to guide discussion, as designed with the YPAGs, allows for de-personalisation making it less threatening to discuss sensitive issues (Barter and Renold, 1999). Clear guidelines were provided at the beginning of group sessions regarding what participants should and should not share and what the research team would have a responsibility to report to others. Participants were reminded of the limits of confidentiality in a group setting. They were encouraged throughout not to talk directly to personal experiences and to speak to the experiences of their or another generation. Nonetheless, some young people did choose to speak of personal experiences which included accounts of accessing CAMHS and other mental health services, poor mental health within their families, and the Conflict-related experiences of their families. As per our Safety Protocol, the research team discussed these with gatekeepers/youth workers to ensure that these young people were offered support.

In undertaking sensitive research participants may speak to traumatic/harmful experiences. Participants were recruited through established community based organisations, and where possible, through pre-existing groups. This was a useful means of ensuring that a support structure was already in place with those whom research participants have established relationships of trust. This was also considered necessary for the recruitment of families to dyads in particular given they were asked to speak directly to the impact of the Conflict on their family. Nevertheless, details of local support services were offered to every participant should they feel a need to follow up on any issues. Additionally, the team developed a distress protocol and a procedure following the disclosure of a child protection issue, threat to personal safety and when dealing with an emergency.

2.8 Impact of Covid-19 Restrictions on Research

As already referred to above, Covid-19 restrictions were introduced at a time when the research team was in the final stages of data collection, still working with the YPAGs and organising recommendation framing workshops. The impact of the restrictions on the final stages of the research were significant and are summarised below. It is worth noting, however, that despite this impact, the research team exceeded their goals in many aspects of the research in terms of the numbers of community representatives, key stakeholders and young people recruited to the study and the extensive engagement that they maintained throughout the project with both the YPAGs and adult advisory groups.

1. In-person data collection was no longer permitted which left some gaps in our children and young people focus groups and our parents' focus groups/interviews. Whilst we considered online interviews, we considered advice from a number of gatekeepers and our adult advisory groups and concluded that, given the sensitivity of the topic, online interviews would not be appropriate as we could not guarantee follow up support. Nevertheless, we exceeded our target recruitment for children and young people. Whilst we did not meet our target recruitment for parent interviews, we are also able to draw on the interviews/focus groups of community representations who identified themselves as parents of 14-24 year olds and spoke in this context.
2. Transcription of audio recordings were outsourced to a QUB approved transcription company with a confidentiality agreement in place. Due to staff shortages and changes in working practice, there were delays in receiving transcripts of interviews/focus groups which in turn delayed coding/analysis.
3. Our methodological approach hinges on engaging young people in data analysis, the framing of recommendations and dissemination processes. We were unable to meet the groups in person to engage in the necessary work over longer periods to achieve our goals. On seeking advice from the relevant youth workers, we continued to meet YPAGs over Zoom but this was dependent on young people having access to the necessary technology and being willing to take part in this manner. We did lose a number of young people at this stage and had to invest time in recruiting new members to the YPAGs. The format of our online sessions was also different to our usual practice and we had to tailor what we could achieve in these sessions. Notably, we were unable to support the young people to be involved in the dissemination of the research findings as we would usually employ half-day sessions to support them in this. Related to this, we have had to delay the publication of a youth friendly version of this report until we can meet with the YPAGs in person.

4. Recommendations framing workshops were due to take place in June/July in QUB – one with young people and one with a group of policy/decision makers and both to be co-facilitated by the YPAGs. As a replacement, we continued to work with YPAGs to link recommendations to research findings and the research team organised an online workshop with Youth Network for Peace. CVSNI agreed to coordinate a virtual meeting with CVSNI, the TRAG and the RAC to frame recommendations – this were held as two separate events although the focus was more on feedback than framing recommendations.
5. Given the above issues, there were inevitable delays to data analysis, consultation, recommendation framing and report writing. It also took time to ensure we continued to work with our YPAGs in meaningful ways which adhered to our Child Rights Based methodology and therefore we scheduled more meetings than we would usually in a face to face format. Additionally, the research team were under significant pressure from within their own institution as teaching members of staff required to teach and support students in a new format over the course of the pandemic.

2.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach to engage with 195 participants across four different groups: departmental representatives and key stakeholders; community representatives; parents; and, children and young people. The study was informed by a rights-based research approach, incorporating Lundy's model of participation which includes four elements: *space*, *voice*, *audience*, *influence*. *Space* was provided for YPAG members to make their input into research design, whilst safe *spaces* were created within focus groups for young people to express their views and experiences. YPAG members were provided the opportunity to *voice* their opinions on rights, participatory research and the design process, children and young people's lives, interpretation of data and, more generally, transgenerational legacy. Participatory methods developed with the YPAG facilitated young participants to *voice* their views and experiences in various ways. The QUB research team have been the YPAG's *audience*, documenting their preferred research options and approaches³⁰. Finally, young people were able to *influence* the research process through the co-design of research tools and considering data interpretation and policy recommendations.

³⁰ Audience will be further extended post Covid-19 restrictions when the QUB team can work with the YPAGs to produce the child friendly publication.

A rights-based approach is also applicable to the elements of the research which collected the views of parents, community representatives and other key stakeholders. The approach emphasised working collaboratively and respectfully with research participants, recognising them as experts in their lives. This also includes the work with the two adult advisory groups, identifying relevant issues to examine, key individuals to access in communities and engagement over ethical considerations.

3 Learning the Past

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines what young people know about the Conflict and the ways in which they learn. It demonstrates that despite most of the young people being born after 1998, they do know a considerable amount about the Conflict and most are able to talk about it freely. The depth of young people's knowledge, however, is questioned in the accounts of adult participants who note limitations to young people's understanding of the context and impact of the Conflict. Young people refer to a range of sources of learning about the Conflict and their views on the extent to which they hear truthful, valid and complete accounts varies. Such concerns are echoed by adult participants, particularly in relation to the potential to romanticise the past. The chapter continues by considering young people's views on the importance of learning. These views were also mixed with some young people wanting to move on from the past, whilst others identifying the value in learning from the past for the present and the future. In a number of ways, young people's accounts which identify omissions, avoidance, partiality and potential negative impacts related to their learning, resonate with previous research documenting children's experiences of learning about the Conflict. This highlights a need to revisit how children and young people are supported to learn about the Conflict and to consider ways of learning which uphold their right to: express their views freely; seek, receive and impart information; have access to information and material from a diversity of sources; education which is directed to the development of respect for their cultural identity, language and values.³¹ Indeed, the chapter not only demonstrates young people's capacity to engage with discussions on the Conflict but also emphasises, from both young people's and adults' accounts, the need for a space to discuss and learn about the Conflict *within* and *across* generations, where young people can safely challenge views and make sense of the past.

3.2 Young People's Knowledge of the Conflict

Most young people in the study were born after 1998 and had therefore grown up in a 'post-conflict' environment. Although one young man claimed '*I don't know anything*' (CYPFG11), most other young people, regardless of location, age or gender, had some knowledge of the Conflict.

³¹ Articles 12, 13, 17, 29 UNCRC respectively.

The opening task in focus groups (asking young people what they associated with the terms 'The Conflict/Troubles' and the dates 1969-1998) demonstrated that many had a sound level of knowledge about the Conflict and were willing to talk about it and related issues. Most typically, initial thoughts focused on young people's perceptions of the extent and nature of violence during this time. In all groups, they made reference to '*shootings*', '*bombs*', '*rioting*' and '*murders on the street every day*', with many able to name specific events such as '*Bloody Sunday*', '*the Omagh bomb*' and the '*Ballymurphy Massacre*'.

Young men in particular noted the role of paramilitaries in the Conflict and were able to name several groups, identifying their role in violence, the use of '*kneecapping*' and also in '*Them protecting you*' (CYPFG12). Similarly, it was young men who spoke about the presence of security forces during the Conflict, with reference made to army checkpoints – '*just looking for bombs on the car and all with the wee mirrors, or the sniffer dogs*' (CYPFG7) – and the '*conflict*' with the army. Two groups, again young men, also spoke of the presence of the '*RUC*' who were '*always on the news*'.

Whilst much of the initial comments by young people were presented as a number of 'facts' or events related to the Conflict, a smaller number of young people, without prompting, offered further insight. Young people across ten groups identified the religious context, describing a conflict between '*Catholics and Protestants*', as being about '*division*' and related to '*cultural differences*'. Others inferred a role of the State, noting that it was a conflict '*between the government and the people*'. One young man from Co. Derry/Londonderry referred to the contested nature of debates surrounding the past and noted it was '*Still being disputed to this day*' (CYPFG3). In a similar vein, a girl from Co. Monaghan described differences in the community regarding '*beliefs*' and related misunderstanding.

Some people were very extreme in how they acted upon their beliefs of certain things, and other people were just going about their day to day business, and don't believe in things to the same extent. Some people weren't aware of the extent of what was going on as well. So, there was a misunderstanding of that. (CYPFG10)

Consideration of the impact of the Conflict on communities and families in these earlier stages of discussion and without prompt was less typical. Only in a small number of groups did young people spontaneously refer to the impact of the Conflict. A number of young people noted the impact on physical and mental health, their perception that there was a high incidence of '*PTSD*' and '*Traumatic injury – physically and mentally*' related to Conflict legacy. Other impacts were

highlighted such as the 'pain' in relation to 'segregation' and sectarianism and the instillation of fear. One young woman in Co. Derry/Londonderry, for example, was aware of the impact on individuals' routine behaviours.

Weren't able to do your day to day activities... because you would have been scared to go walking or getting shot or anything like that. (CYPFG15)

That young people 'would know a lot about the Conflict' (CRFG5) – especially in relation to past events – was acknowledged by adult participants, particularly community representatives, many of whom worked directly with young people on Conflict-related issues. However, young people's knowledge was perceived by adult participants in the study to be somewhat limited. Consultation with victims practitioners noted these limitations to young people's knowledge when they referred to 'a lack of understanding of what occurred during the Troubles' (VPG4). Young people, they suggested, did not appreciate the impact of the Conflict on themselves and their families, not appreciating 'why their family is the way they are' (VPG13) or the ways in which the Conflict has 'affected... their language, the subjects you study at school, what job your parents [had]' (VPG5). Parents, too, identified the limited understanding among young people, given they had no *lived experience* of the Conflict. One parent living in Co. Armagh felt that without living through the period, young people could not understand the associated pain.

They didn't live through maybe their friend losing a father. We lived through that, and we mightn't have lost anybody personally, but you had friends that lost their dads, or their brothers, or whatever, and the young ones now don't understand the effect of that unless they have lost a father, or a brother, or whatever, in the troubles. (PI1)

One mother in Co. Antrim similarly noted that despite the retelling of stories, young people still could not grasp the impact of the Conflict at the time.

They [their children] don't really know what has gone on because you don't want to, well you do tell them, like my Mummy would tell stories and all, like uncles and all would tell stories, but I don't think they get it. They don't get really what went on, you know, like what we had seen it and then what people older than us had seen. (PFG2)

One of the reasons proffered by a key stakeholder, was that the adult generation has been unable to make sense of the impact of the Conflict and this, in turn, impacted on the capacity of the young person's generation to understand its effects.

I think Northern Ireland is in this place as well, that we're maybe just keep close to it, time wise, that we haven't had that ability even processed what has gone on here, and that had a big implication about how that then goes onto the next generation, and that was very much through that as well. (KSI3)

Related to this (raised by those working in the victim sector) was the ways in which young people learned about the Conflict, suggesting that it was 'selective, sort of a hero worship' (CRFG9) and based on 'misinformation' (VPG6), with limited opportunity for young people to talk about the Conflict.

[P]articularly for young people then it's like, the Troubles, what was that all about? And don't have any, kind of, space to talk or engage with it. (KSI3)

3.3 Sources and Experiences of Learning

Young people's knowledge of the Conflict came from a number of sources including school, family, media sources, friends and the community. Whilst they described a varied experience of learning it was evident and consistent with an earlier survey on influences on young people's knowledge and understanding of the past (McCaffery & Hansson, 2011), that school and family were the most common sources of learning across all groups. Young people presented mixed views on the value of different sources of learning and considered information from certain sources more valid than from others.

3.3.1 Learning in School: a 'selective history'

Young people in all focus groups referred to learning about the Conflict in school and, specifically, in History class, often for GCSE or Junior Certificate examinations. Only one young person, from Co. Monaghan, referred to learning in a school context outside of History class where they might 'hear about it a bit' in Religious Education, where the 'conflict of the two religions' might be discussed briefly (CYPFG10). There was an awareness where History was not compulsory subject in schools, some young people would most likely not learn about the Conflict. As one young woman noted:

But if you don't do GCSE History, like I didn't, how are you supposed to know? (CYPFG18)

Even within History classes, young people noted that the content of learning was dependent on the curriculum and not all schools followed a curriculum that included teaching on the Conflict. As

a result, one young person in Co. Monaghan assessed that '*a lot of people wouldn't have learned properly about it*' (CYPFG10). One young woman who attended a '*mixed*' school in a border town in Northern Ireland noted that her experience was different from those in the local Catholic school.

In my school I learnt nothing about it... I think it depends what school you go to, because I went to a mixed school. So, if you went to the likes of [names a Catholic Maintained school], or something, you'd probably learn more about it. (CYPFG9)

Differences in learning were also identified within schools, with only some being offered History and/or learning about the Conflict. One young person in Co. Armagh noted, for example, that learning could be dependent on the 'band' a young person was assigned to.

It's only if you're doing just history as a class you just learn about anything else but certain school that I know of only does that, I think because senior high school, it was only the G band that done the history so I didn't know but I think they done theirs more on World War and all that, like way before the Troubles, like WW1, WW2, communism and all that. I think they done it more on that, than on the Troubles. (CYPFG2)

Prior to learning about the Conflict in school, most young people had already learned something through family, friends or the community but they appreciated that what was learned in school – and how it was learned – was different from other sources. Some participants noted the extent of learning in school, with one young man in Co. Armagh assessing he now knew '*a lot more*' as a result of schooling, compared to the '*bits and pieces*' he had picked up in the community. Similarly, another young man in Co. Monaghan noted that school is where he learnt the '*details*'.

You would have definitely heard of it before, and you definitely would have heard a lot of things, but you wouldn't know specific details really. That's when you would learn about it in history. (CYPFG10)

In contrast, young men from Co. Antrim drew out a different distinction between what was learned in the context of family and schools. Where family members could '*speak about their experience in the Troubles*', learning in schools, they felt, was more restricted, as the following conversation demonstrates.

M: I think in school they don't go into the details...

M: No, teachers don't tell you everything

M: School has got to do the curriculum, like the thing they follow, like the curriculum

M: Certain material

M: Where they can only say certain things to you...

M: They would tell you about the hunger strike and all of that, but it's the basics.

(CYPFG12)

Views that learning in schooling was 'selective' in nature was expressed across a number of focus groups, including that teaching was not sufficiently detailed or in depth. Young people assessed that they learned '*Some of it, not all of it*' (CYPFG5), ultimately '*very little though*' (CYPFG8) and that teachers '*don't go that into it but you kind of get the gist of it*' (CYPFG8). One girl who attended school in Co. Antrim described her perception of how her teacher felt restricted in the information and knowledge he could impart.

I remember sitting in third year history ten years ago and my history teacher turned round to us and was like legally, the only thing we're allowed to teach is that youse killed more of your own than you did of each other. How Protestants killed Protestants he said legally, that's the only thing they're allowed to teach us... Protestants killed more Protestants and Catholics killed more Catholics than we killed of the other side. (CYPFG18)

Other young people noted that learning was often restricted to the historical context and the ways in which the Conflict was rooted in the past, rather than addressing the more recent context or implications. For example, a number of young people who attended school in Northern Ireland spoke of learning more about '*King Billy and all*' (CYPFG14) and about the Easter Rising.

I done more of Irish culture like the Easter Rising stuff, we learned that in school, we never learned nothing about our own history in school. (CYPFG18)

This was also a familiar experience for young people who attended schools in the Border Region of Ireland where, as described by a group of young people in Co. Louth, the focus was often on the impact of the Conflict in an Irish political context.

M: The building up to it, like life for a Catholic before the Troubles before it first started, what life was like before.

F: Lynch and Lemass, learning how the Taoiseachs of Southern Ireland dealt with the tensions and the pressures from either side to deal with it.

F: Yeah in Leaving Cert you look a lot more, you get to look at Irish History and how things in the Republic were affected by Northern Ireland, by the Conflict.

M: We also learn about how Lynch dealt with Haughey and Blaney in the arms trial the year after. And how the southern government was in conflict over the North as well. (CYPFG16)

In terms of the validity of the learning in a school context, young people's views differed on the extent to which these accounts were 'balanced'. One young woman in Co. Armagh felt pupils were offered a fair representation of the Conflict where they learned about '*what Catholics did and what the Protestants did... both sides*' (CYPFG7). More typically, however, the selective nature of learning was again raised, one young man in Co. Monaghan noting that what they learned '*depend[ed] where the teacher stands*' (CYPFG10). A group of girls who attend the same Catholic Maintained school in Co. Armagh described a somewhat one-sided account of their schooling where they felt the teacher tried '*to make it blamed on the Protestant*'. One continued:

I wasn't happy with that because both sides are just as bad as each other, I wasn't really happy with that... Since I went to a Catholic school obviously they're trying to make it look like oh, we're the innocent ones but mostly it's both sides just as bad as each other. (CYPFG1)

Within the same focus group, one young man appreciated that his friends who attended a 'Protestant school' also received a 'selective' account and that '*the truth is somewhere in the middle – both sides seem to be telling selective history even today*' (CYPFG1). Young people living in the Border Region of Ireland were also wary of the potentially selective nature of their learning, one young man in Co. Monaghan noting the '*stories*' they were told in Religious Education.

In my religious class we read a story about two girls that had stones thrown at them, anything thrown at them walking to school, they had to get a guard to escort them to school for being Protestant. It's just stereotypes. (CYPFG16)

Young people raised concerns not only about *what* they learned but also the manner in which they learned about the Conflict. A number of them expressed views suggesting that learning in school left no space for debate or discussion as young people referred to '*regurgitation*' and '*memorising*' as key teaching and learning techniques. One young woman from Co. Louth noted

how this differed from active engagement with other sources of learning such as media representations.

Yeah, in school it's just learning about it, regurgitating it, just making sure you know it but when it's the media you're watching it to watch it, it's not like to get points. (FG16)

Another young woman who attended a school in Co. Antrim also described the focus on memory recall rather than any attempts to foster a deeper understanding of the Conflict.

Yeah, it was just more just the prime minister did this and then it didn't work and then they did something else and it didn't work. It was just so dull, it wasn't actually information, it was just memorising. (CYPFG17)

A number of young people suggested various reasons why schools could be reluctant to engage in in-depth discussion around the Conflict which included the potential for emotive reactions and/or the understanding of young people's capacity to discuss sensitive and traumatic events.

F: I think sometimes teachers might be afraid to talk about it or to discuss it without bringing their own opinions into things or about people bringing their own opinions into things, people are a bit afraid. (CYPFG16)

M: I think as well schools just think we're immature, that's it.

M: They probably think our view of a bomb is ha ha that's the UVF doing that or IRA. It's not. (CYPFG18)

One young person in Co. Antrim further raised that the reluctance was, in fact, related to teachers' lack of ability in responding to young people's opinions and feelings related to the Conflict.

F: I think schools are so scared of young people having an opinion because they don't know how to deal with that opinion. So they don't want to tell you too much so you can't actually, you can't be angry, you can't be upset, they don't want to cause emotion about it, but I feel like you need to, they need trained to control that environment because they're teaching about something we need to know about. (CYPFG18)

Young people's views and experiences, therefore, reflect earlier accounts of teaching about the past which have noted the absence of 'challenging questions', differing levels of teacher readiness and avoidance of the topic (Kitson, 2007; Magill et al., 2009; McCully, 2010). This is

despite revisions to the curriculum which require teachers to explore the impact of history on pupils' sense of identity, culture and lifestyle (CCEA 2007 cited in McCully & Reilly, 2017: 306). Thus, questions previously raised about the nature, quality and parity of education and the support and training for teachers (Cole and Barsalou, 2006) still remain pertinent.

3.3.2 Family Accounts: the passing of 'Conflict stories' across generations

Young people in all but two focus groups recounted the passing of stories of lived experiences by parents, grandparents and other family members. However, similar with previous research on communication between children and parents (Fargas-Malet and Dillenburger, 2016), they had differing experiences of learning about the Conflict through their family members. In some families, parents or grandparents took the time to talk to young people directly about their experiences – '*I was told about it properly*' (CYPFG7) – whereas others described simply '*just hearing stuff*' (CYPFG7) in family interactions. A smaller number had not been told about the Conflict at all within their families, some of whom were not originally from Northern Ireland or whose families had moved away temporarily. One young woman described her parents' avoidance of the topic.

I actually don't know too much, I don't know a lot. I just know like the basic stuff...I probably only learnt, probably in the last few years, because mum took us to England. She took me, and [brother], and my little sister. So, we didn't grow up knowing. ... I didn't even know what religion I was until I was in P4 when I would come home, and my mum got in trouble for it. She basically said, well, I just didn't want to bring her up knowing all this conflict ... So, I was not taught much from my mum and dad, which is probably a good thing. They kept me away from it. (CYPFG9)

Similarly, the parents of one young man who did grow up in Northern Ireland and lived through the Conflict chose not to recount their experiences, particularly when he was younger.

My parents like to try and keep most of what happened away.... When you're younger they don't want to tell you the violence bit, and all the groups, but then you learn about it when you're older. (CYPFG7)

Avoidance of talking about the past could be a way of parents shielding children from what happened but can also be linked to the legacy of the Conflict in families, where stories are too painful to talk about (Hanna et al., 2012; McEvoy-Levy, 2011). Differing approaches to talking

about the Conflict within families were also noted by a number of adult participants. One key stakeholder talked about the contrast in family narratives.

I think there is narratives in family homes, but that would seem to really vary. I think there's quite a contrast. Some homes where they're particularly politically minded, they will be fed on a certain narrative. Others I think they're always going to do the very opposite in some ways. It's a bit like this idea that some parents have, we'll keep children away from death, for example. They're almost going to try and do that, but inevitably children will learn in their own particular way.... (KSFG6)

Nevertheless, following learning in school, young people most commonly talked about learning about the Conflict from family members, particularly parents, grandparents and other extended family who had lived experiences of the Conflict.

My granda would tell me all stuff of what happened to him, about what he went through because my granda's family all are from [city in NI], my granda told me all the stuff he went through and it was quite bad. (CYPFG1)

M: I know most of it from my dad's perspective of it. (CYPFG2)

M: My mum always talks about it.

M: My da actually fully grew up during it...grew up the whole way through it...

F: Yeah, my dad and my mum was in it [living through times of the Troubles]. (CYPFG18)

M: They talked to me as well, because I had it from both sides. My dad's family is Catholic, and my mum was a Protestant, so I know both ends. (CYPFG7)

What stood out about this source of learning was that young people were learning from people who 'have actually gone through it' (CYPFG10) and had 'actual knowledge of events' (CYPFG16). Learning, therefore, addressed some of the details identified as missing in school accounts where young people heard first-hand about events that had happened, family members were able to 'speak about their experiences in the Troubles' (CYPFG12) and recount 'what they've seen' (CYPFG12). These 'Conflict stories' (CYPFG13) most commonly related to accounts from older members of the family such as grandparents or their stories which had been 'passed down' (CYPFG12). Such stories often related to violent events that had happened – particularly those directly experienced or witnessed by family members.

I would have heard stories recently of like my mum watching her mother getting beat by the IRA while she was dying with cancer and stuff. Mum said she didn't realise when she was younger she was held hostage. (CYPFG9)

M: About growing up in it and all, and what happened and all.

M: They would say were hearing all the bombs going off.

M: My granda got his car stole.

M: Somebody couldn't leave the bar. (CYPFG7)

F: There was a man shot at my granny's front door. Now my granny and granda had ten weans so they had ten weans in the house, now I don't know what age they were but there was a boy shot right at the front door. (CYPFG15)

M: People shot, and what happened in the community. Just things that happened to people. (CYPFG13)

Across a number of groups, accounts also related to the impact that the Conflict had on community life. Families living in the Border Region had many accounts to share about the presence of checkpoints and restrictions on their movement. Two girls – from Co. Donegal and Co. Monaghan – described their families' experiences of living on the border.

F: Daddy says whenever he was wee, because we live beside the border ... they'd go to the border and just walk about the place, but one day he was going over the border a soldier jumped out from under the hedge and told him he wasn't allowed over. (CYPFG6)

F: My uncle lived, well grew up close enough to the border and he would tell you all the stories about having to go through checkpoints, to go from A to B, a simple journey might take him extra longer with the border and all this. (CYPFG10)

Young men in Co. Armagh and Co. Antrim also spoke of the presence of the army in their communities and the impact of checkpoints on the perceptions of safety.

M: Army, I don't know what they're called, gates, like stoppages in the middle of the road.

M: Just looking for bombs on the car and all with the wee mirrors, or the sniffer dogs. (CYPFG7)

*M: [Grandad told him about] Them big tanks driving down the wee small streets and all.
(CYPFG11)*

Another young man in Co. Antrim while referring to the impact of curfews and food restrictions also noted the sense of community support that existed as described by his mother.

*M: See when my ma told me about the curfews and all, she said it was hard like.
Because a lot of shops, they stopped their deliveries and all coming in so a lot of
people had to depend on each other. To give each other teabags and all that.
(CYPFG12)*

Indeed, the dominant view among adult participants was that young people learned most about the past from their family or their community, where stories were retold and passed down through generations. One community representative in Co. Louth suggested the family was the principal source of learning, claiming children did not learn about the conflict in school.

*F: Through families again. It's all going back through the families, or hearing about it
from the families, because it's not a thing that they learn about in school. (CRFG9)*

Adult participants who were parents acknowledged their role in passing on stories to their children as those who had witnessed the impact of the Conflict and had 'vivid' (CRFG3) memories of their own childhood.

*I think it's to do with...it's passed on. Stories are passed on. It's re-lived. It's massive.
It's massively affecting people, I think. (PI3)*

As one community representative in Co. Armagh articulated, stories were told from 'mum and dad or... older people in the community' with such detail and repetition that young people's own retelling of events were as if they too had lived through the experience. These are reflective of 'post memories' where children can 'remember' the experiences of their parents, as powerful narratives and images repeated over time, and constitute memories in their own right (Halliday and Ferguson, 2020).

*... even a young person talking about the bomb in [area]. I heard a young person talking
about a bomb in [area], and even how he was talking about it, was as if he had been there,
has actually had been there. (CRFG3)*

As discussed above, young people had noted the limitations of learning in school as lacking in detail and therefore family accounts, for some, filled this void. This contrast to school accounts was described by one young man in Co. Antrim as '*brutal*' (CYPFG12). Nevertheless, young people often noted the worth of hearing what happened from individuals who had lived through the Conflict. In this sense, they suggested that they see more truth in these accounts compared to other sources.

M: I would take family's word over the other people.

M: Yeah, I would do that as well. (CYPFG17)

In the same discussion among young men in Co. Antrim, one participant, however, noted that there was still potential for '*bias*' in such accounts.

M: Yeah. I would take the information from someone who's been through it. There's a few of my family members that have been through it but I would go to the person who lived the longest through it and ask them about it, ask them what happened. But I still wouldn't accept all the information that they're giving me because their viewpoints are still like their viewpoints, everybody has got their own side to it. Everybody is biased. (CYPFG17)

Given this potential for '*bias*', young people noted the possibly '*damaging*' effect of learning about the Conflict from parents with '*strong beliefs*' (CYPFG2). A key concern noted by those who spoke of learning through family contexts was the way in which the past could be represented to young people. As noted above, many children perceived a potential bias in family accounts of the Conflict, yet some still valued them as a source of learning over others. Community representatives and parents, however, worried about the potential for glorification in family stories when individuals are remembered as heroes who '*fought for the country*'.

The accounts below from community representatives and two parents, suggest that the impact of the Conflict, in terms of effects on family life, substance use and mental health, is not discussed to the same degree with young people who, in turn, are unable to acknowledge or understand such effects.

M: I've met young people whose had grandparents, or an uncle, that was in the IRA... and they have a slightly different perspective on who didn't have a family that was part of the IRA. Oh yeah, you know, my granda was in the RA, you know, he just came out

of jail about ten years ago, or something like that. There's a slight glorification in it, because the way it is seen on paper, you know, they fought for the country but the nitty gritty, the ugliness of it, is not discussed. They don't know. They can't find out. They can't really understand the ugliness of it.

F: The post-conflict, these things isn't discussed. So, the effects that the Troubles has had on families, on communities, not their generation, but say their mums' or dads', or whatever, you know, around like mental health, like marriage breakdown, alcohol, and drug abuse, none of that is discussed. That wouldn't even come into any of it. (CRFG9)

I have come across young ones that have uncles and stuff in jail that are related to paramilitaries, and they praise these, you know, these are great guys, and they don't see the effect it's having on their families, or having on the uncle. ... I would say the uncle now is sitting thinking, what did I do that all for, and why am I still here, in my eyes, but he [young person] looks up to him for what he done, and thinks it's a good thing, which isn't really...it's again, trying to educate, you know, killing people is not good. (PI1)

They [their children] don't really know what has gone on because you don't want to, well you do tell them, like my Mummy would tell stories and all, like uncles and all would tell stories, but I don't think they get it. They don't get really what went on, you know, like what we had seen it and then what people older than us had seen. (PFG2)

Learning about the Conflict through such stories and exposure to viewpoints among the older generations can, in turn, shape young people's attitudes and behaviours. This is explored in later chapters, illustrating the potential for such learning to influence young people's perceptions of the 'other' community, instil fear, a sense of difference and sectarian attitudes and impact their mobility and social networks.

3.3.3 Learning from Media Sources

Following learning in school and family contexts young people across thirteen focus groups spoke about learning through a range of media sources, described by one young man as 'secondary sources' (CYPFG17) compared to the first-hand accounts handed down through families. Adult participants tended to highlight social media as a key source of learning about the Conflict for young people. One participant, for example, contrasted the media sources accessed by her generation as young people in the 1970s and 1980s with those of the current generation of young people.

I was going to say, to me, one of the differences with young people in terms of how they learn about is, if I think about it myself growing up as a child. I went to school in [area] '70 through to '80. I was post-primary school at that stage. So, for me, that was certainly about the likes of regularly listening to radio, and TV, and the news, and newspapers. That seems, to me, certainly for the young people I would see, or the children I would see in school, that does not seem to be happening that way. So, [name] talks there about they're hearing it in other ways...I think social media I think certainly is probably one of the big differences. (KSFG6)

Concerns were raised that media representations in social media formats could promote sectarian attitudes or add to the glorification or romanticisation of the past. One respondent in the consultation with victims practitioners noted that access to material online '*may promote extreme views on either side*' (VPG15). One community representative described the impact of the visual aspect of learning through social media.

And the further we move away from the past it's been romanticised and young people are seeing that romanticisation of the past as heroes and social media is playing a lot into that too where you're seeing old videos of the Kesh and old videos of the blanket men and videos of Bloody Sunday, rioting and young people are sharing that and starting to have association with that even though they don't have association with the direct violence attributed to that so it's safe for them to get associated with that because they're not directly involved with it and I'm seeing that more increasingly. (CRI1)

One key stakeholder recognised that family views, or '*kitchen table politics*', may influence the way a young person navigates information on social media, engaging with sources which will bring them into contact with particular legacy accounts.

They spend so long in dark spaces hearing the same stuff pumped out that actually it's very hard on your heart, and if you're a young person seeking that, or you get excited about it, then it's very easily accessible, and some of, well, with sites in particular, have legacy stuff all the time... But you tend to go down a line, and if you're a young person whose kitchen table politics is stressed down one line, you're probably likely to seek that out. You're not likely to look for both sides, and, of course, in the internet that's easily done. (KSFG6)

In contrast to adult views, young people, in fact, only made brief reference to social media accounts which one young person considered as only 'wee bits' (CYPFG17). One young man in Co. Antrim did recognise, however, the potential of such sources to incite negative reactions, yet was also dismissive of accounts apparently not informed by lived experiences.

*Like I've seen on Facebook the past couple of days, this wee man, literally he will not f**k up and he's just like this, that and the other and it's like, you do not have a clue, stop acting like you do... He's a Catholic... he's also talking about the history about what happened during the Troubles and all and you're like mate, you were about minus 42 when the Troubles were happening. Shut up. (CYPFG17)*

Movies, TV shows, documentaries and news broadcasts were the main media sources that young people discussed in relation to accessing information about the Conflict and, in fewer cases, plays and songs. Engagement with such sources was presented as voluntary, in contrast, perhaps, to school contexts, as young people chose to access them - 'you're watching it to watch it' (CYPFG16). Young people often described them as 'interesting' (CYPFG14) and referred to the accuracy of portrayal, with one young person in Co. Antrim suggesting, 'it shows them what the war was like so that's good' (CYPFG13). However, others noted the potential omissions or one-sided nature of media representations of the Conflict and were able to identify some of the limitations of these sources. They realised, for example, that representations weren't 'perfect' (CYPFG13) as the creator 'is going to try to put their own spin on it' (CYPFG16).

The media is kind of sectarian as well in a sense because it's to do with their religion, whatever religion they are then that's what, that's the opinion that comes on both sides, they may have took one side. (CYPFG16)

Compared to the text-based learning in school, one group in Co. Louth noted the added benefit of the visual aspect of learning through media sources which was more likely to have an impact and resonate with its young viewers.

It has more of an impact. I think it kind of hits home a bit more whenever you actually see maybe footage or people's personal stories about it. It kind of gives you more of an impact of what actually went on instead of just looking at a page and seeing the different leaders that were involved and what happened. Like someone telling you, oh this happened. But hearing someone's actual stories about it, it kind of hits home a bit more. (CYPFG16)

3.3.4 Learning within the Community

Young people in nine groups located in Northern Ireland spoke about learning about the Conflict through the community via their friends, the adult generation, visual representations or as part of youth groups. Only one group outside of Northern Ireland in Co. Louth referred to a community context through their work with Comhairle na nÓg³².

Young people described learning in the community through their social networks such as friends who '*just tell me stuff*' (CYPFG2), '*just different people who live around you*' (CYPFG17) or through membership of groups such as marching bands. Some young people noted that '*if you live in an estate*' (CYPFG14) you were likely to pick up information on the Conflict, and would '*just usually hear*' (CYPFG7) accounts from other members of the community. There was a sense among one group of young people living in Co. Antrim that it was impossible not to recognise events which had impacted the community during the Conflict as they were frequently talked about and represented '*everywhere*' including on murals (CYPFG13). Similar to family accounts, the potentially biased nature of those accounts passed through the community were recognised, as articulated by one young man in Co. Armagh.

You just hear about good and bad sides. Say, if you're brought up in a Protestant community, you'd hear all the bad sides about what happened with the Catholics, different problems, made them a bad name. More, sort of, like violence starts, because lots of people think what they did back then, and don't think about it now. (CYPFG7)

In two groups, both located in Co. Antrim, young people considered that learning within the community was not so much about hearing about what happened in the past, but, rather, that they reflected that some of what characterised the period of the Conflict still continued. Therefore, when asked about where they learned about the Conflict, they discussed it as a live issue.

F: The fact that it's still happening

F: UVF and IRA they're still about, they're still planting bombs, still do all that. We're still fully segregated, we not integrated. If we were more integrated there'd be no such thing as T:BUC. (CYPFG18)

M: It's just the way our country is... Yeah it's just our country some people just riot and get angry because the peelers have let them do what they want. (CYPFG17)

³² Child and youth councils operating in local authorities in Republic of Ireland.

Other learning in the community happened in the context of youth groups particularly in the context of community relations programmes (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). Such learning involved interactive events, visits to areas particularly affected by the Conflict and discussion on relevant documentaries. Such activities and space for learning and discussion seemed to be valued by young people and viewed as '*neutral*' (CYPFG1), more so than other sources of learning they had spoken of. One group in Co. Derry/Londonderry spoke positively about visiting a museum that focused on the history of the Conflict as part of their youth group.

After it we were in full conversation... That was between 18 and 25 so it was that age group who wouldn't have known anything about the Troubles, we were all so invested in talking about it. And also there was the massive riot that happened a few weeks prior to that so we were able to talk about that there, basically we were all saying about how the beliefs have went out the window, like the people who is rioting now ain't fighting for what they had to fight for back then. (CYPFG15)

Another group from Co. Louth valued visiting an area particularly affected by the Conflict in Northern Ireland and appreciated the balanced account they appeared to have been offered.

It gives you insight on both sides because we got a tour from someone who was in the IRA and someone who was in the UVF. So we had two different perspectives to show us so it wouldn't be such a biased view going into it. It was good to see both sides. (CYPFG16)

It was evident across all focus groups that, to various extents, young people knew about, and were able to speak about, what happened during the Conflict. They drew on a range of sources to inform their knowledge but they presented mixed views regarding the extent to which these accounts were complete and valid. As noted above, some young people welcomed space to speak openly about the Conflict, and its impact, with their peers. As discussion in groups progressed, young people considered whether they should learn about the Conflict, as explored in the following section.

3.4 To Learn or not to Learn?

3.4.1 "We don't need to talk about it"

A small number of young people questioned the need to learn about, or reflect on, the past, vocalizing that life had '*moved on*'. Two groups in particular, from different communities in Co. Antrim, were keen to establish that '*the past is in the past*', and that '*we don't need to talk about it*' (CYPFG11). One young man seemed to suggest the irrelevance of the past for his present life and articulated a need to '*let go*'.

M: I think it's too late now, it's all over. We don't need to learn the information again. If we were learning it during the time I would appreciate it more because it would tell me oh, these things are happening at the moment, this, this and this is happening, I should steer clear from being out too late, from going to certain areas and stuff like that there. ... plays and movies and even poetry is still trying to touch on how these things are still affecting us but the only reason it's still affecting us is because we won't let it go. (CYPFG17)

There were mixed views among adult participants about whether young people should know about the past and their parents' experiences. Echoing some of the young people's viewpoints, one parent suggested that young people may, in fact, not be interested in learning about the past.

I don't know, they don't really have any interest in it as much because things come on the TV about the Troubles, come in and watch this, this is the way it used to be and they wouldn't have any interest in it at all, none at all.... It's like why would we want to watch this, it's boring. So no interest at all. (PFG1)

Similarly, one victims practitioner noted that some young people simply '*do not wish to be reminded of what happened and want to draw a line under the 'Troubles'*' (VPG3). Other adult participants reflected on their own choices to refrain from speaking about the Conflict. One community representative described his avoidance of talking about the Conflict with his son.

Except now, our [son] is thirteen. He's second year, and he's starting to ask questions then about flags, and about Protestants and Catholics. He's obviously become conscious of it, and part of it is from his peers in school, because they're probably coming from houses where the Conflict is talked about, and the Troubles is talked about, and politics maybe is talked about in front of the kids, whereas we try not to. (CRFG3)

Some of the concerns or hesitation about learning about the past – expressed by both young people and adults in the study – related to the potential negative impact of such learning. One young woman in Co. Derry/Londonderry, for example, noted the effects of hearing about how families had been impacted.

It's sad like whenever you know that your family and stuff has went through it as well, like you know whenever you know your grandparents and stuff were in it, it's not nice, other than the really negative impact of being aware of it. (CYPFG4)

Similarly, one young man, also from Co. Derry/Londonderry, remembered a specific case which, he suggests, the bereaved family may not want to be reminded about.

They're bringing up the past when they're unable to move on. Like the former SAS operative who was accused of killing an innocent bystander, I'm pretty sure the family doesn't want to be reminded that a former SAS operative killed their loved one who was unarmed. (CYPFG3)

Young people also described the potential negative impact that learning could have on themselves, particularly in relation to their mental health. One young man, for example, suggested that watching documentaries on the Conflict 'can make you depressed' (CYPFG14), while a young woman described being 'confused' and 'scared' when learning about the Conflict.

But I would get confused, and I don't really want to learn too much about it, because... last year, or something, like Facebook was getting me scared, because there was a load of things going on, and even now still, the bombs and stuff, and these bomb scares, I don't really want to read into too much, because I've like severe bad anxiety, like mental health. My own mind would go mental. So, I don't really want to think about what could happen. (CYPFG9)

Further potentially negative impacts of learning related to the effect on young people's attitudes, particularly in the fostering of sectarian beliefs and attitudes supportive of violence – 'it's not good because it continues on the hate a wee bit' (CYPFG15). Young people noted that this could occur across different forms of learning – in school, families or in the community. One young man in Co. Armagh noted the influence of community accounts and the potential to encourage present day violence.

You just hear about good and bad sides. Say, if you're brought up in a Protestant community, you'd hear all the bad sides about what happened with the Catholics, different problems, made them a bad name. More, sort of, like violence starts, because lots of people think what they did back then, and don't think about it now. (CYPFG7)

Reflecting on the imbalanced – or even 'biased' – accounts that young people spoke of in a school context, one young woman in Co. Armagh noted that learning about 'all Protestants' influences the way young people could feel about the 'other' community.

It's like what I said too, going to a Catholic school we're being told all Protestants are bad from history so you're looking at the Protestants and thinking oh, I hate Protestants, they did that towards us so that's why it's affecting us now. (CYPFG1)

In a similar vein, other young people spoke about attitudes developed when learning about the Conflict within families and the risk, for example, 'to be brought up to hate Protestants or hate Catholics' (CYPFG8). This could, as one young woman from Co. Monaghan described, be linked to family accounts of the Conflict and interactions between the two communities.

My mum... She was born in '77, and she grew up in [border town] like. I think if we went to mum she'd just, I don't know, she'd still have a bit of a grudge towards Protestants, even though she's half Protestant herself, she still holds that grudge of what was going on. I think that's just because she worked on the border, and people from the North would have come up and cause trouble and just flew back over the border. (CYPFG8)

The risk of perpetuating sectarian attitudes across generations was highlighted by another young woman, also living in a border region.

... in another way I don't think it's really, really important, because you don't want to drum sectarian, like have kids being sectarian, or like bitter against the other religion, because that's just going to keep it going. If that makes sense. (CYPFG9)

Adult participants, too, highlighted risks associated with learning about the past, related in part to the 'romanticisation' and 'hero worship' discussed above. One parent in Co. Armagh, who also worked with young people, identified the transmission of anger and incitation of violence as a particular concern.

I'm working with young people myself at that, with working with a 16-year-old, I can see it. They're talking about it, and in their heads there's still a fight on or there's going to be another war. They still want, they think they know what the war was about, and they want it, listening to them, they want it to start up again, and they want to win whatever they thought they were fighting for, and it's hard to explain to them, and try to educate them, you know, it's not, it's better this way, and nobody really needs to win anything, and we can have a better Northern Ireland, but I don't know. (PI1)

The concerns highlighted by young people and adults did not solely relate to learning about what had happened in the past, but also about the learning of attitudes, cultural identity and difference, and the ways in which this may manifest in communities and serve to perpetuate sectarian attitudes and violence (McAlister et al., 2013). This form of learning and its impacts are discussed in greater detail in following two chapters.

3.4.2 "Knowledge is power"

Despite references to wanting to leave the past in the past and recognition of the potential negative impact of learning, in all but one focus group, young people did identify the importance of learning about the Conflict or, at least, that '*it's a wee bit interesting*' (CYPFG12). Their accounts, therefore, support previous research that many young people are interested in being taught about controversial and sensitive subjects, such as the Conflict (Bell et al., 2010; Conway, 2006). For a number of young people, it was simply that they thought it was important to know about their country's '*history*'.

F: Because it's part of our country's history and to, kind of, understand or to appreciate where we are now. In today's society you, kind of, have to have at least a basic knowledge on what has happened in Ireland's history, and the Troubles was such a big time for history in Ireland, that to not know anything about it, kind of, I don't know, I'd be afraid like, em ...

M: It's like lying to yourself kind of, if you pretend to yourself that it didn't happen, and didn't teach people about it. (CYPFG10)

M: At the same time we can't take away from it, it's our culture, it's our history, we have to live with that. Even though none of us were born and raised through it, it's still our history and we have to take a look at it thinking yeah that's what happened back in the day because of what we didn't do. (CYPFG17)

A group of mothers from the same community in Co. Antrim also discussed the importance of knowing history and how this became more relevant for them over time. One acknowledged the role of young people as being part of that dialogue and the importance of communication between the generations.

It didn't mean that much to you, but now as you're older you think about like all the different things that happened. We've done a bit of history from the [community] and stuff like that, and we really enjoyed that, getting to know. There was loads of stuff that we hadn't a clue of, and yet we lived through it. So, I think it's really good to encourage kids to talk and us to be open in that conversation. (PFG2)

Learning about the past was also about acknowledging what had happened to individuals, families and communities and to ensure that their suffering was remembered. One group of young people in Co. Louth felt that victims of the Conflict should not have '*died for nothing*' (CYPFG16). It was also important, as one young man articulated, to foster a deeper understanding of the Conflict rather than simply knowing facts and dates.

Yeah. Because you won't have as much knowledge going into it so then it's your basically own opinion against everyone else's, but once someone actually explains it to you then you get a better understanding of the situation itself. (CYPFG16)

A number of young people in one focus group in Co. Armagh explained that their families had moved to Northern Ireland since the Good Friday/ Belfast Agreement when they were children. They described a particular need for immigrant communities to learn about the Conflict in order to understand the complex history and the legacy it has left, particularly in certain areas.

I think it's important for immigrants coming in to understand the history of the country, to understand why there's some spaces some people can't go because they feel unsafe or why Protestants do certain things or Catholics do certain things because it's part of their history and they understand it, they have to learn it. (CYPFG2)

This young woman, therefore, articulates the ongoing relevance of what happened in the past and how it still shapes young people's experiences today in restricting movement. In a somewhat similar vein, another young woman in Co. Antrim suggested that understanding the past was vital as she argued the Conflict and its effects were still live in the community she lived in.

Knowledge is power. If you understand that, because all the Soldier F and Soldier H stuff, like young people are hearing that now but they don't understand why, so then they should be taught why, why this is going on, whether you agree with it or disagree with it, why what's happened [in the past] has happened because it's current. (CYPFG18)

The relevance of the past for the present featured in a number of other group discussions – all among young people in locations in Northern Ireland. It was important to know what happened, some thought, in order to keep themselves safe in their daily lives. For example, knowing to avoid going into certain places, wearing the wrong clothes or saying something which could provoke a negative reaction.

F: If we didn't know we could be in danger then if we went to the wrong place.

...

M: If you were wearing certain items and people are right beside you... Maybe the Celtic tops in the Protestant areas. (CYPFG6)

M: Because if someone goes out and doesn't know anything about it, someone could come up to them and say something, and they could say something wrong, and ended up getting beat up or something. (CYPFG7)

For others, knowing about the past was important to understand the ongoing impact the Conflict has on the lives of people in their community, particularly in relation to mental health. Young men in a group in Co. Antrim described the long-term effects from events in the past.

M: I think people have very short minds, like a very short memory, because big things happened, and you have to remember it....

M: Like something happened thirty, forty years ago, still has an effect on people today. (CYPFG11)

As well as a focus on the present, one of the most frequently discussed reasons for learning about the past related to the future, and in particular the need to avoid a return to conflict or a repetition of what had happened – 'Let's learn from our mistakes' (CYPFG18). Young people, therefore, spoke of a need to learn from the past to prevent violence in the future or to know how to better respond.

M: You can learn from the past as well, so I don't think there's a real reason to try and cover it up. If you look at what used to happen you can figure out how to avoid it for the future, and if we didn't learn about it I don't think we would know to avoid it. (CYPFG1)

M: Because if they don't learn it, it's only a matter of time before they take part in it, only by learning what happened in the past and the impact that has made in the place today, we can avoid it. (CYPFG3)

F: It's important, but I think it is important young people are aware of it, because to prevent it, like we want to prevent it from happening again in future years. (CYPFG10)

3.4.3 Creating a safe space for learning

As already discussed, not all learning was equally valued and young people often returned to referencing the validity they give to different sources of learning when discussing a need to learn about the past. A number of group discussions noted that learning had to be '*unbiased*' (CYPFG1) and be taught '*from both sides*' (CYPFG18), warning against modes of learning which had the potential to encourage sectarian attitudes.

See it's one of them things, like there's good comes out of it because it makes the younger generation realise what they'd been through, at the same time it's not good because it continues on the hate a wee bit. (CYPFG15)

I think it can be positive and negative depending on what information you've given. Because if people are saying oh, don't go down there, that's where Protestants or Catholics are or you know, don't do that or we hate them but if you're told things like your bag was checked going into a shop it just makes you think a little bit and appreciate what people went through, more to just. (CYPFG17)

The need for balanced accounts – particularly in school contexts – was also identified among respondents in the consultation with victim practitioners. They noted that children needed to know the '*truth*' of what happened during the Conflict and that children should have the '*Freedom to explore the past without the worry of having to take sides*' (VPG7). A '*one-sided*' approach was warned against with schools encouraged to '*allow victims to tell their story so that the truth be told*' and that the role of security forces in '*saving lives*' should be acknowledged (VPG8).

According to young people, consideration also needs to be given to the age at which learning about the past is introduced. Being '*too young in primary school*', for example, '*could upset you or something*' (CYPFG7). One young man in Co. Antrim noted that learning should occur at an age where young people can make judgements about the validity of the source of learning.

If you tell it to younger children they're more susceptible to information and to other people's views. So if you have someone from one side telling them about so and so thing and how this other side was bad, they'll start thinking that side is the bad side and I'm against this. But if you tell it to an older group of people, they have their own opinions and they actually can think about and say if they want to accept this or is it true actually. (CYPFG17)

However, one parent noted the risk of leaving more formal modes of learning too late and discussed the importance of educating children at a sufficiently early age before negative attitudes become entrenched. She also highlighted the importance of engaging parents in the process (particularly in allowing their children to attend Good Relations Programmes), acknowledging that some of the problematic aspects of learning are established in the family context.

If parents would let their children go to them [Good Relations Programmes], and if we can get the children, and I think maybe again doing it from they're a younger age, before they're fifteen, and they know all the craic, and they've got this hatred in them. If you get them at a younger age, and take them on trips, and nearly educate them before the parents can educate them. Educate them before the parents can educate them. Obviously, people are going to have their hang ups, again if they've suffered in the past with the past. I don't think we can forget the past, and people suffering, but I do think they should build on it, and that's where we should try and get them at a younger age, and take them on trips, weeks here and weeks there, and just try, but again you need the parents to participate there. They're one of the biggest barriers, to be honest. We're the biggest barrier of our kids' lives, I feel anyway, just from what I've seen with the young ones I would work with. (PI1)

A number of adult participants made reference – both explicitly and implicitly – to a need for learning which facilitates space for young people to discuss the Conflict and in order for them to understand the impact on their family lives and communities. So, whilst the value of learning about the Conflict was acknowledged, an appropriate or effective mode of learning, some argued, had not been developed. One community representative noted the importance of educating children on the political context and to develop their capacity to challenge the views which may be shared with them.

So, it's that, it's educating the kids to be more politically aware, and a lot of it is historical as well. Do you know like, they feel like you have to vote that. It's not getting them ones to think. I think, also, in schools, people are scared to do the work, do you know what I mean, and I think that's a scary thing because a historical thing comes down too, who you vote, do you know what I mean. If you're scared to challenge your parents' views, you're not going to do it, but as you get older you can do that. So, it's about teaching the kids that. It's okay to challenge people, and to say this is what we want. (CRI4)

In a similar vein, one key stakeholder identified the dominance of two political narratives leaving no space in between to be accommodated by young people trying to make sense of the past.

At the minute we're just in a place where there's two main political narratives on it really. Anybody else in the middle feels, 'I can't say anything because I don't agree with either of these two sides at the minute', and then people go into silence mode, and then particularly for young people then it's like, the Troubles, what was that all about, and don't have any, kind of, space to talk or engage with it. (KSI3)

Facilitating discussion between the generations was crucial according to one key stakeholder who felt that to avoid ritualisation – and perhaps glorification – of the past, young people needed the space to question and critically engage with the past, acknowledging their capacity to have these challenging conversations.

... you need to actually invite young people to interrogate your stories, because the telling of the past can become ritualised in ways that aren't healthy, and people will get used to telling their story again, and again, and they get a particular reaction... So, the story, actually, sometimes there's a change, and it becomes a performance rather than a genuine sharing of what happened, and I think young people can often see through that, but they ask questions that most of us would be completely scundered by, but it's because they come at it fresh. I think we need that, sort of, inter-generational dialogue where kids can feel free to say, well, what did you do in the past, what were we involved in, how do you feel about it now, and to do that critically. So, it's not just idolising the dad who was in the RA, but actually saying, you know, trying to get a critical conversation going about, well, was it really worth all the pain, and I think young people are actually given the opportunity are very, very good at that, at working through that complex stuff, but we always, sort of, infantilize them, and underestimate them in terms of what they can cope with. It's the secrecy that actually becomes more problematic for them, I think, than the open dialogue. (KSFG6)

3.5 Conclusions and Rights Implications

Young people's knowledge of the Conflict was learned through a range of sources, most notably in the context of school and family accounts. Although their level of understanding was questioned by some adult participants, by virtue of not having lived through the Conflict, young people had considerable knowledge and demonstrated capacity to talk about sensitive and challenging issues. Accounts of learning in the family context varied from families who did not talk about the

past, to young people who overheard accounts in adult conversations, to those whose parents, grandparents and other family members recounted detailed stories of the Conflict and its impact on family and communities. Adult participants' perceived family accounts as the principal source of learning through the recounting of lived experiences across generations. In this way, much of what young people know and think about the Conflict is established prior to any formal learning.

Whilst learning in school could fill gaps in detail from other accounts of the Conflict, more typically what was learned and the way in which it was learned depended on school, subject choices, teachers' views and the capacity or willingness to engage young people in sensitive and potentially emotive discussions. Such discussion could, of course, be challenging for teachers who have not received adequate training or for whom discussions of the past could act as a trigger, particularly if they have not dealt with their own related issues. Nevertheless, learning in school could be selective, partial, lacking in depth or absent. The analysis demonstrates that despite long standing concerns related to avoidance of teaching of the Conflict, the neglect to address political history in primary schools and a focus on historic societies elsewhere (Barton, 2001a; Barton & McCully, 2010; Bell et al., 2010; NICCY, 2018), children's opportunities to discuss and make sense of 'the Troubles' are limited (NICCY, 2020).

Participants in all groups in the study were aware of the limitations of accounts shared with young people with concerns related to partiality or 'bias' linked most strongly to family accounts, but also to social media and accounts within the community. The potential to glorify or romanticise the past was a key concern where children were not included in discussions about the impact of the Conflict in communities and families. Additionally, participants noted that selective or partial accounts may perpetuate sectarian views that can reinforce a divisive mind-set between communities across the generations. This raises questions related to the accounts and source material young people have access to in order to inform their views and perceptions of the past, and suggests that their freedom of expression is compromised which includes: 'freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice' (UNCRC, Art. 13). This points to a need for young people to have access to a range of perspectives and stories of the past in a variety of formats in order to achieve a shared narrative about the Conflict (NICCY, 2018; 2020). There is potential within this for resources such as the Oral History Archive - 'a central place for people from all backgrounds ... to share experiences and narratives related to the Troubles' (Stormont House Agreement, 2014: para. 22) – to inform young people, if supported to engage with the resource in a way which is age appropriate.

It is important to recognise that there were varied views among young people and adults about whether young people should learn about the past. Some were keen to highlight that the Conflict should remain in the past as speaking of the Conflict could have a negative impact on young people's mental health or influence their attitudes with the potential of intergenerational transmission of sectarian beliefs. These are perhaps not reasons for the avoidance of learning but rather arguments for a different way of learning. Others articulated strong views that learning about the past was important to know about the country's history, to acknowledge the impact on communities and families, to understand how the past shapes the present and to learn from the past to inform the future. It is important that a focus on learning does not result in an additional divide between those who want to 'move on' and those who feel such an approach silences them, ignores a key part of their identity and fails to acknowledge the past. Attention should perhaps turn to how we can create safe spaces for children and young people to learn about the Conflict, have these sensitive discussions and feel able and safe to acknowledge and/or challenge narratives of the past.

An effective mode of learning which provides a safe space to express different views within two contested political narratives was not evident in participants' accounts. Formal learning focused on exam success does not encourage debate, discussion and the depth of understanding adult participants suggested young people lacked. Learning needs to utilise methods young people find engaging – interactive methods, hearing from those from different perspectives who have lived through Conflict and visual media were all noted by young people as particularly memorable and meaningful. Indeed, States are required to ensure children have access to information and material from a diversity of cultural resources (UNCRC, Art. 17). Consideration needs to be given to the age at which formal learning may start and that age appropriate activities are developed. Given the learning evident across the generations as a result of the passing of stories through the community and family, learning should facilitate dialogue between the generations and build young people's capacity to interrogate stories in a safe space. Consultation with children and young people in the development of learning resources and methods is crucial to ensure that they are relevant and appropriate to children's interests and to ensure that their views are taken into account (UNCRC, Art. 12).

3.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, and consultations with our advisory groups, we make the following recommendations:

- The school curriculum should be revised to consider the delivery of teaching on the Conflict. Consideration should be given to the age at which to introduce learning to ensure

this begins before any negative attitudes can be entrenched. It should also be embedded in a subject where there is space for discussion and debate and less focus on rote learning for examination purposes.

- Consultation should take place with parents/guardians and young people in the revision of the curriculum to ensure that learning at home is considered in conjunction with school learning.
- The current training for teachers on the Conflict and cross-community issues needs to be expanded to develop their capacity and confidence to facilitate challenging and sensitive topics and to respond to emotion in the classroom. Teachers require additional support in the teaching of the Conflict, particularly where they are dealing with their own related issues.
- A two generation approach to learning is required, either in school or community settings. Safe spaces need to be created where discussions can be held within and across generations. Parents who want to talk about the Conflict with children require support and access to information. Children and young people's capacity should be developed so they can engage in discussion with the older generations and challenge views as they make sense of the past.
- Children and young people should be supported to access a range of accessible sources and information to develop their knowledge and understanding – e.g. the Oral History Archive – but also be involved in the development of child-informed and child friendly sources related to the Conflict.

4 Learning Identity, Culture and Difference

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the ways in which young people learn about the Conflict. It discussed the need for a safe space for young people to learn about the past within and across generations. Building on this, the present chapter examines young people's views and understanding of identity and cultural expression. It explores the extent to which they adopt a particular identity and the perceived importance of doing so within their communities. It also explores the expressions of identity within the community – both visual symbols and through cultural events. A dyad of a father and daughter draws on detailed narratives to demonstrate the potential for expressions of culture to foster a sense of connectedness both across generations of a family and also between the individual and the community. Other accounts, however, raise concerns related to expressions of identity as fostering a sense of difference from others, with the potential to extend into sectarian views. Finally, the chapter explores how a sense of difference may be instilled and/or reinforced through attitudes passed down through generations. The findings not only reinforce previous research noting parents' influence on children's views, their potential to shape beliefs and opinions and to instil negative attitudes (McAlister et al., 2009; Muldoon et al., 2007; Smyth et al., 2004; Stringer et al., 2010) but also suggest that these issues remain unresolved a number of years on. However, the findings also reveal the taking on of narratives passed down through the family is not inevitable, as some young people demonstrated an ability to resist and/or challenge these. The findings point to the need to engage not only with the young people's generation but also to involve the parent and grandparent generations in debates and discussions on identity and difference.

4.2 Importance of Identity

Young people in the study typically lived in communities which have historically been identified along ethno-national identities. Young people themselves, however, differed in the extent to which they assumed these identities or labels as individuals. They did appreciate, at the same time, the importance often afforded to such identification, particularly among older members of the community and at certain times of the year. The data also illustrate some frustrations expressed

by young people and those who work with them when religious identities are assumed or applied when young people may consider other individual characteristics as more important to their sense of self.

Few young people in focus group discussions claimed to identify strongly with particular identities or communities. Typically, young people did not express identity across ethno-national lines, rather they spoke, sometimes reluctantly, about being 'Catholic' or 'Protestant', something, which some argued, was not a choice but by virtue of their parents. One young person in Co. Monaghan, for example, clearly equated identity with their parents' religion.

[Identity is] not something that you choose most of the time. As a child your parents choose your religion for you. (CYPFG10)

Some young people were certain about their identity 'definitely' identifying as 'Catholic' or 'Protestant' whilst others were more ambivalent: 'if I had to say I'd probably say Protestant' (CYPFG7). Others were clear that they didn't identify with either community – 'not in the slightest' (CYPFG17). Where an identity was claimed, this was typically expressed along religious lines yet most noted, as expressed by one young woman in Co. Tyrone, that this did not necessarily mean they practiced a religion.

It makes me laugh, because there's a lot of young ones, like our ages, who would sit and say, ah, 'I hate Catholics or Protestants, or I'm a deep Catholic', or whatever you want to call them, but they don't go to Mass, or you don't do this. They're just carrying on the hate side. (CYPFG9)

A discussion among community representatives in Co. Armagh resonated with this young person's viewpoint, as they noted the declining participation in religious activities and the potential impact this may have on young people's views on community identity.

F: We were talking about that yesterday, weren't we, about how I feel I'm culturally Protestant.... But not religiously Protestant... and then how does that inform and shape your identity... A lot of people now, in our generation and younger are cultural Catholics. They'll go to the communions, and they'll go to the funerals, but they don't go to church. They'll maybe go at Christmas and Easter. That's about it.

...

M: So, how that impacts then on identity, I don't know, if it even does. Community identity, maybe it's just a less important part, and other things then replace that. (CRFG3)

Whether young people felt a sense of belonging to a specific community they, nonetheless, were aware of the importance that is attributed to identity in Northern Ireland in particular. A number of young people's accounts referred to occasions when they were questioned about their own religious identity or described strategies that were used to seek out such information from someone else. They spoke of occasions when they might be 'tricked' or 'trick' others in order to identify an individual as one or the other religions (CYPFG15). Others described more direct strategies. For example, one young woman, who identified as Catholic, had moved to Northern Ireland with her family when she was aged 4 and 'lived in a Protestant area'. She describes here as 'weird' her friends' need to know about her religious identity.

For me, it's just a bit weird. I also moved here when I was 4, I think and I never really understood the whole Catholic/Protestant thing, I didn't realise there was a thing and I lived in a Protestant area and I lived with a bunch of friends and I remember talking to my friend once when I was 7 years old and that was the first time like she just straight up asked me, 'are you a Protestant or a Catholic?' and I was kind of like, I don't know. (CYPFG2)

Although young people were often ambivalent or non-committal about their own identity, a number did recognise that religious identity was important 'to some people' (CYPFG7). For example, a group of young people in Co. Louth noted a generational difference in the importance of knowing someone's religion. Two young women described how the older generation in their community might interpret being thought of as 'Protestant' as an 'insult'.

F: There was a rumour going round a few weeks ago that I was a Protestant, I don't know where it came from but it wasn't a big deal, I just laughed and moved on and I feel like if that was my granny she would [feigns shock] god, how dare they. Seeing it as an insult but for me it was just – ooh.

F: I think that's another factor in the generations because our generation, like you said, you don't care, oh someone thought I was Protestant – whatever. Then the older generation, they think if someone referred to you as one of them because they think oh, Protestant is a bad name, that they have a bad reputation or whatever and that someone is saying that you're one of them, you know, I think that's another...

F: It's a good thing though. So for us really we're not strung up on religion.

F: Not bothered. (CYPFG16)

Their views were supported by a young man in the same group who described a tendency to only identify someone in terms of their religion – *'you wouldn't know his name, you wouldn't know nothing about him but it would be like – oh yeah, that's a Protestant fella'*. What was 'wrong' in this type of identification, as the same young man noted, was that the individual could then be *'disregarded... because of their religion that they didn't really have a choice in originally'* (CYPFG16). The issue for some, as described here by one young woman from Co. Armagh, was that through identifying someone in terms of their religion, this was considered indicative of other characteristics and thus certain assumptions are drawn.

I feel like maybe sometimes it almost defines you as a person if you're a Catholic then you're this and that, or if you're a Protestant you're this and this. Like you're like labelled just because you're part of one community. (CYPFG1)

For example, in one community in Co. Antrim, a group of young men described belonging to the 'Protestant community' but also noted this could be interpreted as them being 'very one-sided. You're not very open minded or something, you know' (CYPFG14). A further tendency was to draw assumptions on an individual's political affiliation, based on their religious identity, regardless of whether this is the case. One community representative in Co. Armagh explained:

So, when I say, well, 'I'm a Catholic young person', [the assumption is] 'so you're republican, you're a nationalist, and this is what you like', or maybe 'I'm a Protestant young person', well, you like X, Y, and Z, as well. I think that we associate that with ourselves, even if we're not practising in those religions, or those faiths, or those denominations, we almost align ourselves with that, and then actually we say those Catholics, and actually they're not all Catholics, or those Protestants do this, when that's not always the case. I think that's hard for young people to understand, and to get their heads around as well. (CRFG4)

4.2.1 A Forced Identity?

As noted, a number of young people did not identify with a particular identity, yet assumptions and processes in place in the community meant that an identity could be placed on them involuntarily. One key example was the wearing of school uniforms and was noted as a particular issue for young people as a means of identifying them with a religion *'just by your uniform'* (CYPFG7). Wearing a uniform could restrict young people's movements in the periods before and after school as they assessed a need to keep to their own side of the community and were only comfortable going to the 'other' community *'out of my uniform'* (CYPFG4). Pressure to claim or accept an

identity also came from potentially threatening sources to display affiliation with particular groups within the community. For example, one key stakeholder representing an all-island organisation working with children and families described young men they worked with and the assumption that if they did not identify with certain expressions of identity they were considered to be 'anti' community.

They were saying, everybody, in their words, and they were saying, everybody has a perception that all young men are affiliated with marching bands and bonfires. That's what they were saying how they perceived that everybody is perceiving them, but they were also saying then, by us not engaging in that in our community, we're seen as, why are you not in a band, why are you not at the bonfire, why are you not drinking with your bag of cans with us, why are you not doing that? ... you're not in a band, what's wrong with you? You're not at the bonfire, what's wrong with you? You're not helping to collect for the bonfire. You're not giving a donation to the bonfire. What's wrong with you and your family? You're seen then as almost anti-Protestant, or anti-Catholic, do you know what I mean? (KSI8)

A number of youth workers who ran cross-community participants described frustrations with a requirement to identify young people as a specific religion or nationality noting, as an example, this could force young people 'from mixed marriages, where they're both sides of the community' to choose between two identities inherited from their parents. Community representatives in Co. Louth noted that they 'struggle' to get young people to identify as Catholic or Protestant for the purposes of their programme – 'these kids aren't identifying as anything' – and, to a greater extent than young people in Northern Ireland, they had more identity factors to consider.

They are behind on identity in comparison to the young people on this side of the border who have all these other boxes that you're ticking when it comes to identity. (CRFG9)

In a similar vein, one community representative in Co. Armagh noted that classifying young people in terms of their religion or nationality denied young people's choice to be defined by other characteristics they considered more important and influential in their identity.

So, it's interesting that when you have a different focus on your life, or when you have a different need, that actually some of your boxes could be just threw up in the air because actually you have a greater need than identifying yourself as British, or Irish, or Catholic, or

Protestant. You're a young person with a disability, and you need support for that first. That's your utmost first important need. (CRFG4)

Imposing an identity on young people along religious lines can, therefore, be counter to their definition of self. Indeed, since 2003, findings from the Young Life and Times Survey has indicated a steady decline in young people aged 16 who identify as 'belonging to any particular religion', from 88% of young people in 2003, to 80% in 2010 and 69% most recently in 2019 (ARK, 2003; 2010; 2019).

4.3 Expressions of Identity and Culture

4.3.1 Visual Expressions of Identity: Belonging and Alienation

Young people identified many symbols in the community which are associated with ethno-national identity (McKnight & Schubotz, 2017) and their discussion of the ways in which they might be received could be interpreted as the existence of a 'culture war' (Gray et al., 2018). Whilst young people had been hesitant to associate with a particular identity they did demonstrate affiliations when discussing symbols of identity, even if they did not articulate this as them being '*Catholic or Protestant*' or '*nationalist or unionist*'. Common identifiers visible within the community described by young people included the flying of flags, graffiti, the painting of kerbsides and murals. One group of young people in Co. Tyrone suggested that they would see '*a lot of union jacks and all flying about*' but '*don't really see much Catholic flags*' (CYPFG9), whilst others acknowledged both their '*own*' and the '*other*' community would express identity in these ways. Young people felt that such expressions of identity intensified at particular times when other events were happening.

There's loads of union jacks and all up because it's near the Twelfth, and then in the middle of August there will be loads of Catholics for the 15th. (CYPFG7)

In the same location in Co. Armagh, however, a community representative noted that symbolic displays – particularly flags – were becoming commonplace all year round.

So, all these flags.... I'm very conscious with my work that more flags are going up, and they're staying up longer... what is the government doing... while Stormont is collapsed, what are the commission actually working on still in the vacuum of that while more flags are going up (CRFG3)

It was typically young people in research locations in Northern Ireland who spoke about community expressions of identity. Young people from communities in the Border Region of

Ireland had less to say about this. However, experiences could differ depending on the community in which they lived. For example, in one area of Co. Louth young people noted that you might 'see the odd Irish flag' or thought it 'mad' if they saw 'IRA stuff' visible in the community. In the same group, however, one young man described a different context.

You see in my area, [estate] you see it all around that area ... you walk through certain parts of the area as well and you have IRB printed on the walls and Irish flags everywhere. It all depends where you go in the area and everything. Some part will be classed as Protestant, some part will be classed as everything, different unionists and everything. So it all depends on where you go kind of thing and that's in [estate] as well. (CYPFG16)

Such displays of identity could be interpreted or received differently by young people. For some, where they identified with the colours or flags, these symbols demonstrated membership of community – 'It's, sort of, like another form of identity. It shows who you are' (CYPFG7) - and signified to them it was a place where they belonged and could feel safe - 'places you go and ... places you don't' (CYPFG15). Some accounts indicated a sense of ownership or belonging: 'So you know you're in your own community' (CYPFG13). At the same time, symbols indicated to young people places where they don't 'belong' and therefore establish a sense of difference.

It's cos I look at the flags and I don't think they're my flags... I just look at the flags and think I don't believe in them flags I believe in other ones, so I just feel different. (CYPFG15)

Symbols of identity were not only about a sense of belonging or membership to community, but could be exclusionary and antagonistic and in this way could be interpreted in fear. Flags could be flown, for example, knowing 'they rub it in like' (CYPFG13).

Some people just put flags up to annoy people... Putting flags up in the wrong place, like union jacks, down the other end of the town, and there's flags up there. Just some people do it to annoy people, to set them off, trying to get a reaction. (CYPFG7)

Visual expressions could also serve as reminders of who has control over a community and could be interpreted as threatening by those outside – but also within – the community. One young man, for example, noted that messages communicated through murals were a way of showing 'who has dominance over the area' (CYPFG17). Similarly, a group of community representatives in Co. Antrim highlighted the 'pressure' felt by young people 'living in a paramilitary control area' through messages communicated via murals.

A couple of young men said, this always sticks in my mind this conversation, a particular mural ... of the hooded gunman, he said is that supposed to scare people from the [other community] or is that to keep me in check. So it's that, that's telling me what their understanding of those murals are and those messages are. (CRFG8)

When symbolic expressions were used to communicate sectarian views or support of particular organisations, young people were more likely to raise questions regarding an element of 'hate'. Graffiti messages – such as 'KAH Kill all Huns' – and the flying of flags indicating paramilitary support were thought of negatively by a number of young people.

See I don't even mind flags, like the tricolour or the union jack, I've noticed... I think it's more Protestant flags have a lot of things on them that are a bit, I think, it's not fair, like organisations and stuff. I don't think that's really appropriate. Like the flag alone, if they want to put the flag up, fair enough, but even if there was a tricolour with the IRA I wouldn't even like that and I'm a Catholic myself. I just don't think they should be allowed to use flags like that, because it's like a lot of hate and stuff in it. (CYPFG9)

4.3.2 Cultural Events as Expressions of Identity

A sense of identity and community belonging could take on more significance at particular times of the year, especially in relation to the celebration and commemoration of historical events through parades, marches, bonfires and other activities. Like visual symbols of identity and culture, they were most commonly spoken about by young people in communities in Northern Ireland. One group in Co. Monaghan, for example, noted that apart from St Patrick's Day, there would be '*nothing like*' the parades and bonfires they were aware of across the border – '*It wouldn't be that extreme*' (CYPFG10). Similarly, a community representative from Co. Louth noted a decrease in participation in such events in recent years.

We had the republican march yesterday for in [area]. It wasn't huge... the Easter Sunday parade has dwindled away down too, I mean, quite low. Again, there's pockets, a number of groups have, I'm saying they, but it's dwindled away. If you think about it, the ceasefire was 25 years ago, and we're dealing with people who are nowhere that age. (CRFG5)

Like young people in previous studies (Leonard & McKnight, 2015) events were described as single identity events aimed at one or other community. One community representative, for example, described the mixed feelings – pride and defensiveness – which are associated with expressions of community identity, including parades.

So, if you grow up seeing republican murals in your street, or memorial gardens, or parades, or kerbstones being painted, and flags out, you inherit that, because that's where you're from, and you feel proud of that. There's a sense of pride, but there's also a sense of defensiveness as well. (CRFG4)

Recent research has illustrated how events such as bonfires remain an essential aspect of cultural identity and tradition for young people from the broad Unionist/Loyalist tradition (NIYF, 2019a). Whilst young people in the current study did not expand in detail on the positive aspects of such cultural expressions of identity these did include a sense of community belonging, family connectedness across the generations and showing honour to deceased family members and family traditions. Some of these positive aspects are reflected upon in the dyad below of 'Ewan' and 'Joanne'³³.

Ewan's father was killed by the Provisional IRA when Ewan was 12 years old. For Ewan, identifying with 'a unionist Protestant community' was important, his own father 'a staunch unionist man... an Orangeman... a bandsman'. Ewan joined the band with his father 3 years before he died which was 'so special to me... Him and I... drumming the wee side drum in the band together'.

Ewan remained 'very much involved in my culture' throughout his life, walking in his father's footsteps.

At 16 I couldn't wait to join the Loyal Orders to follow in my father's footsteps. He was an Orangeman, and I joined the Orange Institution at 16, and I was always in an accordion band, and my culture is extremely important to me, and then I continued on through life.

³³ Any names used in the report are pseudonyms.

For Ewan, expression of his culture was not about establishing difference, but a sense of connection within his community, and one he wanted to pass on to his daughters.

I don't parade on the 12th July to annoy my neighbours. That's not what it's about. You come out in any rural Twelfth, they parade in the morning, or go to the field, we have our tea, we meet different people, you've a bit of chat, you go back, you parade in the afternoon parade, you listen to the service or you go and have a picnic with your family, and you go home that night... It's my culture and my tradition, and I want my girls to be part of that.

It was important to Ewan to pass on his love of unionist culture to his two daughters and it was significant for him that both '*play the accordion in the band*' although he appreciated that '*It's not as important to them to be honest, the band*'. Joanne did, though, appreciate the importance of unionist culture – and particularly participation in the band - for both her father and grandfather. For Joanne herself, it was also '*a big family thing for me*' and helped her to establish a connection to her grandfather.

It was so important to me because I knew my grandfather played such a big part in that band... Hearing about my granda being in the band and because I was never able to be close to him personally, this was my way of being close to him obviously indirectly but I remember my first parade I played the triangle... I felt so proud knowing that this was where my grandfather walked too and my dad... it's always just something that made me feel really close to him and that's why I continue to march.

Ewan felt that he could hold '*very profound and deep and meaningful views in terms of my unionism, and my culture, and my Christian faith*' whilst also being '*a good neighbour and a good friend to everyone*'. He wanted this for his daughters too, that they '*be confident in their unionism, and their culture, and their identity, but at the same time respect that of others*'. Joanne echoes these sentiments and describes cross-community friendships whilst still holding on to the importance of her culture.

I have a lot of Catholic friends, one my best friends is a Catholic girl... and I think that's the way it should be. I feel a lot of the time because I am so vocal about it people assume that I'm almost, you know, I don't like Catholics... but that's not the way it is... I love that I can have friends from both sides of the community but I want us all to remain proud of what we are.

Ewan does worry, however, about the future place of cultural expression both within his family and more broadly. He would be concerned about 'a mixed religious marriage... because I want my children to be there in the field on the 12th'. He also worries about attempts to 'demean your cultures, especially from an Orange perspective' whilst describing a more 'unified narrative' attached to nationalist culture.

There's a unified narrative in terms of Gaelic games, Irish language, sport culture, dance, and people are very much united. People are unapologetic. They're unashamed of their culture and identity. You come into a unionist Protestant community it's much more diverse because we're much more diverse people. We're several different churches, there's different political parties, and we're more diverse by nature.

He worried that in comparison to young unionists, the nationalist identity is presented more confidently among young people in a generation of 'young nationalists and young republicans... articulate young activists that are very much involved in their campaigns, and their politics, and their struggle'. Joanne's hope is that 'we can move on together but still remember what happened in the past to many of our family and friends'.

Apart from the detailed account with Ewan and Joanne's stories, young people's accounts portrayed cultural events as more problematic, reflecting the more emotive aspects of events such as bonfires and their potential to lead to disorder and violence (NIYF, 2019b). Young people rarely spoke of positive aspects associated with these events within their own community and few gave accounts of participating in or enjoying them. Rather, they focused on the impact of experiencing those events connected to the 'other' community. Speaking of events within their own community young people expressed that the meaning being such events had been lost while other aspects

such as excessive drinking had taken priority. One group of young people in Co, Antrim had noted the importance of owning a '*British passport*' and of identifying as a '*religious Protestant but not loyalist*' yet did not celebrate cultural events for these reasons.

- M: *Personally, I don't celebrate the 12th, the 11th because people for me have made it too much into a drinking festival.*
- F: *It's like a pantomime.*
- M: *Yeah, it's more of a go out and get drunk rather than go out and celebrate our history.*
- F: *Half of the people that go to the 11th and the 12th don't even understand why....*
- M: *That's the one thing that annoys me about in here... no one knows what the 12th July actually means. They all grew up thinking aye, when the 12th day comes that's me, I'm on the drink.*
- M: *They just want to drink.*
- F: *How many of them go to the speeches?*
- M: *That's why I don't celebrate the 12th and 11th anymore*
- M: *I don't celebrate. (CYPFG18)*

These sentiments were echoed by a participant in a younger group in the same community who described wanting to avoid such parades and similar events but tells of times when he has been '*forced*' to attend.

I've stopped going to parades and stuff like that there because I've gotten fed up with seeing people drunk and listening to people drunk and I'm terrified when I'm going to them. I hate the loud noises... Yeah there's been times I've been walking down with my mum and all because I've been forced to go because I couldn't stay in the house but I've been walking down and I've literally kept my head down the entire way because I've been afraid of people coming over to me and asking me something, me saying the wrong answer like I naturally would and then me getting punched in the face because I tend to say the wrong thing when I'm nervous. (CYPFG17)

More problematic was how these cultural events were received or interpreted by young people from the 'other' community. Some noted an indifference to such events - '*I don't really give a f**k to be fair*' – particularly if they remained contained in the one community - '*I think it's all right as long as it is on their side*'. Others simply accepted such events as something that just happens in the context of Northern Ireland: '*It's part of our history, that's the way I look at it, it's part of what*

happened in the city so there's nothing you can do about it' (CYPFG15). One group in Co. Antrim thought of bonfires as 'bonkers' but considered parades as a suitable means of expressing identity at different times of the year, perhaps as they were also used within their community.

I don't mind if they have their parade because I mean, we have a parade. The parades like, that's alright because it's not doing no damage but bonfires are. That's council, that's causing lots of council money and all to get that all fixed, like all clean. Like especially the [name] bonfire, you have to go and get everyone to go and get that cleaned out and then they complain about the carpark being stinking. It's them ones that's getting it stinking (all laugh) (CYPFG12).

However, as one community representative in Co. Armagh noted, it was at these times, rather than throughout the year, that issues around identity were more 'contentious': *'there's something happening around bonfires, flag protests, maybe a rally for Irish Language Act, or there's a memorial during the year'* (CRFG4). A number of young people expressed more strongly felt negative attitudes, particularly towards marches and parades, describing how they felt 'angry' or viewed them as times of intensified fear or sectarianism. This was especially expressed by young people from communities which have been labelled as nationalist or republican and their views towards parades during the period of 12th July. Some young people's views were informed by events in the past where *'there would have been a lot of issues, and a lot of the kids would have maybe got caught up in that'* (CYPFG13) or where changes to parade routes were enforced due to prior clashes.

Years ago, Protestants would have had their parade down the [area] and massive violence there between young people and older people and of course they made a statute so now during this day the parade can only go up the town and that's it. Obviously it's fine in a Protestant area but nowhere near the [area]. Obviously there's other history behind it but that's the one, the main thing about the [area]. (CYPFG1)

Previous research has found that events like parades and the display of symbols can intensify feelings associated with exclusive identities and increase tensions in young people's communities (Bell, 2013a; Leonard & McKnight, 2015). This expression of identity through cultural events, along with the symbolism discussed in the earlier section, can heighten a sense of division and difference in young people's communities and, at particular times of the year, can intensify feelings of fear of the 'other' and sectarianism. The meaning and interpretation of these symbols

and events, however are also learned and interpreted as fear in interaction with those most close to young people, notably within their families.

4.4 Learning about Identity and Difference

Young people were asked about where they learned about their cultural identity and the communities to which they belonged. Some of them were unsure and suggested that it was something that you '*just know*' (CYPFG5). Community representatives discussed that a narrative of difference – and sometimes of hatred – is sustained through other mechanisms within the community such as exposure to peers in school expressing certain attitudes ('*Tiocfaidh ar la*'), additional exposure via social media channels and although '*you know yourself that it's not right*', these can become '*engrained*' in young people in the community (CRFG6). One community representative in Co. Antrim – although challenged by another member of the group – was particularly concerned about the influence of teaching and symbolism within the schools, arguing that nationalism and republican '*propaganda*' is promoted through Catholic education.

F: Schools, to me no matter what background or what the religion is, they're not political schools, come on now, they're not political schools. They're coming from a religious background, there's no political. Like if you go into a school in a Catholic area they haven't got up republican emblems and stuff, they're coming from a religious side, they're not taught about republicanism.

M: I've worked in Catholic primary schools in Northern Ireland and they do have Irish tricolours around the school, they do have things relating to Irish nationalism and when they're talking about history there's elements of traditionally what nationalism was back then, what republicanism was back then. (CRFG8)

Most typically however, across young people's and adults' accounts, the influence of attitudes and narratives passed down through families was identified as the most influential.

4.4.1 Passing Down Attitudes Through the Family

The dyad of Ewan and Joanne (see above) provides an example of how cultural traditions and meanings can be passed through family generations with the positive impact of shared celebrations and connectedness to the family and to the community to which they belonged. However, other accounts in the study referenced some concern about the transmission of values and attitudes which could manifest in fear of the 'other' community and sectarian beliefs. At the same time, there was also evidence of young people resisting narratives that could foster

sectarian attitudes and the potential for a generational shift in thinking, at least among some groups.

Across the range of data, it was recognised that the views and attitudes held by parents, grandparents and other older members of the family had been informed by past experiences, the sharing of which also had the potential to shape young people's views. For example, young people spoke of grandparents who told stories of participating in civil rights marches (CYPFG15) or aunties who '*didn't feel safe*' because of stories of the '*Shankill butchers*' and some did recognise that parents' views and warnings were related to very real experiences in their past.

F: My dad always thinks around the 12th that the bonfire is really close, not really close but the [Catholic area] is but it's like close enough but once they have drinks they think they're going to go to the [Catholic area], like a big massive group of Protestants and just attack everyone, that's what my dad always thinks is going to happen, obviously it's not because they haven't done it in years...

F: It does affect my parents and grandparents and my older family. (CYPFG1)

A group of key stakeholders representing an all-island organisation working with children and families similarly spoke of their peers – the parent generation – whose past experiences feed into the narratives shared with children.

F: But still a lot of my friends, and they're all in their early forties, and some of them nearly fifty now, I mean, their daily life, because of who their brothers were involved in, or their das, or their mummies, or their grandads or whatever, their daily life was being ripped out of their bed in the middle of the night by the soldiers, and when they see soldiers, a lot of them haven't moved on because of what they had experienced.

M: And those guys are still feeding a narrative -

F: Aye to their children then (KSI8)

A group of young people in Co. Antrim discussed the extent to which they took on their parents' fear, recognising their own irrationality for being fearful whilst others noted the similarities between young people from different communities.

F: So my mum and dad were afraid, they passed on that fear to me even though I have no reason to be like that. Even though I have no reason to be.

M: I just don't see the point in being scared. I don't. I've walked about ['other' community] rightly no sweat. ...I don't understand why you should be scared walking in areas like

that, you know what I mean. They're the same as you, they work, they leave their house in the morning, they go to work, they come home and eat their dinner and go to bed. ...

M: My da passed it down to me doing that there but I didn't listen to my da growing up.

F: It's because of what your parents say. (CYPFG18)

Those who worked with young people – like the mother in the follow quote – recognised that in engaging with young people, they also needed to take account of the past experiences of families that may be feeding into family attitudes.

Maybe, again, the young ones that I work with, the like of that parent on the phone, maybe she lost somebody very close in the Troubles, and may have been shot by the police. I don't know the story, so that could be where that's coming from in her, and you have to try and understand that too. It's hard for her to forget that. I'm just assuming maybe something like that happened. (PI1)

A typical warning described by young people and community representatives which was issued by members of older generations of families, was to avoid certain areas and not to interact with individuals from the 'other' community (see Chapter 5 for further discussions). This has the potential to create a sense of unknown and difference which could mask appreciation and understanding of similarities. In the following excerpt, one community representative explained a grandparent's fear which emanated from past experiences but also a concern for their grandchild losing their identity.

I had a young person whose grandparents didn't want him ... travelling to the other side of [city], because they were like 'you'll get beat up, this will happen, that will happen, you can't trust that side of the community', and that young person was going, 'but no, I work with them, I've been working with them every Monday night. They're great. I'm safe'. The grandparent was still concerned about the environment, and what was going on, and making sure that that young person didn't lose their sense of community and who they were from working in that cross-community group, because they were still very much in the format of the Troubles. 'We have to fight for rights, and we had to do this, that, and the other, and I experienced this, and they've seen traumatic things'. (CRFG4)

In a similar vein, another community representative in the same group described a young man who was 'okay with' staying with a family of a different religion as part of a cross-community

programme – 'he understood that the idea of the project was cross-community, and he believed that'. His parents, however, were unable to accept the idea.

We received a phone call that night from his parents who were outraged with the idea that he had to stay with a Catholic family, because they were under the idea that he was staying with a Protestant family, and this was just an idea that they could not fathom, and they were very, very upset by it. So, it is interesting to acknowledge that the generation before this young lad is so alienated by the idea that their son would have to stay with a Catholic family, but it was a normalised idea for him. (CRFG4)

Further accounts demonstrated the potential for young people to adopt, and act upon, parents' attitudes. This could be reflected, for example, in voting practices where young people are often influenced to vote along the same lines as their parents, as explained by one community representative.

They were saying they were voting because that's what their mummy told them to do, who to vote for, and if my daddy - one of the wee girls said, 'if my daddy thought that I voted somebody other than DUP he would murder me', and yet one of the wee lads says, 'well, my ma would murder me if I wasn't to vote for Sinn Fein'. (CRI4)

More typically, the potential to inherit attitudes from parents or grandparents related to encouraging young people to appreciate a difference between individuals from the two communities or, more worryingly, to instil fear and hatred which had the potential to manifest in sectarianism. Participants noted that the influencing of children and young people's attitudes started at a young age. By the time young people were engaging with cross-community programmes, they had already established views, inherited within the family context. Those working with young people often found it challenging to encourage young people to consider a different way of thinking. One community representative in Co. Armagh, for example, noted that young people would share their parents' views on various symbols of identity.

... people are being fed things from ... around the kitchen table, that's being fed from parents or grandparents, and then that in turn can impact their views. So, therefore, whenever we had sessions on flags, and emblems, and things young people were coming with their own, obviously their own views, but they were coming with, you heard them say, you know, I do this, or I've done that, and my family does this, or I've been involved in this, and, for me, it just seemed, just from experience over the years, it wasn't just a one off

where this was a knock on affect. This was the same thing that we were finding out from young people, that they're hearing things around from their family and, therefore, they're taking on that view. (CRFG4)

Similarly, another community representative in Co. Antrim described parents who *'were quite open about the fact that they wanted their children to grow up with a Rangers top'* to establish that they were *'particularly different from the person across the way because they were republican or loyalist or whatever'* (CRFG8). One young woman from Co. Derry/Londonderry also noted the young age at which her father tried to instil a sense of difference.

My father said to me if I ever bring a Protestant boy home that he would disown me. If I ever brought a Protestant boy home I was disowned. Now I was probably about eight. (CYPFG15)

Across a number of focus groups – all in locations within Northern Ireland – young people spoke of sectarian attitudes that they had been exposed to at home or that they were aware of within other families. A number of participants suggested that views and attitudes expressed among older generations in the family were taken on board by children in the family. Two young men in Co. Antrim suggested that hearing *'Sectarian Songs'* like *'Go home British soldiers'* and the calling of names could be repeated by young people who heard them (CYPFG11). In a different community in Co. Antrim, another young man expressed similar views that attitudes held by members of the older generation *'influences'* younger members: *'like say your Ma or Da if they hate someone and you're growing up with this hatred for someone you haven't even properly met yet'* (CYPFG18). In a similar vein, a young woman from Co. Derry/Londonderry suggested that young people *'turn sectarianism too'* due to parents *'passing on the hate'* (CYPFG15). Two young woman in Co. Tyrone spoke of how children *'copy'* the sectarian views they have been *'poisoned'* with.

F: I just think the majority of the kids, this is just what I think, some of the kids have been poisoned from they've been born. If the parents would be really sectarian, the kids are copying, and probably the majority of the kids in [NI border town] are sectarian, and they probably don't even know the full history, if you know what I mean...

F: Yeah. It comes from family views, like more the mum and dad's, they're taking it from them, or even making their own mind up. (CYPFG9)

Concerns relating to the fostering of sectarian attitudes were shared by adult participants in the study, particularly those who worked directly with young people. For example, one key stakeholder representing an all-island organisation working with children and families noted that young people's engagement with cultural events throughout the year could be very much shaped by their parents' actions.

We've done a lot of work over the years, especially around bonfires, especially around that time of the year, and then we maybe ask the youngsters, why are you putting them flags on your bonfires, and it's the same response. My daddy and my mummy says we have to, or that's what they do in our family. But why do you do it? Oh I don't know, I don't care. (KS18)

One parent in Co. Armagh we spoke to, who also worked directly with young people, explained the challenges faced when attempting to engage parents as part of their support and advice to young people when the sectarian views they are trying to challenge appear to be entrenched within the family.

Some of them...I actually had an issue one day where one of the wee boys was singing songs about people that were killed in the Troubles, and the PSNI were in working with us doing a car, and he was singing songs to them about colleagues that had been killed, and when I phoned his mum she agreed that what he was doing was right. So, he's obviously getting it from home, and basically, she just told me to get off the phone. So, that's quite a recent incident. So, that's what you're up against. (PI1)

Alternatively, young people recounted experiences of parents who held more inclusive attitudes and 'hated' sectarianism. Often, these young people had benefited from exposure to both communities through family members who identified with different religions or communities. As with sectarian attitudes, more inclusive attitudes were also susceptible to inheritance across the generations.

It depends on like who they've grown up with and stuff like that there. In my own personal life I grew up with a mother who was very understanding of different cultures and stuff like that there and always wanted me to be understanding of those things, so she would have been very inclusive with other people and I grew up with the same beliefs. I never judged someone based on their religion or anything like that there because it's wrong. (CYPFG17)

Such sentiment was echoed by a community representative in Co. Armagh who, whilst having focused on the passing of negative attitudes, acknowledged that these family experiences were in the minority.

Although I gave that example earlier on of the parents who are feeding the negative experiences, and discouraging the young people to get involved, there is also the flip side where parents are saying, we grew up in this society, it was terrible, we don't want this. We encourage you to get involved in these cross-community initiatives. We want a society where everybody feels accepted and you can feel you can walk wherever you want. So, if I had to put a percentage on it, there's definitely less of a percentage of people who are discouraging young people... We do not want this for our young people. Let's move on. Let's grow up in a society where everybody can feel accepted. (CRFG4)

The findings therefore resonate with those of earlier studies where children and young people within Northern Ireland (ARK, 2007; Stringer et al., 2010) and those living along the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Muldoon et al., 2007) have acknowledged their parents' influence on their own views. They also reinforce concerns regarding the potential for parents and family members to instil negative attitudes and encourage the development of sectarian attitudes (Kelly, 2002; McAlister et al., 2009). In contrast to some earlier findings (Muldoon et al., 2007), young people did not view the transmission of negative values across generations as inevitable. Rather, there was also evidence of young people resisting narratives that could foster sectarian attitudes and the potential for a generational shift in thinking, at least among some groups.

4.4.2 Resisting Narratives of Difference?

The implications of passing of narratives and attitudes either through the family or community were clearly identified by young people and adult participants in the study and included: lack of exposure to and interaction with young people identifying as a different religion, avoidance and fear of 'other' communities, intensified sense of division and potential for conflict or violence (explored in greater depth in following chapters). At the same time, however, it is not inevitable that young people accept the views being expressed within the older generations of their family. There was some sense of the potential for young people to resist the attitudes they had been exposed to, perhaps highlighting the potential for changing attitudes across generations. One young man in Co. Armagh noted that whilst 'Older people usually don't have a better cross-community... younger, they're starting to get better' (CYPFG7). Similarly, a parent in Co.

Derry/Londonderry acknowledged the importance of respecting the identity of people from all communities, but that this was harder to communicate to an older generation.

You strengthen your own identity but then I probably realised in recent times myself, if I feel strong in my identity and I don't want anyone, somebody from a unionist tradition has every right having been brought up that way to feel strong about theirs. It's going to be very hard to get people, particularly older ones to start accepting it now as you move forward but you have to recognise that if we want to be recognised as equals you have to treat them the same, you can't put down their identity and expect them to say yours is okay. (PFG1)

A group of young people from Co. Antrim, whilst acknowledging the passing down of sectarian attitudes to young people, demonstrated a resolve not to take on such attitudes.

F: I feel like sectarian thoughts are still being passed down because like I growing up I definitely heard a lot.

[Agreement in group]

M: Yeah, same here.

F: Like, I don't repeat them but like I was definitely told them and I was told like yeah, horrible things that like if I was easily influenced I could have been like, 'you know what, that probably is true'. But I know it's not... Like Catholic's eyes are too close together.

M: You know like derogatory.

M: Like every conflict is connected to the IRA.

F: Yeah, so those thoughts and ideas are still being passed down and there is young people who still believe them and still do carry them on and hold the anger to go out and then be nasty to people they don't know. Be nasty to groups they haven't met. (CYPFG18)

In a different community in Co. Antrim, one young man explained that the problem mainly lay within his grandad's generation.

*Like my auntie is a Protestant and he's [grandad] openly just sitting calling them all the Orange bast**ds of the day and all. That's his generation. Do you know what I mean? It's because of people like that and stuff this is still happening. But when all the old dinosaurs die this place will be sweet... 100%. (CRI5)*

Another young man explained that he resisted his father's attitudes and benefited from the different views held by his mother.

But there's still people out there who are still like 'I wouldn't touch them [Catholics], I wouldn't go near them, they're filth'. Like my da's one of them, my da hates them. And see to be fair, I don't listen to half the stuff my da says to me because my da doesn't matter to me. My mum matters to me. My mum raised me and my mum raised me the right way and my da didn't raise me so at the end of the day, if I'm going to listen to one of my parents it's my mum because my mum was raised in the right sense of the way, not my dad.
(CYPFG18)

The ability to question the attitudes and narratives shared within the family is perhaps reflective of ongoing engagement with young people in the community in challenging narratives of difference. It also signifies a need for increasing dialogue across generations to encourage debate and discussion on interpretations of identity and difference.

4.5 Conclusion and Rights Implications

This chapter has explored young people's views and understanding of identity and cultural expression. Whilst they varied in their willingness to assume a particular identity or label within the focus group setting, young people recognised the importance of identity within their communities, particularly in Northern Ireland but also reflected in the accounts of young people in the Border Region of Ireland. Some drew a generational distinction that claiming an identity was of more significance for older individuals in the community. Concerns were raised by young people and community representatives where identity or community membership was imposed on young people through assumptions made in their wearing of a school uniform, participation in a cross-community group or imposed as a result of pressure from groups to demonstrate affiliation to the community. This is contrary to their right to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, belief and religion as articulated in UNCRC Arts. 13 and 14.

Most accounts suggested that visible expressions of identity were not a constant but rather intensified at certain times of the year. Association with visual symbols and participation in cultural events did indicate some level of community membership among young people (reinforced in adult accounts) and for them, symbols of identity could indicate a place of belonging and safety. Perhaps the limited elaboration in their accounts of their own identity or culture reflects a struggle to articulate what these terms mean (NIYF, 2019a) as culture becomes associated with the Conflict and the past with 'an absence of new words and phrases more in tune with a post-conflict

environment' (NIYF, 2019b: 21). Participation in events such as parades and marches can be important ways to express culture and identity. As demonstrated in the story of Ewan and Joanne, these are viewed as important means to establish connectedness across generations through the sharing and imparting of culture and tradition. Their account, however, also suggests ways in which the passing of tradition may be threatened or questioned and thus raises concerns in relation to children's rights to: freedom of expression (UNCRC, Art.13); freedom of thought, belief and religion (UNCRC, Art. 14); freedom of association (UNCRC, Art.15); and, leisure, play and culture (UNCRC, Art. 31).

Much of the discussion in focus groups was directed towards the expressions of identity connected to the 'other' community which was often interpreted as exclusionary, antagonistic and precipitating fear. Such interpretation can heighten a sense of division and difference and can intensify sectarian attitudes. Such attitudes, according to participants' accounts, were likely to originate in the views and narratives passed down through generations within the family. Whilst in the previous chapter young people spoke of a range of sources through which they learnt about the Conflict, in relation to identity and culture the family was the key source of learning, supportive of earlier findings suggesting that the most important influence on 16 year-olds' views regarding the 'other' main religious community was their family (ARK, 2007). This raises questions regarding the extent to which the State is fulfilling its obligation to direct education to the development of respect for human rights and cultural identity and the preparation of the child for life in the spirit of peace, tolerance and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religion groups (UNCRC, Art. 29).

The views and attitudes held by parents, grandparents and other older family members were strongly embedded in past experiences of the Conflict. There was the potential for young people to adopt and act upon such narratives through voting practices, identifying difference, feeling fear, and perhaps hatred, towards the 'other' community. Such views could be entrenched at a young age, presenting as a challenge when young people come to engage in cross-community programmes. The transmission of views, without creating a safe space for young people to challenge them or express alternative viewpoints is in contradiction to their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, belief and religion (UNCRC, Arts. 13 & 14).

There were positive accounts, however, of young people inheriting inclusive attitudes across the generations and evidence that some young people were able to resist negative or sectarian attitudes when exposed to them. This does suggest the possibility of breaking the transmission of

negative attitudes across generations, particularly when children and young people are provided the safe space to voice their views and have their opinions heard (UNCRC, Art. 12).

4.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, and consultations with our advisory groups, we make the following recommendations:

- In line with UNCRC Art. 29, education should play a role in developing children's understanding of their own and other cultures and ethno-national identities, to enhance understanding, integration, respect and tolerance. This should be incorporated into a whole school curriculum, rather than focused on particular subjects. Whilst current education policy, to some extent, provides for such learning (e.g. Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy), evidence of its impact on children's attitudes has been questioned (NICCY, 2020). This calls for a revision of the content and delivery of education – both formal and informal – and an evaluation of its impact on young people's attitudes.
- These findings demonstrate the continued importance of the family in the transmission of attitudes of the 'other' community. Therefore, there is a need for increasing dialogue across the generations to encourage open and collective discussions on interpretations of identity and difference.
- Young people require a safe space to explore their meaning of their own culture and identity and to learn about those of others. They should be trained to communicate this to others and attain a language to articulate what their culture represents (NIYF, 2019a). This space may differ for children and young people, particularly depending on the impact of the Conflict in their lives and those of their family members. Consultation should be conducted with children and young people to gather their views on: how education on culture and identity should be delivered; who they should learn alongside; and, when and how this should be delivered.
- Young people should be consulted about the ways in which they would like to express their culture and identity safely. They should also be equipped with the skills to organise and develop their own events (perhaps alternatives to those traditionally held) to express their culture and identity (NIYF, 2019b).

5 Impacts and Legacies I: Divided Space

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the ways in which young people experience the spaces they inhabit as divided contexts. Young people lived in communities with visible signs of demarcation which, alongside some of the fears and attitudes towards the 'other' community (as expressed in the previous chapter) acted in ways to restrict young people's mobility and interactions with others beyond their own communities. Peace walls could send a message that communities could not interact whereas young people – and those who worked with them – suggested a need for increased shared spaces. Segregation from early ages – whether in housing or education – can serve to intensify a sense of difference and, in some cases, sectarian attitudes. There was a sense that once young people did come together through shared education or cross-community programmes, these feelings of difference were entrenched. The findings therefore indicate the continued impact of persistent segregation in the lives of children and young people as noted historically (Bell, 2013a; Kilkelly et al., 2004; Roche, 2008), despite the implementation of a number of strategies aimed to facilitate a more united and shared society. Engagement with cross-community programmes showed the potential of the creation of safe spaces to encourage discussion and, in some cases, to foster new relationships across communities. Both the accounts of young people and youth workers, however, suggest that such work faces challenges, not least in the attitudes that young people return to within the divided contexts they navigate. This therefore raises questions in relation to the broader contexts within which these programmes attempt to operate and the need to direct attention to addressing the ways in which society and its institutions are organised and structured.

5.2 Divided Communities

The research sites for this project were selected in consultation with the Transgenerational Research Advisory Group and following consultation with community and voluntary sector organisations and youth workers. The sites were informed by a number of criteria including communities which are disproportionately impacted by the Conflict and its legacy (see Chapter 2). Not surprisingly, therefore, the impact of Conflict is deeply felt within the communities represented

in the research and, as one key stakeholder notes, '*Certainly for some of the people I come across, there's a sense in which this is almost as fresh as ever*' (KSFG6). At the same time, the continued impact of Conflict can vary, even among young people from the same communities, or may not be recognised by young people themselves.

It's a weird mixture of things, I think, because in some senses I think in some areas of [city], it's like the Conflict has never ended for some young people, but in the same streets there could be young people who have friends from all over the city. So, some young people, like my daughters, are always saying, 'why do you talk about the Troubles so much? get over it, you know, it's history'.... Actually, I know that they are affected, whether they know it or not, by what's happened, and how it plays out in our society, but at the same time I have to listen to them because I don't want them to be inaccessible, and they have friends from all over, and from many, many different backgrounds, and so on, and that's great, and I want them to enjoy that. (KSFG6)

Young people from communities in the Border Region of Ireland did not typically describe their community as divided and the coming together of young people from different religions was not considered an issue. Young people in Co. Louth, for example, noted that they '*don't really hear anything*' in relation to divided communities although community representatives in the same area noted the existence of '*two big... republican zones [with] 90% Sinn Fein voters, and it's all one side of the story*' and how '*the whole Protestant community... is just completely dissipated*' as a result of the development of these communities (CRFG9). Young people in Co. Monaghan noted that communities are '*pretty mixed*' or '*very mixed*' and segregation is '*not really a big deal here*'. It is something that they associated with Northern Ireland, as one young woman noted.

It just seems more that the whole segregation stuff is still happening in the North, and it's not really bothered with in the South anymore, like no-one really cares. (CYPFG8)

A community representative in the same area similarly noted that young people '*don't really seem to care*' about community division. Young people in the study from locations within Northern Ireland, however, were often acutely aware of the divisions that exist within their community, views which were supported by community representatives. Whilst some young people felt division was '*not as bad*' in more recent years (CYPFG15) – perhaps reflecting recent evidence of more positive attitudes towards the 'other' community (McKnight & Schubotz, 2017) – they still noted the restrictions such division could place on their lives in terms of social contacts and mobility, as discussed in detail in later sections. Other young people noted that whilst their

community as a whole has 'more Catholics,' they were still able to identify specific parts of their community which were more 'Catholic' or 'Protestant'. In other communities, segregation and division were made most evident in the presence of 'peace walls' with some young people explaining that they 'live right on the wall' or 'live facing it'. In the research site in Co. Armagh 'deep segregation' was still very much an issue (CYPFG2). Whilst community representatives identified some changes in relation to the extent of 'social' and 'workplace' 'mixing', residential segregation and/or demarcation is still very much present.

It was a mad house. So, where I lived, definitely socially, more mixing, but residentially more segregated, and there is some mixed housing schemes where I live, but there's flags go up, right up the road, and right around the corner and all. So, it's demarcated, but it's mixed. (CRFG3)

As one community representative noted, this level of residential segregation is not necessarily thought of as a negative among community residents as long as they perceive their situation to be safe.

I live in a segregated community. I live in a housing estate that's, well, there probably is a couple of Catholics hiding somewhere, but it's like 99.99 percent Protestant, and it's on an interface. If I didn't do this type of work, I'd be quite happy sitting there, because I've shopped there, family is there, school is there. I don't need to mix with anybody really. Because I do this kind of work, I'm very conscious then that I do live in an area that is segregated. I personally think most people are happy to live quietly, separately from each other, as long as nothing is going to affect your home, or your safety, or you as a person. I think people at the minute are quite happy just to live segregated. (CRFG3)

Young people in the same community noted that people from outside of the area might not know of the level of segregation or where the 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' areas were, particularly given the nature of the town centre as 'common ground'. However, to those within the community, the division was still deeply felt.

Still today there are like very segregated parts of the town. So, like we're 30 years on, like so many years from the end of the Conflict there's still very close segregation and a lot of like marches. It's not as on the surface as it used to be during the Troubles, but it very much so still is, deep segregation. (CYPFG2)

In a similar vein, a young man in Co. Antrim noted the lack of religious integration despite other forms of diversity in his community.

Yeah, like we don't have any diversity. Like I know people with skin colour and all but like diversity with religion – that needs to happen. Like there still is Protestant area, Catholic area, Protestant area, you know. I think what would help that is just like if you all just moved into one community (laughs). (CYPFG18)

Visible lines of segregation and demarcation – 'barriers set up between us... peace walls... big steel fences' (CYPFG2) were identified as problems among community representatives in particular. One community representative in Co. Derry/Londonderry noted that such divisions represented 'ghettoization' in the community. In Co. Antrim, another community representative describes the negative impact of the erection of peace walls in causing 'greater division' between 'two communities that were linked by streets'.

I remember the time when there was no wall in between the street and neighbours lived as neighbours and as that wall went up it caused a greater division, a greater uncertainty, it created greater worry as to what was happening because right through the Troubles that wall wasn't there, if anybody can remember it? All through the worst of the Troubles. And as soon as that wall went up that division is you know, we're working towards getting it down but obviously trust is going to be major to take that away from people that maybe didn't even live there when it was neighbours. But that direct impact and that surge of violence, that period of time was children...who would be coming young adults now about 18 were drawn into that in both communities, that was probably one of the worst when you thought you were coming out the other end. So that was the fallout of that, you're sort of still dealing with that because that was major impact on top of everything else that happened... between two communities that were linked by streets. (CRFG8)

Residential segregation also presents as an issue for newcomer families, particularly those who identify with a particular religion. One group of community representatives discussed the impact of segregation on those coming from countries outside of Northern Ireland and finding themselves isolated within communities they've been placed in due to a need to access social housing.

... a Polish family, who are Catholic, they found affordable housing in a very unionist area, and they're the only Catholics living in that area ... They knew that's where just affordable

housing is..., but they're finding themselves isolated within that because of the infrastructure of Northern Ireland right now. (CRFG4)

Participants' views varied on the continued need for peace walls in the community which, one young woman noted, send a message that young people '*cannot mix because if they mix it will be bad. That wall is kind of saying that*' (CYPFG6). In one group in Co. Antrim, whilst young people felt that it was unlikely the peace walls would come down '*because of tension*' they did articulate a need for a shared space for young people to come together.

I reckon there should be a place in between both of them where people of both religions can go in and talk to each other about different issues they have and be able to sort them out. (CYPFG17)

Community representatives in Co. Derry/Londonderry also noted that the walls should come down, articulating that there was '*no need*' for the walls. They suggested that the older generations maintained the level of segregation which, they argued, was not required for younger members of the community.

M: If we're looking at it in the context of children and young people, I don't think it's an issue. I think its older people in the community who still want the walls and not the younger. If you were to go to the real crux of it, it plays to people's needs to still have those walls.

F: Yeah. I know by living on an interface that there's no need for it, especially on [area] and [area], they'd love it down. They say it's stopping you from making friends. Segregates you. (CRFG2)

Findings from the YLT survey in 2018 found that a significant minority (21%) of 16 year-olds preferred to live with people of the same identity. Such views could suggest the normalcy of segregation for some young people (ARK, 2018). They could also be reflective of attitudes shared by older generations. Nevertheless, a number of young people – some of whom lived on a peace wall – thought divided space was '*not a bad a thing*' and feared peace walls coming down, suggesting integration would bring violence. Their discussions suggested that the presence of peace walls did provide them with a sense of safety.

M: Everyone will be all mad.

M: Aye, it would be mayhem, it would be like your parents' [time]....

M: People would be mad, chucking stuff.

M: Definitely, violence. (CYPFG13)

M: The only thing I would say is it would be too soon to tear them down because there is still tension but otherwise.

M: Yeah, there is still quite a bit of tension going on every here and there. (CYPFG17)

What follows examines the impact of living in divided contexts in young people's lives as they navigate their community, engage with education and explore peer relationships both within and outside of their community.

5.3 Impacts of Divided Space

As noted above, young people described living in divided communities, often through the visible symbols discussed in the previous chapter. Whilst such identification can foster a sense of cohesiveness and belonging, the implications of division can also be limiting, particularly for the community's young people. In examining the impact of divided space, here we explore restrictions on young people's mobility and to the broadening of their social networks. We also examine the ways in which experiences of living in divided communities may establish, or intensify, feelings of fear and, at times, sectarianism.

5.3.1 Restrictions on Mobility

Young people's experiences and willingness to move within and outside of their communities – and specifically into areas associated with the 'other' community – varied but also generated much discussion among participants. A number of community representatives expressed their frustration at restrictions on young people's movements – especially when precipitated by warnings from family members – particularly when they were attempting to forge relationships between young people across communities. Those who did feel able to navigate across communities did not do so entirely freely or without reservation and often had to take other factors into consideration, particularly related to how identifiable they thought they were. One young person, in Co. Armagh, noted that even though he didn't identify with any religion, having been brought up as Protestant still impacted on how safe he felt walking through a Catholic area.

Walking up there in my point of view, because I don't class myself as Catholic or Protestant, I've been brought up as Protestant, walking through there is kind of scary, especially at night walking through there just to get home as it's a quick way but walking

through there in the daytime I'm like, is something going to happen. But I don't class myself as it. (CYPFG2)

A group of young people in Co. Antrim questioned why young people should be 'scared' walking in areas identified with the other community and note they have frequented other areas and visited friends' houses.

I don't understand why you should be scared walking in areas like that, you know what I mean. They're the same as you, they work, they leave their house in the morning, they go to work, they come home and eat their dinner and go to bed. (CYPFG18)

Having friends of a different religion – noted by some community representatives as more typical of older young people as their social lives brought them into city centres, college, bars and nightclubs – meant that some young people felt more comfortable moving between communities.

I do have friends down there [Catholic area] and I don't mind walking through it because I have no problem. If they have a problem with me then obviously I don't want to be there but no one has even said or come up to me. So I feel safe, until it gets to that point where someone doesn't like Protestants, that will scare me but because nothing's happened then I don't really care. (CYPFG18)

Young people from a community in Co. Armagh, however, noted that despite having friends identifying as a different religion they could 'be scared to go to the other end of the town' and if they did so, it was only in their company.

If you meet someone from down there and you're really good friends with them, and then you just go down there, because you're going down to meet someone. It's not you're going to be on your own down there. It's like you're with someone from the other side of the community, so they're not on their own. (CYPFG7)

A group of young people in Co. Antrim did navigate through various communities as part of their daily routines but despite their willingness to move in this way, they also described some reservations related to their moves. They noted that feelings of fear had been 'passed down' by their parents and in particularly small communities where 'everybody knows everybody' they were worried about being identified as an outsider or different.

Like for me, my bus into town goes through [Catholic area] I can get another bus but I like that bus because it's closest to my house but I still feel a wee bit threatened when you're going [there] or any Catholic area for that reason... I think they're just always looking up at the bus seeing who they can see and all. (CYPFG18)

For some, hesitations to enter the nearby 'Catholic' area was related to past events and the extent to which they were already 'known'.

That's the only place I wouldn't walk through because they know my ... face and they go after me straight away like. For other stuff, for past experiences. That's why I can't walk through it because a lot of people down there know me too much. (CYPFG18)

In a similar vein, young people in other areas noted that their movements were made with some hesitation. For example, the two young people below – from Co. Armagh and Co. Tyrone – considered hiding their Catholic identity as necessary in some of their interactions.

I'm not saying it's not safe however you do in certain parts like maybe you wouldn't want to address the fact that maybe you consider yourself a Catholic, like you could go to that area, but you wouldn't go about like oh, I'm Catholic so it just depends how you go about it, I think. (CYPFG1)

Well, it doesn't bother me for my boyfriend is a Protestant. He lives in a really big deep place... So, like I would really need to be careful in what things I'd wear. Even something stupid, like if I had rosary beads or something, or anything like that, they wouldn't like it, because they already started asking questions who I was at the start, to him, and then they were being funny about it, because obviously they knew by my name I was a Catholic. (CYPFG9)

One young man in Co. Antrim similarly spoke of a relationship with a girl of a different religion. The group provided mixed accounts of 'obviously' avoiding going into Catholic areas or, alternatively, receiving 'a pass to go up' for a party which is, at the same time, 'dodgy'. This young man also noted the fear he could feel when visiting his girlfriend due to being isolated if 'someone starts' on him.

*See my girlfriend she's a Catholic and like going to that area, I sh*t myself [everyone laughs]. Her family all know I'm Protestant and it's like you sh*t yourself because if*

*someone starts you're f**ked and there's no one there to help you like... I just sh*t myself every time I'm there you know cos I've got no one there to help me if I get stuck or anything. (CYPFG14)*

Other young people were definite that the impact of living in segregated communities restricted their movements. Young people noted that the threat of violence in entering the other community was an inhibitor – '*knowing that there could be people out there that could maybe start on them*' (CYPFG3), that they could be '*targeted because they're from certain families certain areas*' (CYPFG17) or '*some of them might try and beat you*' (CYPFG7). A group of young people from Co. Derry/Londonderry noted that there were areas they '*would never walk through*' because they would feel '*fear*', '*isolated*' or '*uncomfortable*'. Having experienced violence in the past walking through a particular area, one young woman noted how this restricted her movement for a number of years.

Well, five years ago me, my boyfriend and his best friend was walking through and this group of wee fellas from [PUL area] started slagging him and all this here, and my ex-boyfriend now, he's quite republican so he said something and it was just a massive brawl broke out to the point that I was floored on the ground. Never, until Halloween just past was the first time I stepped in [PUL area] ever since. (CYPFG15)

Young people were conscious of not wearing '*football tops*' or '*GAA tops*' in certain areas as they were identified as indicative of membership of certain communities. Wearing their school uniform was particularly problematic and meant young people often wanted to get directly home after school to remove the identifier before feeling free to move about. Once the uniform is removed, young people reported feeling safer – '*No-one knows who you are. They don't know your identity*' (CYPFG7). Some young people reflected not only on how they felt about their own restricted movement, but also noted that they wished their community appeared more welcoming to others. One young woman in Co. Derry/Londonderry, for example, described wanting young people to feel comfortable in her community.

I don't really like the fact that other people feel uncomfortable to come into my community because I certainly don't like the fact that I feel uncomfortable to go into someone else's. I feel like I should be able to walk to the [Protestant area] whenever I want but you can't, like especially with my uniform. I could never walk to the [Protestant area] in my uniform, I've done it before and you just get looks, you just get stared at the whole way. It's like if somebody came through here in a [Controlled School] uniform they would get looked at

and they would be made to feel intimidated so, if I don't like feeling like that walking through someone else's I certainly don't want other people to feel like that coming to mine. (CYPFG4)

All of the above accounts were articulated by young people living in communities in Northern Ireland, reflective of the non-divided nature of communities described by young people in Border Region locations. One group of young people from Co. Donegal did provide their insight into the limited mobility of young people in towns in Northern Ireland, given their regular interaction with young people in these communities. One young man noted that the presence of peace walls act as a barrier to young people's movement.

Them people would see it at a young age. Certainly, they're not going to go past that wall, they will know when they were growing up, just didn't go past, don't go into them areas, but if the wall wasn't there it might have been different. You could have played with people on the other side of the wall, the other young people. Whenever they're going up, they could mix, and there didn't have to be violence. (CYPFG6)

Adult participants also noted the impact of physical demarcations and the impact that these can have on young people's attitudes to movement, suggesting that places are unsafe to enter.

So, there still is the peace wall up, I would love to see it down, but as little as maybe four years ago there has been serious riots and, therefore, there's no sign of it coming down any time soon at the minute. There still is areas ... where people will not go to because that's a Protestant area, that's a Catholic area. They will not go over the bridge because that's just an area. One of our cross-community projects we took the young people on a tour of their own town and it surprised me, as a youth worker, that young people had not been across the bridge because they didn't even know where that Protestant estate was, yet they've lived there their whole life. (CRFG4)

A group of mothers in a community in Co. Antrim also noted their concern of their children socialising in areas 'over the wall' despite thinking young people coming into their area is safe.

F: My wee boy goes with, I just say a wee girl from over the wall, because I'm on the peace line... But I would be afraid of him going over her area, because I think, I don't know. It's more safe here.

F: But look at how we still believe a Protestant can come to our area and be safe, be allowed but if we went over, and I know there are good people there, but you still have that fear. But I always say it and think it's terrible, anybody that comes over to our area is safe. (PFG2)

The influence of parents' and grandparents' fears was also echoed in young people's accounts as they spoke of being told to 'stay away' from the 'other' community – 'don't do that there, don't go near that there' (CYPFG18). One community representative, who was also within the age range of young people in the study, described his grandmother's fear as he frequented a 'loyalist estate' to see his girlfriend.

My granny and all, when I was still going with my kid's ma, she would have been very nervous because I would have been staying in the likes of ... loyalist estates. She would have been really freaked out and all do you know what I mean. She would have lit candles and all to come home. (CRI5)

Young people's experiences reflect earlier accounts, to an extent, which report developing a knowledge of safe/unsafe areas from family and friends, an unwillingness to venture into the 'other' community and restricting movements to intra-area movements (Bell, 2013a, 2013b; Healy, 2006; Leonard, 2006b; Roche, 2008). However, their accounts also demonstrate experiences of frequenting and socialising in areas associated with the 'other' community. In these cases, while able to navigate different communities, they also placed restrictions on themselves to manage their safety, including taking account of how they dressed, what they said and who they were seen with. Such opportunities, as explored further below, only seemed to open up, however, in later teenager years given that young people's exposure to young people from the 'other' community was significantly limited up to this point.

5.3.2 Limited Exposure to Young People from 'Other' Community

Like my best mate is a Protestant and we both obviously have different beliefs, but we'd talk about it, she has her side and I have my side and it doesn't affect our friendship whatsoever. (CYPFG1)

This young woman's experience was not typical of young people in the study who more commonly described limited exposure to young people from the 'other' community until they reached their mid- or late-teenage years, most typically through shared education or cross-

community programmes. Community representatives in Co. Antrim noted the ways in which some young people's experiences resonated with those of their own generation. In their discussion, they noted that the narrative of areas which are deemed 'safe' and 'unsafe' is 'still very live' and that 'we probably transmit them to our kids in some way' (CRFG8). Similarly, young people's accounts echoed some of the concerns noted in the previous chapter, that parents' views and the narratives they passed on were shaping young people's attitudes and behaviours and thus impacted on their opportunity to interact with others. One young person in Co. Armagh describes here the 'damaging' effect on young people's networks.

And for me it could be so damaging for kids because if they're being brought up by their parents who have really strong beliefs, then that obviously transfers to the kids because that's all they're taught, that's all they know and that can just be so damaging because it's just completely limiting who they interact with, how they interact with people and that just carries on through to the rest of their lives. (CYPFG2)

Similarly, one young woman in the same community noted that unless children are 'brought up to believe that difference really isn't that big then you are not going to be open to meeting new people from different communities' (CYPFG1). One group of young people in Co. Antrim noted that the existence of T:BUC programmes was evidence that the community was 'still fully segregated' and that due to 'influences when you're growing up, like say your Ma or Da', young people can develop 'hatred from someone you haven't even properly met yet'. Among this group, a number spoke about how they or their friends 'wouldn't know a Catholic' or 'didn't meet a Catholic until I was 19'. In another group in Co. Armagh, young people noted that the 'massive divide' in the community meant that they had no opportunity to meet young people of a different religion.

There's a complete divide and a lot of times people growing up, even me growing up, I wouldn't have had any Protestant friends whenever I was young because of the area I lived in... it's so far from any Protestant areas that you wouldn't really have got a mesh, like a crossing point there. So, you just wouldn't have met enough Protestants. (CYPFG1)

There was little opportunity, therefore, for young people to come together - some noting that this might happen at a concert but more typically as part of a cross-community programme. When it did occur, it was something to be remarked as two young men from different communities noted.

This is historically a more Protestant area so the fact we have got four Catholics sitting here today is amazing but in a lot of other places you're not going to get this. (CYPFG1)

No, I would say like when you're in a different area or like when you get that chance just to see a Catholic and when that Catholic knows you're a Prod then it's like a big deal. (CYPFG14)

For younger children, opportunities to meet children from other communities could be relatively few as they had less freedom to move independently throughout the community and could be restricted by the social activities available. For example, one group of community representatives noted that such activities for younger children can be often 'single identity activities', particularly within nationalist communities and that those activities which were more typically mixed had an added cost - an additional barrier for families who could not afford it.

F: But we try to get our children to mix with each other. We try to get our children to meet. We're very conscious of that.

M: They go to the GAA club. The girls go to Irish Dancing. It's nearly all single identity activities. The only probably thing that's mixed is swimming, and that's probably in their class thing, because they've got the money to pay for swimming lessons.

F: It's common interest.

M: Big money, to buy swimming lessons, and keep at them, because it takes a long time to learn kids to swim. So, there's probably lots of working-class families who don't have that opportunity who can afford it. (CRFG3)

There was a concern, therefore, that by the stage that young people do get to meet and have the potential to integrate, the sense of difference could be too engrained for meaningful interaction to occur.

No because then whenever you actually do get, because we don't get to mix at a really early age or until the age of 15 then whenever you actually get to meet, like Catholics having decided that Protestants are bad and then Protestants decide that Catholics are bad so then they're like not really willing to communicate with each other. (CYPFG1)

Even when positive relationships could be formed between young people from different communities, problems could still arise as they attempt to maintain that relationship alongside prejudices within their community. For example, one parent described her son starting a relationship with a girl of a 'different religion', only comfortable to do so on holiday, away from his

own community. On return, they were challenged by other young people, something she had hoped had changed from her own generation.

They had got together, different religion, and when they came back ... I would have run him to her house and stuff, but then he got a text message, 'stay away', you know, 'we seen you in McDonalds', wrong end of [area], and that was it, they couldn't see each no more. So, that's still happening... I know in our day it happened, but I thought it was pretty sad still happening now... But it's only when they went away on that trip for the week he would never have had looked at the wee girl in [area] because of where she came from. (P11)

On the other hand, there was a sense that as young people approached the end of their teenage years and their lives extended beyond their own neighbourhoods and communities to include employment and new social contexts, the opportunities to extend their social networks across communities increased.

Teenagers who have probably got up to about 17 ... do run about together and maybe would go into each other's houses but they mightn't drink in bars within the area but they will socialise in the town and stuff... Once you're going into 17, 18 it's nearly okay, you're nearly an adult. ... I think when they come to about 17, 18 and they might be working and stuff so they know they can go out into the town and that's not a problem. The less likelihood of maybe something shouting down the street at you at 18, "what are you doing down here?", they might have moved on from that, they might not have, I'm just presuming and thinking about a couple I know as well that do all go out together but not to drink in each other's bars. (CRFG8)

One group of young men in Co. Antrim described the opportunities to meet up with young people from other communities on neutral territory as part of unstructured leisure time. Whilst such events may attract attention for associated anti-social behaviour, the potential to 'come together' and 'be fine with each other' was recognised as a positive.

Don't get me wrong like, see to be honest, there's actually, see now, there's actually Prods that hang about with Catholics ... Well I sometimes go down because my mates, I have mates there and I go down just to see them but at the same time... basically it's a group of Catholics and a group of Prods but we're all dead on with each other. But at the same time it's like it's just weird... See to be honest, I guess it's kind of a good thing because like

Protestants and Catholics, they're all fine with each other all of a sudden. It's not like we go to each other and it's like 'oh let's fight' but now Prods and Catholics come together, it's not a fist fight, it's what's happening lads, what you at, let's drink, let's party, let's get wiped. (CYPF14)

In addition to broadening the geographical scope of their social lives, other shifts in young people's networks and social lives relate to their online lives. One community representative, for example, noted that this had the potential to circumvent the physical barriers in the community as young people increased social mobility in an online context.

I think societies have changed and how we communicate has changed. So, a lot of the time, if our parents, a relationship with their parents, is that you had to physically walk to your friend's house or walk into a new area. Online, young people are meeting other young people from different areas and creating relationships, creating bonds, without having to physically put themselves at risk online in a specific area with their identifiers. So, I think that young people have more social mobility now. So, they're going to different areas. They're online meeting the other different young people, and I think that helps. (CRFG4)

Whilst some continuity in experiences across generations, therefore, persisted in terms of limited exposure to young people from the 'other' community, reflecting previous research (Brown & Dwyer, 2014; McAlister et al., 2013) there appears to be increasing potential for young people to broaden the scope of their social lives as they approach later teenage years. This is facilitated by increasing independence and extending their social lives geographically or into an online context, allowing them to establish new connections previously restricted.

5.3.3 Intensifying Fear and Sectarianism

Associated with the accounts of segregation and sense of difference between communities were also feelings of fear and expressions of sectarianism. Young people spoke about 'a lot of fear' linked to the divisions within the community and being 'scared' if approached by a young person from the 'other' community.

I don't talk to anyone on that estate because I just try to keep as private as possible and just do not talk to them, kids would walk up to me and be like, "hiya", I just walk on straight [everyone laughs]. There's a reason for it, I'm scared if I talk to one of those kids someone

will come up and be like, "why are you talking to my kids?", so I just do not talk to them. (CYPFG1)

These feelings of fear also manifested in the restrictions they put on their mobility, as discussed above. For those outside Northern Ireland, the visible evidence of division also had its effects. As noted above, young people in counties in the Border Region of Ireland did not experience the same level of division within their communities nor did they witness the 'extreme' (CYPFG10) expressions of culture and identity. However, due to their close proximity to the border, they did have knowledge of divisions which could be 'intimidating' or 'scary' on a visit to Northern Ireland. Some expressed their own fear of divided communities and uncertainties of where or with whom they could feel safe.

Because you wouldn't know. Especially in [city] you want to know which taxi, what taxi to get into, because my mum and dad went up to [city] one day to see my mum's aunt, and they got into a taxi, and told the taxi driver where they wanted to go, and they said, 'you can't be in this taxi'. So, he pointed them to another taxi. (CYPFG8)

Fear could also be generated in the communication of sectarian attitudes, sometimes evident in visual symbols within the community and also passed down across generations. Young people noted regular exposure to such sectarian attitudes and discussed the impact of 'derogatory' and 'hurtful' language of 'huns', 'taigs' and 'fenians' which implied being of a certain religion as 'a negative thing'. In relation to sectarian violence they referred to occasions where there was fighting between 'Prods and the Catholics' (CYPFG17) and to specific times when they were 'battered just because I was a Catholic' (CYPFG15). At the same time, they noted that violence with sectarian motives was less pervasive than in the past, suggesting that it doesn't happen 'as much today', compared to 'five or six years ago, or ten years', that it 'doesn't really happen that much' (CYPFG14) and that 'there wouldn't be as many rows after nights out and stuff (CYPFG1).

Despite a perceived decline in a sectarian violence generally, young people across all groups in Northern Ireland identified cultural or sporting events as potential triggers for violence, one young person describing a community 'waiting to explode'. Adult participants also questioned the notion of 'everyday violence' in the community but rather noted a number of 'flashpoints' around which sectarian violence and rioting appeared to be concentrated. Community cultural events were experienced as divisive and were periods when sectarian attitudes and violence intensified. Celebrations at Easter Sunday, 12th July and 15th August were identified as key dates in the calendar in this regard. Whilst these events were experienced across Northern Ireland, there were

also more local parades to commemorate or celebrate specific events which could raise '*a lot of issues, and a lot of the kids would have maybe got caught up in that*' (CYPFG13). Bonfires were a key source of contention in the community and were referred to across a number of focus groups. On the one hand, the destruction of bonfires was antagonising for those keen to celebrate their culture. On the other, whilst some young people noted that bonfires were not created '*maliciously anymore... people take it as it being done maliciously*' (CYPFG17). This was particularly the case for young people who viewed symbols associated with their own identity being burnt on the bonfires.

F: You go ahead and build the bonfires, they get knocked down, like Catholics would like knock them down and then that would cause more rows because even if I don't think it's right, they do spend so much time on building it up that you know, one person goes up and just ruins it for them.

M: To be fair.... Yes, they spend a lot of time building bonfires, but do they have to burn the Irish flag on them? I don't think so.

F: I think that's disrespectful.

M: There's no Catholic holiday dedicated to burning the Union Jack. Me driving past a bonfire and seeing an Irish flag just ready to be burned.

...

F: And they're putting up people, all the ones from Sinn Fein and the one that's particularly up the most is [politician] and I'm close with the [politician's] family because I went to school with them and it's just like really bad, it's like oh god. You get scared, you get really scared.

M: In our own communities things that we can identify with are just being burned driving past – it's awful. (CYPFG1)

In a similar vein, one young woman expressed her fear when her local GAA flag was set alight and thrown on top of her car during celebrations after her own team's win.

Well, I remember, like we live in [area] now, so that would be a Protestant area, but there is Catholics there as well. But I remember, this is a good lot of years ago, but all the school people I went to school with at the time, something stupid, like [GAA team] won. So, obviously where some of the Catholics were living, they had [GAA team] flags. So, some of the young Protestant kids went and stole the flag and went down to [area], but we were driving home, but they lit the flag on fire, and I remember they were waving it front of all the cars, and the next thing the flag got threw on top of our car. I remember being

petrified. It was the same, the kids I went to school with, the same year as me, and I was, like, 'oh my God'. (CYPFG9)

Bonfires, parades and marches were considered by a number of young people as trigger points for rioting within the community. Young people across a number of groups suggested that rather than having a pervasive presence, sectarian rioting and violence were to a large part concentrated at these times of the year.

Sectarianism happens when it comes to July and August, that's when it all starts hyping up again because the Protestants will have their 12th July and all, and then well Catholics they used to have their 15th of August and all and see the big march and all for Easter and the Easter Rising and all that, a lot of conflict for that. That's when it all starts rising up again but then after that it all... It all just quiets down, everyone is all just mates again, it's weird. (CYPFG12)

A lot of people dislike them [parades], a lot of people will start riots and start chucking bottles and stuff like that there about the place and the police have to get involved. (CYPFG17)

Adult participants also noted their concern for cultural events as trigger points for rioting in the community. One community representative from Co. Derry/Londonderry noted the violence which surrounded the Easter Rising commemorations which continued for a number of weeks and ran into summer events.

Last Easter Monday, they were able to get stuck in, and riot, just directly after the parade, and they were so buoyed by the experience over the parade weeks and months after it that that's all they've been talking about this last month or so. And it made headline news across the water, as well as here, which to them is a bonus. Everybody was talking about it... Last July, June and July last year, was the worst it's been for a long time. There was baton rounds, there was rubber bullets, there was everything, but I think that all started off with Easter. (CRFG2)

An additional concern for some participants was the perceived 'normalisation' of sectarian violence in the community (see further discussions on normalisation of violence in Chapter 8). A number of young people referred to the entertainment value of rioting – 'It's good to watch', a

'Spectator sport then' (CYPFG4) – and its exceptionality was questioned by some, even, as described here, where it involved serious injury or death.

I just think people take it too seriously now. Like you have people marching down with flags and stuff like that there and people getting so annoyed with it, getting drunk over it and then chucking the bottles that they were drinking out of at people. At the worst case, having a good few people injured and maybe one person dead from it. (CYPFG17)

The levels of support for sectarian rioting was noted as worrying by one key stakeholder given that young people found support among school peers – or feared that they had 'missed out' on something if they didn't join in – and their parents to be involved in such activity.

The worry and concerning thing is the normalisation of it. So, in the area that I work in, the interface area, for young people was, well, four or five years ago, for a number of years was the number one riot spots, but also their friends from school would come and meet them and they would all go down, but for them it was like getting chased by the police. The parents would walk down, and 5, 6 year olds, and everyone would go down to see what was happening, but if you brought somebody from the outside in to look at what was actually going, they just could not understand why this is normal. The kids just go and do that, and the parents were, right, come back in an hour for your tea type thing. It's that, kind of, the legacy. If we want to say a legacy, it is how that's being normalised. It's okay to let your kids go down to look, or see, but then knowing fine well they might get involved. (KSFG6)

For some young people, they associated the events at these times with a long history attached to their communities. One community representative, however, expressed concern about newcomer families who, as a result of accessing social housing, could find themselves at 'hotspots' at these particular times, with limited understanding of the context.

I worked primarily with BME young people they ended up, and it was due to social housing, it was due to affordable housing, they ended up being placed right on the interface. And all of a sudden, a young person moving from Poland, or another Eastern Europe country, were put right in the middle of where, at a parading season, where the hotspots were, and they're getting it from both sides, and not understanding what's going on here. Therefore, through no fault of their own, they're automatically brought into the legacy of our Conflict, because at parading season tempers flare, streets close, police

presence is about, and unfortunately, because they're right on the peace line, it has happened where they have been the victims of maybe windows being smashed in, or cars being wrecked, and things. (CRFG4)

For young people more generally, however, regardless of their familiarity with the context, violence and rioting associated with particular cultural events was a source of fear. For example, a number of them, and some parents, spoke of young people restricting their movements during these times.

M: And even when the parades start coming in, there's people being threatened about stuff and just scared something can happen right there and then. I wouldn't say it's safe for people to be...

M: Not being out at night, definitely not round bonfire time, July time. Like if you're out at that time... if I was going to [shop] I'd be like looking around making sure no one is coming after me just in case, but I go outside now and am like okay, just walk but at that time I'm just like.... (CYPFG2)

Similarly, one young woman described her friend's reactions to celebrating her birthday on the 12th July 'in a Protestant area'.

I would celebrate my birthday not necessarily on my actual birthday. I remember my friends being like kind of, they didn't really want to come over to my house because I do live in a Protestant area and that's not to say it's bad or anything ... It never really bothered me or my parents, I think it's a pretty safe community or area in general however, I don't like the fact that I can't necessarily go out on my birthday with friends that are Catholic because they're afraid that something is going to happen to them. (CYPFG1)

Sectarian violence and rioting may be restricted to certain points in the calendar and flashpoints within communities and young people have noted a perceived decline in general sectarian violence in recent years, particularly outside of these calendar dates. However, taking a longer perspective, one community representative noted concerns in relation to the 'ripple effect' of sectarian attitudes passed through family generations and communities and the potential for these to manifest in more sustained periods of sectarian violence in the future.

The whole effect, the wave effect if you like, the ripple effect. I would have expected after this long, after the Good Friday Agreement and all the money that's been threw at all the

different legacies things and all I haven't seen any improvement... there's still a legacy of that that could very easily blow up again and become much, much worse than what we've seen over the last few years. Even around the bonfire issues, people really seem to think that that is a big part of their culture and if they want to move bonfires, so if you watch the amount of children that were sucked in even last year to the bonfire events. This whole legacy needs to be addressed properly and I'm not very confident that our politicians are capable of doing that. And I think that's part of the problem, people seeing hopelessness ... throughout the whole of Northern Ireland... all those things are still there in the background almost like a volcano waiting to explode. My worry is that this generation could well suffer again what we all grew up with and what we went through and if we're not too careful we could end up very quickly back in that situation again. (CRFG8)

5.4 Divided Schools

Reflective of Northern Ireland more generally, young people within the research sites in Northern Ireland most commonly were, or had been, attending Catholic Maintained or Controlled Schools with a very small number attending integrated schools. One young woman in Co. Armagh described how she travelled further than her closer school to ensure she attended a Catholic Maintained school.

That school is so close to me and I was like no because it's for Protestants, so I ended up going to [school] which is further away just because it was Protestant. It can affect your education as well. (CYPFG1)

In Border Region research sites, young people assessed that there was 'not as much' segregation in schooling as in Northern Ireland, but although the division did not seem as stark, those in Counties Monaghan, Donegal and Louth still described divided school settings. In one group in Co. Monaghan they described their school as a 'strongly religious Catholic school' which, despite a number of nationalities and religions being represented among students, they are 'not taught about any other religion'. The same group identified a lack of integrated opportunities for young people in rural communities.

F: Yeah there's very little integrated schools. Like, in rural Ireland anyway there's not many schools where it's, I forget the name of it, but like there's a certain religion, like around, like ethos around the school.

M: Like a non-denominational.

F: Yeah. It's either a Catholic or a Protestant school, unless you go to a city, or a big town, there's very little. (CYPFG10)

Young people in Border Region locations did make references to the mixing of religions within schools yet the school remained largely dominated by a particular religion. For example, in Co. Donegal, young people referred to themselves as a '*tiny percent*' of Catholic students in an otherwise '*Protestant*' school. In another group from Co. Monaghan, one young woman described the issues with being identified as Catholic in a '*predominantly Protestant school*'.

Still a good bit of segregation, I'd say... I go to a predominantly Protestant school, but I'm Catholic, and there would be, like the word Catholic would kind of be used as an insult and stuff. (CYPFG10)

Only in one group, from Co. Louth, did young people describe an integrated school, which was relatively new and did not identify with any denomination.

Our school opened up there a few years ago and they made sure it was a non-religious school, no symbols, no Marys in the corner, it's all just complete like, they don't even teach religion in my school, they don't teach it, it's just, they don't teach religion in my school. (CYPFG16)

For young people in Northern Ireland, as well as living in divided communities, they were aware of the potentially negative implications of segregated education. One issue highlighted by young people was '*They don't teach you about other people's religions and how you should respect them*' (CYPFG17) and in this way they could foster the sense of difference and sectarian attitudes. When schools did bring children of different religions together through Shared Education programmes the unfamiliarity could be problematic. One young woman in Co. Armagh described an occasion when pupils from the local Controlled School attended her own school.

... it is very weird because our very Catholic school is very close to a very Protestant school and it's just a bit weird kind of seeing it be so close but like I think it's just depending on the people because there definitely is still a bit of sectarianism. I remember when I was in like third year or something there was a big uproar in our school because some students from the Protestant school were in our school and someone started shouting really sectarian things at them and there was a whole domestic issue. It's just still very present. (CYPFG2)

Similarly, one young man in Co. Antrim described his school's attempt to engage with pupils on the other side of a 'big massive brick wall' where they physically challenged each other in the context of sports classes.

And even that there was hard for us because whenever we went over we were getting elbows in the nose and all, and getting digs in the face but at the end of the day we couldn't do nothing because our teacher was stricter on us than their's was stricter on them ones. So whenever we went over we were just getting hit and we just said 'right we'll just take it on the chin and we'll get them back when we play football'. And then when we played football that was our chance to get them back... the teachers weren't there to stop us and we done what we wanted. (CYPFG18)

Part of the challenges in implementing these initiatives may connect to the limited impact shared education can achieve in the context of deep divisions in segregated areas. Where students return to segregated lives, the relative limited cross-community contact within Shared Education may prove insufficient for relationships and friendships to develop (Roulston & Hansson, 2019). Young people could also come together in an educational setting if they decided to attend further education on completion of secondary school. By this stage, as noted by one young woman in Co. Armagh, their views on young people from a different religion or community could be engrained.

And also, the fact that schools are divided, this is Catholic schools, this is a Protestant school, we don't really get to mix with them and integrate with them and then when you get to the stage where you can actually go to Tech and there is people who are Protestant and Catholic then it's a bit too late because you have a view on them. (CYPFG1)

In only one group, in Co. Antrim, did young people express a view supportive of segregated education. Young people here suggested that segregated education 'helps a wee bit' and results in 'less conflict in schools' and avoids 'World War 3'. Whilst not necessarily supportive of segregated education, others noted the difficulties in learning a religious education curriculum in a mixed setting.

We understand it in a way, if you look at it, doing GCSE you learn about Catholic teachings, I know you go on a bit to like Presbyterian teachings and stuff like that but you mainly look at Catholic teachings like so, and like it would be hard to try to separate that, it would be hard to try and get like if there was some people saying, say there were Protestants coming to my school and we were doing Catholic teachings, they could turn

and say, why are we doing this, I don't want to learn about their religion. I think RE is a massive part to play in it. (CYPFG4)

Other young people felt that religion and education should be separated and encouraged a move towards integrated education noting the potentially positive impact it could have on breaking down divisions in the community.

I think it should all be just mixed, because it's just encouraging the children to stay divided like. (CYPFG9)

I don't think there should be a wall between Protestant and Catholics. If everyone learnt to get together I don't think there should be a wall. And I think all schools should be integrated. (CYPFG18)

They're [integrated schools] probably actually all right, because if there was ever to be a change that would be the start of it. (CYPFG13)

One young woman who attended an integrated school described a positive context where labels were absent. The problem, she noted, was outside school amongst her peer group when challenged about having friends of a different religion.

Because I'm in a mixed school no one really puts labels on each other. No-one says like 'you're a Catholic, you're a protestant'. Like if you know, then you know. No one says anything because it's mixed so like no one, even the teachers and all are mixed, no one is going to say anything but you would get those few ones who would be like – 'oh, you're a Catholic or eww, you're a Protestant'. So see if you're talking to your Protestant friends about a Catholic that you're friends with and they're like 'ewww' and all that, you'd feel like, you'd feel like crap because they're saying not nice things about you, also about your friends. (CYPFG18)

Amongst adult participants, particularly community representatives and key stakeholders, segregated education was viewed as one of a number of mechanisms in the community - particularly alongside residential segregation, which created and reinforced barriers between young people of different communities.

So, you went to your Protestant schools. They were different than you over there across the road. You grew up to hate them. This drip feeding of, they're different than us, we

don't like them, that's a perverse cultural thing in those communities that is picked up not just in the family. In fact, the family can be against that, but yet it's still picked up from the kids on the street, from the kids that are hanging about with you, who are getting it from their parents. (KSFG6)

But until Northern Ireland introduces a more integrated education system, and as long as we continue to segregate education and make young people go to a Catholic school, a State school, then you're creating these barriers. You're creating this segregation that young people from the age of zero, and as soon as they go to nursery school, or pre-school even, that they're being segregated because of what community background they have, until we sort that out I think the bigger picture there's always going to be an element of divide. (CRFG4)

By beginning to address some of this division within educational contexts, adult participants noted the contribution of shared education programmes in contexts where children have little or no experience of meeting those identifying with another religion. Some of them drew on their own children's experiences, highlighting that young people appreciate the purposes of the programme and they can identify 'changing' attitudes.

There's a large peace programme funding shared education, and with my own children involved in that I can see the benefits of it. It's not like twenty years ago when I was in school and you were forced to be inside, put you in a sports hall with Protestants and Catholics and go and make friends, and you met each other once a fortnight for an hour. It's the shared education approach now I feel is working. I love the fact that my kids come back and there's no mention of them in a different uniform, them from a different school. They have got different names, and there's nothing about background. It's about, we were just joining in with another school. We got to do their sports. We have to do their activities. We've got to go to their school and learn from their teachers, and that approach is working. (CRFG4)

5.5 Cross-community Programmes

Whilst young people were able to note briefly if they had participated in a Shared Education programme in school, they spoke more in-depth about their experiences of attending cross-community programmes delivered in local youth club settings. A number of community representatives articulated the purpose of such programmes and drew contrast between the types of learning entailed compared to other types of learning that young people had previously been

exposed to within the community, school and family. For example, one adult participant explained that in schools, teachers may be *'scared to do the work'* and young people may be *'scared to challenge your parents' views'* but that cross-community programmes can teach children those skills – *'it's okay to challenge people, and to say this is what we want'*. Similarly, a group of key stakeholders representing an all-island organisation working with children and families explained that cross-community programmes were about offering a *'safe space'* for young people *'to question, to challenge, to explore'* narratives they are *'fed'*, particularly within the family, in relation to cultural expression and sectarian attitudes, helping them to follow a different *'path'* to one that has been laid out at home (KSI8). Similarly, a community representative noted that programmes were about learning about the past and culture *'in an honest and more positive way than people just carrying stories who really make half them up'* (CRI3). Another, from the victims and survivors sector, explained this was particularly important for those who have limited exposure to those from the *'other'* community and are impacted by *'bigoted'* accounts at home.

And even on a cross-community basis, the young people across the youth project, it's a cross-community project but for some of those young people they've never met somebody from a Catholic or Protestant background, some would say their parents are quite bigoted so they're listening at home to things about Catholics or Protestants and that's very difficult for young people because ... they haven't lived it so they don't know why, they're just being told these things. (KSI1)

Young people who had experiences of these programmes tended to give positive evaluations - *'really good'*, *'brilliant'*, *'really great'* and a number were able to articulate a clear purpose attached to the programmes.

But whenever young people if they come to [youth group] they're meeting other people from different religions and cultures and stuff like that there anyway because it is a very inclusive programme. If they go to [youth group], literally it's in the title, it is a cross-community programme so they're meeting people from other communities, they're meeting people from other backgrounds that they probably wouldn't have ever come into contact before. (CYPFG17)

Young people also distinguished the context of learning within the programmes from that of school or family contexts where, as detailed in Chapter 3, they noted the tendency for unbalanced accounts, partial learning or a lack of space for debate. One group in Co. Armagh, for example, noted that learning was *'more neutral'* in the context of the programme and focused on learning *'about people's cultures in a good way'* (CYPFG1). One young woman in Co. Louth appreciated

that 'everyone's voice is heard and nothing is like judged... it doesn't discriminate against one person or another' (CYPFG16), echoing the creation of a 'safe space' noted above. Another group from Co. Antrim discussed the value of learning in detail about the importance of culture in both communities to discover 'they're not so different'.

At the start like when we started we all learnt about the walls and all this and then they started taking us out on trips so, one trip would be on a Catholic side learning about all the murals and all and then go onto a Protestant side and see all their murals and then they would show each other flags. Like we'd go on a residential for a few days, you know like team-building residential and that's where we all start talking away to each other. We got flags and all out, didn't we? And started showing each other our flags and what they mean and what it has in them and just learning about each other's culture. We did everything like. (CYPFG12).

A key positive, and potential indicator of success, linked to the programmes was evidence in a youth worker's account of young people's engagement with the programmes in terms of listening to other young people's views and experiences and recognising commonalities.

... young people were open to hearing from the other side of the community. They were open to hearing about flags and emblems. They were open to hearing about why in other groups, other sides of the community, having a bonfire, why are they celebrating this and that, what happened in the past, about the Troubles and things, that they were open to having that conversation. As much as they came in and identified as I'm a Protestant or I'm a Catholic, whenever they got down to it they realised actually we are all young people, we all have the same issues, and yes, we come with a background from a different community background. Yes, we come with maybe something attached to them, but at the end of the day they realised that we're all the same, we're all equal. (CRFG4)

Another youth worker delivering the programme with a different group of young people identified its success, even with those who 'were very strong in their own views' and who identified with a 'nationalist' and 'unionist' background.

Those young people were very strong in their own views. They knew what they believed, but they were very willing to listen to other young people from other communities. So, when we brought nationalist and unionist young people together, they were very strong about what they believed, but they were willing to interact with each other, and have

conversation about what they believe, and why they believed it. They were willing to challenge each other, but when they left, they were always friends when they left.
(CRFG4)

Young people, too, hinted at successful programmes, describing other young people they met as 'normal people', and 'not really' different, 'just different beliefs'. Whilst not all young people remained in contact after engagement with the programme, some did describe the potential for more lasting friendships and the role that social media may play in facilitating this. One young man described making friends with someone 'just like me'.

I've kept in contact with a good few of the people from like one of the other areas that we go to. I really like talking to him, he's a good guy. Very smart. Very energetic. He's a very, he himself is of a different religion, culture but he's just like me, he's just like all of us except for a lot more hyper. A lot more hyper. He's not over the top with it, with his religion and stuff like that, he's always quite calm and collected about that there, everything else is all over the place. But he never really mentions it, he tries his best not to because he knows that there are a lot of people who aren't going to agree with them. (CYPFG17).

One young woman in Co. Louth described that engagement with the cross-community programme gave her confidence to make friends with young people of a different religion, knowing she wouldn't be judged.

And you can make friendships then as well and not have people thinking you're friends with a Protestant. It's kind of a lot more... I don't know what the word is, you're just kind of not judged for being friends with someone who is a different religion from you. Everyone is the same. (CYPFG16)

Not all accounts of cross-community programmes were positive, however. Some young people, for example, noted that 'you still get bitterness' after programmes are completed or suggested that positive relationships were not formed, referring to other young people as 'wild cheeky' and 'cheeky rats':

Yeah sometimes they're alright and then sometimes it can be a bit sort of confrontational and standoffish. And then sometimes they're alright. When they are being like that it's just like mate, come on, all that's in the past. You can remember the past and that's good, you should remember the past but you can't, there's no point in being bitter on something.
(CYPFG14)

Such negative feedback could, in part be linked to the challenges that those charged with delivering the programmes identified. One such challenge was barriers to recruiting young people in to the programme. One barrier related to parents' attitudes and how they have informed young people's views and thus their willingness to engage with the aims of the programme. To some in the community, programmes were feared as '*dumbing down*' (CRFG9) unionist or nationalist culture and one youth worker discussed organisations or individuals within the community which were unwilling to support cross-community initiatives.

... we also have negative experiences in that there is still, on both sides of the divide ... organisations or communities who are unwilling to engage in cross-community initiatives. This is through first-hand experience of trying to recruit young people from specific housing estates, and the local community rep, or the local organisation, has stopped it happening. So, young people have wanted it to happen. The young people, or part of their organisation, has wanted it to happen, but the community rep, or the person in charge of that group, has stopped it from happening... I'm speaking both sides. I'm speaking from the nationalist and the unionist point of view... from the Protestant point of view, or the unionist group, it was an issue of not wanting to strip their identity of Britishness, that they were concerned that by getting involved in a cross-community initiative that it's going to be seen as integrate and we're working towards a United Ireland, and that's what's going to happen as a result of this project. They weren't thinking of the young people from the nationalist organisation. (CRFG4)

Other concerns noted by those running cross-community programmes related to broader operational matters. One problem related to expectations of funding bodies on recruiting sufficiently young people from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds, particularly in certain communities. One community representative from Co. Monaghan, for example, noted the difficulty in recruiting young people from a Protestant background: '*I'm not sure why that is. Maybe it's because there's a lack of Protestants in the area or we're not finding them but it is difficult to get young people who are Protestant to engage on the programmes*' (CRFG6). Part of the problem could also be, as articulated by other community representatives, that in some communities '*religion has diminished in young people's lives as any sort of an influence*' and isn't used as an identifying label (CRFG9) or, they '*feel like they have bigger issues*' (CRFG9). For example, one community representative in Co. Antrim noted that whilst the running of their programmes had been positive, young people were more concerned by debts payable to drug dealers and/or paramilitaries.

That's not something that they look at in the morning and going, I wish I had other friends on the other side of the wall, or I hate them'uns on the other side of the wall. Our kids are waking up in the morning and going 'where am I going to get the money to pay this debt?' [to dealers/ paramilitaries]. That is the priority issue for some of these kids that we're working with. But if we do anything about sectarianism here and our kids respond very well, more than any other community I've worked in. (CRFG7)

Other concerns related to the need for longer term funding required for sustainability as opposed to 'short bursts of funding' or 'intervention funding' targeted at 'contentious times' but which does not alleviate long term problems (CRFG4) as well as increased funding for rural communities – described by one community representative as the 'second cousin of this kind of work' (CRFG3). A number of community representatives were of the view that three or five year funded programmes were required to allow programmes to develop and expand. Expansion was also discussed in terms of the scope of the work incorporated into cross-community programmes, in recognition of a range of social groups within the community – 'an all-encompassing project with people from all backgrounds everywhere' (CRFG6). Similarly, one youth worker in Co. Armagh noted that a continued focus on religious division neglected the work needed to be done in relation to, for example, asylum seekers, refugees and the travelling community.

So, I think, with the current young people that we have, they have been brought up in a culture where it's like the divide is now larger than just Catholic and Protestant. There's asylum seekers, refugees, gypsies, Irish Travellers, so all these different forms of community, but we're still focusing on the Catholic and Protestant divide, instead of expanding that out, when actually some people need challenged on behaviour towards the other groups, instead of just Catholic, this Catholic and Protestant thing that keeps going on. (CRFG4)

At the same time, however, as the analysis presented in this report demonstrates, sufficient concerns remain to maintain cross-community work based on the 'two traditions'. Reflecting a number of themes of this chapter in relation to the segregation of education, residential and community segregation, one final concern noted by a community representative was the limited potential of Good Relations programmes whilst young people continue to live in divided contexts.

[T]here's a lot of money and finance and funding put into Good Relations programmes, yet with all we're still segregated within schools, housing, communities etc. then Good Relations programmes whilst they might be good can be on fruitless ground, if you like,

because for everyday life if communities are still divided, you know and they're still living in separate communities and you know, they're going to separate schools and so on and so forth, I think whilst the programmes themselves are good, I think there needs to be an overarching kind of approach to what Good Relations actually is as opposed to let's get young people from different communities together and then separate again at the end of the night and bring them back together again. (CRFG1)

5.6 Conclusions and Rights Implications

The findings in this chapter demonstrate that young people's lives in Northern Ireland and their communities remain highly segregated in relation to residential segregation, segregated education and engagement in 'single identity' activities, all of which limited the potential to interact with young people from the 'other' community. Young people from communities in the Border Region of Ireland noted that segregated communities were a feature of communities in Northern Ireland, despite their identification of some communities in the Republic of Ireland as clearly 'Republican'. For some young people and adults, segregation in the community can offer a sense of safety, often linked to the impact of hearing about family members' experiences of the past. As a result, some participants (both young and older) reflected concerns about the removal of peace walls, suggesting integration of communities could lead to violence.

More typically, however, participants (particularly young people and community representatives) identified the negative impact of segregation in the community. Their accounts raised implications for a child's right to leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities (UNCRC, Art. 31) and their rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (UNCRC, Art. 15). Noting restrictions on their movements, feeling unable to access play/leisure facilities in certain areas and/or feeling unsafe as they meet peers in public spaces, the analysis illustrates a lack of optimum environment for children to realise their Article 31 rights. As noted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, this should be an environment free from stress, secure from social harm and violence and free from prejudice or discrimination (UN, 2013: para. 6).

Visible signs of segregation such as peace walls had the potential, participants suggested, to increase division by sending a message that communities should not interact. Visible demarcation, along with warnings from older generations, can restrict young people's mobility and interactions with others beyond their own community. These could also contribute to a heightened sense of difference which could intensify feelings of fear and sectarianism. There was a concern, therefore, that by the stage that young people do get to meet and have the potential to integrate, the sense of difference could be too engrained for meaningful interaction to occur.

Whilst there is much continuity across generations, in terms of attitudes towards the 'other' community and restrictions on young people's movement, young people also spoke of navigating the 'other' community as part of their social lives. As a sense of independence developed, and despite warnings from older generations, young people spoke of a willingness to interact with young people from the 'other' community, accessing 'neutral' spaces together but also to socialise in each other's neighbourhoods with some safeguards in place: attention to the way they dressed, the way they spoke and who they were with. Their movement, therefore, was not entirely 'free' nor without reservation. Increased interaction can come with shifts in young people's lives as they gather independence and are able to extend the geographical scope of their social lives, no longer dependent on parents to bring them places, access employment and navigate social lives online which can circumvent physical barriers in the community. In their messages to decision makers, a key request was for more shared spaces (as opposed to 'co-used' places) (Roulston et al., 2017) which can facilitate meaningful interaction between young people across the communities.

Sectarian views and violence do persist, however, linked to fears that had been generated about the 'other' community. Young people's perception, based on what they had been told about the past, however, was that sectarian violence was less pervasive in their communities (views supported by adult participants) and was concentrated at certain flashpoints in the calendar triggered by cultural or sporting events. Despite its concentration, concerns remained about the perceived normalisation of sectarian violence at these times in the year. During such times, restrictions on movement can be intensified when young people feel more fearful about navigating spaces outside of their community. Additionally, newcomer families who have been placed in social housing in certain communities could also find themselves isolated at these times, with limited understanding of the context and safety concerns.

The majority of young people in research sites in Northern Ireland were, or had been, in segregated education. Young people in the Border Region of Ireland did not describe their schooling as segregated, nevertheless discussions illustrated that their schools were identified along religious lines. A small number of young people noted that segregated education could limit the potential for conflict in school and allowed learning of religion easier. Other participants (both young people and adults) were quicker to note the limitations of the system: that young people did not learn about other religions and respect them; the challenges when young people finally did come together through Shared Education programmes or in Further Education; that it creates and reinforces barriers between young people of different communities; and, it fosters a sense of difference and sectarian attitudes. Adult participants noted that segregated education was one of

a number of mechanisms, alongside residential segregation, that could reinforce barriers between young people of different communities – a point reiterated by young people who had been challenged about making friends of a different religion through their experiences of integrated or shared education.

Accounts of engagement in Shared Education did raise the potential for addressing negative or sectarian attitudes but young people did not speak at length about their experiences. Some did reflect on the challenges of meaningful engagement in this context, given the limited interaction with young people across communities outside of such programmes. Whilst the Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 represented a step forward in increasing mixing within the Northern Ireland education system, there remains a number of concerns about the quality of some shared education programmes (UK Children's Commissioners, 2015), especially in regards to the opportunity for all pupils to take part (Haydon, 2020). Ultimately, the programme 'does not address the core issue of a segregated education system' (Haydon, 2020: 77). Thus, in their 2016 Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that the State Party,

actively promote a fully integrated education system and carefully monitor the provision of shared education, with the participation of children, in order to ensure that it facilitates social integration. (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016b: para. 72(e))

Few young people in the study spoke of their experiences of integrated education or personal preferences, although they did note the limitations of the segregated system. Evidence elsewhere, however, would suggest that the support for integration is increasing with 56% of 16 year olds noting they would prefer to send their children to a mixed-religion school (ARK, 2019), yet many are oversubscribed (Haydon, 2020).

Young people had much more to say in relation to their participation in cross-community programmes which, they noted, showed the potential to create safe spaces encouraging discussion, hear 'neutral' accounts, challenge narratives, have their voice heard and, in some cases, foster new relationships across communities. Whilst not all young people remained in contact after programmes, some did describe the potential for lasting friendships, sometimes facilitated by social media interaction. However, there is also limitation to the potential of such programmes whilst young people continue to live in divided contexts as they may struggle to maintain new relationships alongside prejudices within their community. Community representatives noted that the attitudes of parents and grandparents could work against the aims

of cross-community programmes and inhibit recruitment of young people. An additional challenge faced by youth workers was a requirement to recruit along religious lines when young people did not identify with a religion. There was also consideration of the focus of programmes given other identities and cultures beyond the 'two communities' and the challenges faced by newcomer families. Short-term funding was often targeted at flashpoints in the calendar and restricted the extent of work that could be achieved with young people whilst geographical provision was unequal with limited programmes in rural communities. Overall, while the young people in this research appeared to have more opportunities and perceive less risk to meeting with the 'other' community than the parent and grandparent generation, their choices and freedom of movement were not without limitation. Elements of integration were often within a wider context of division and young people were reminded of the 'dangers' of integration at particular points in the year.

5.7 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, and consultations with our advisory groups, we make the following recommendations:

- The analysis highlights the potential of cross-community programmes to provide a safe space for learning. Further investment in these programmes is required to avoid short-term funding cycles which can impact on recruitment and prolonged engagement with young people. Provision should also be revised geographically to ensure sufficient access to programmes in rural communities. The findings throughout this report also speak strongly to the need to maintain cross-community and good relations at the forefront of youth programmes.
- Whilst Shared Education has been an important step towards increased mixing within the school environment, the findings in this report support more fundamental changes to the structuring of the community in Northern Ireland. Increasing the provision (and funding) of integrated education, particularly given the increasing demand and oversubscription, is key and thus attention should be given to the UNCRC Concluding Observations in 2016 that a 'fully integrated education system' is actively promoted.
- Issues of division and integration should be explored with parents/guardians with a view to impacting on messages they pass on to their children from an early age. Such support could be delivered in inter-community programmes for children in early years and Key Stage 1 education (Morrow, 2019).
- The findings support an increased need for shared spaces for young people to come together safely without being subject to negative attitudes and to develop greater understanding of the 'other' community and their culture.

6 Impacts and Legacies II: Health and Well-Being Within and Across Generations

“... the kind of trauma of the Troubles isn't a medical issue. It is a social issue with medical consequences ... When people start thinking of it as a medical issue then you're looking for one place to sort it all out, and that's only for symptom management. It's for nothing else. (KSI3)”

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the impacts and legacies of the Conflict on the health and well-being of three generations - the grandparent generation, the parent generation (those in their 30s-50s) and the current generation (young people aged 14-25). The chapter begins with a discussion of the complex relationship between Conflict legacy, poverty, health and well-being. It speaks to the interconnectedness of these issues and the need for responses beyond those focused on individuals and mental health.

The remainder of the chapter is presented generationally. Given the degree to which personal stories were shared with us, we begin each generational section with an account of some of these. This is followed by a discussion of the impacts and legacies of the Conflict on health and well-being. In addition to illuminating individual experiences, we consider the social, cultural and generational factors (as a society experiencing and emerging from Conflict) impacting mental ill-health. Through providing a generational analysis we identify some recurrent themes that might point to transgenerational means of discussing (or not discussing), and responding to health difficulties. Themes of delayed impact, avoidance and silence, haunting and numbing raised in previous research emerge again among those with whom we spoke, thus demonstrating the enduring impacts of the Conflict, and its legacy, across generations. Many of the issues raised in

this chapter are picked up upon in the next Chapter as we focus on transgenerational legacies within families.

While young people spoke in great detail about mental ill-health, suicide, substance misuse and gaps in services, we have not been able to do justice to all of the issues they raise. Many of their experiences and concerns are well expressed in other recent research (e.g. NICCY, 2018). Here we summarise the key issues raised, and focus on considering these in the context of Conflict legacy.

6.2 Exploring the Relationship between Conflict Legacy, Health and Well-Being

There was general agreement among all cohorts that the health and well-being of many continues to be negatively impacted by the Conflict and its legacy. This understanding was drawn from practice, as well as personal experiences: *'We would see through [our] service that people struggle with their mental health, they struggle with their physical health ...'* (KS11). Most spoke about the impacts and legacies of the Conflict on the mental well-being of individuals – their parents, grandparents, partners, friends, those in their communities, and themselves. Some, it was recognised, particularly the injured and bereaved *'live with the pain ... with remembering every day of their life'* (CRI3). Others spoke of societal impacts and the legacies for whole cities and communities.

The relationship between poverty, the Conflict and illness/ disability has been highlighted in past research with adults and children (e.g. Horgan, 2011; Tomlinson, 2016). That it was raised again in this research, when discussing Conflict legacy and the impacts on the current generation, suggests long-term trends and impacts. Community representatives and key stakeholders often spoke of the combined effects of historical underinvestment, limited opportunities and parenting stress (see Chapter 7). While young people also raised some of these issues, particularly lack of opportunities and poor mental health services, they tended not to conceptualise this in terms of Conflict legacy (see Section 6.5).

Disentangling the relationship between Conflict legacy, poverty and poor health is complex. Yet when overlaying health, deprivation and other Conflict-related indicators - suicide rates, residual paramilitary-style activity, low educational attainment - some felt the relationship was clear:

Belfast is the highest ... suicide rate in the UK ... and in those working-class communities ... we see the hotspots ... There can't be a coincidence that those hotspots are the same spots for the hotspots for everything else. (KSFG6)

Reflecting on her practice in the Border Region of Ireland, a representative from the health sector also spoke of the interconnection between Conflict legacy, poverty and health outcomes. Throughout her account, an extract of which is below, she spoke of the ways in which the Conflict exacerbated the impacts of poverty and poor access to services, a point similar to that noted by Hillyard et al. (2005):

... you would find that the Troubles and how it affected people very much manifested on their health and well-being and that you would have ... high levels of illness, of chronic illnesses in the border region, kind of higher levels of circulatory diseases, cancers, road traffic accidents and suicides, as well as high levels of mental illness in the border region which, you know, you would say are linked to their poverty but compounded by the impact of the Troubles. (KSI5)

Some also spoke of the infrastructural legacy impacting the current generation. That is, the lack of service investment during the Conflict, and the long-term impacts of limited employment opportunities on economic, physical and mental well-being. The persistence of these issue in research across different time periods suggests enduring structural legacy issues:

If you look at during the Troubles, Northern Ireland was given less money for health services, for infrastructure for jobs. So, all that environmental pressure does impact on mental health, where you are living on benefits, when you are not able to access services, when there's low employment, low maybe educational and employment achievement. (CRFG4)

Explaining the implications in his area, a community representative in Co. Antrim said:

If ... you work here for any time you see that health is the biggest issue here. Health feeds into the drugs, into the crime, into low educational attainability, into the low employment. (CRFG7)

Identifying the specific relationship between poor health outcomes and Conflict legacy is difficult, therefore, given the correlation between poor health and economic deprivation more generally. This was evidenced in many community representatives discussions of the multiple issues impacting young people's health today, Conflict legacy often being one of these. The following extract from a health professional encapsulates this well. He notes the range of issues that young people can present with, and the difficulty in isolating those specific to the Conflict:

... you will meet young people ... and they present with anxiety, or depression, or a psychotic illness, and if you take a full history you quickly ascertain that ... a family

member was killed during the Troubles, or somebody went to prison, or somebody was a member of the security services who was under threat or attack. ... But often what you have is a multi-factorial aetiology or causation of any particular problem that a young person might be depressed, or other things might have happened, that they might have had a significant relationship which fell apart, or they were in employment and lost their job, or they've been using drugs or alcohol, but in the background there's also the Troubles, the Conflict. So, disentangling all of that is difficult. (KS17)

Some felt that the high rates of mental ill-health and suicide in Northern Ireland as a society emerging from conflict were evidence enough of the relationship, and of the urgent need to invest in services. A number of key stakeholders and community representatives also spoke of societal trauma, collective pain, and of 'whole communities' traumatised by the Conflict. Suffering, therefore, as has been noted elsewhere, was recognised as 'personal, communal and society-wide' (Gallagher et al., 2012: 69). This was reflected in the views of some participants, that responses needed to go beyond individualised medical initiatives. That said, one departmental representative felt it was essential to understand the difference between poor mental health in Conflict-affected communities, and Conflict-related trauma (as a consequence of 'direct' impact). Drawing on the example of a parent suffering Conflict-related PTSD as a consequence of the death of their parent, they stated:

I think there's a distinction to be made between that and somebody who has grown up in an area that was affected by the Conflict in general, but maybe didn't have the direct effect within their family circle. (DRFG1)

A similar distinction was made by a community representative in one focus group. She felt it was 'too simple' to suggest that whole towns and cities were affected, and there is a need to focus on the families of the injured and bereaved - '*pinpointing specific young people who have lived through it, and families who have lived through it.*' (CRFG2)

Yet youth and community workers more generally, and those working in the victims sectors and with families, illustrated the often messy and complex interaction of Conflict-related factors with other stressors impacting on young people, parents and families. A representative from the victims sector noted, for example:

... I'd say 75% of our young people are referrals with mental health issues, with friendship issues, behavioural issues, Social Services might be involved, CAMHS, family support hub – that sort of thing. So, they're vulnerable, at risk and there is traumas there. Not all in

relation to the Troubles ... but certainly there is that element there. So, you can see how it, you know, first-hand you can see through the projects, the impact across the generations. (KSI1)

As noted by the health professional above, and elaborated upon in Chapter 7, the manifestation of issues relating to Conflict legacy may not always be clear. Further, children of parents who might not define themselves, or be defined by others as 'victims', could still be impacted in a range of ways. As outlined below, recognition and understanding of the impacts of Conflict legacy are only now emerging for some. This might suggest that the pool of 'victims' or those requiring supports is more than individual victims services can cater for, and an exclusive focus on families 'directly affected' may be limiting.

The difficulty in separating out the social and individual (e.g. direct) health impacts and legacies for the current generation was also raised. Many young people experience the legacies of the past in the present, some in multiple ways, both directly and indirectly:

... you look at children as victims and witnesses of trauma that has happened as a result of the Conflict in their own families but also what's happening in their communities still, and we know it's still happening in communities ... (KSI4)

Cautioning against a restricted focus on individuals and families, another representative from the victims sector spoke of the need for social understanding and responses, rather than an emphasis on individual and medical responses:

If we're talking about trauma as just a mental health issue, as opposed to a social issue, then it has a big impact about how you respond to it, and if you're going to say we respond to trauma by giving people counselling, or during the Troubles it would have been giving them diazepam or whatever ... you're still only resolving the symptoms and not the causes. (KSI3)

There was understanding, therefore, that the causes of Conflict-related poor health outcomes were multiple, and that this should be reflected in the responses.

6.3 The Grandparent Generation: Reflections on Impacts and Legacies

Adult research participants were invited to reflect upon the impacts of the Conflict on their parents' generation, and young people asked to reflect on the impacts on their grandparents' generation.

While not asked to discuss personal details, many inevitably did so. As might be expected stories of death, injury, relocation, parental imprisonment, and disruption to everyday life were commonplace. As noted below, many adults reflected upon this in terms of their own childhood, as their experiences and memories of growing up during the Conflict (see Section 6.4).

Young people spoke more generally of grandparents experiences, with a small number providing personal details and examples. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, many young people learned about the Conflict through the sharing of stories by parents and grandparents. Given that this is detailed in Chapter 3, here we focus primarily on adult accounts of their parents. It is noteworthy, however, that some young people did recognise generational impact, identifying grandparents as most profoundly affected, followed by parents, and then their own generation. Extracts like those below are a reminder of cross-generational impacts and Conflict legacy, as young people talk about the Conflict impacting those in the past and the present:

I'd say they [the grandparent generation] were probably impacted the heaviest. They lived through it the longest. My mother would probably only have been about, have been a decade and a half in it while my granda would have lived from literally the start, born or somewhere round that 'til obviously now. (CYPFG16)

*Well they [parent generation] grew up when it was a bit madder, well it's still sort of mad but like then it was more, you know what I mean? They seen like more mad sh*t going on. (CYPFG14)*

6.3.1 Perceived Impacts on Parents: A Quiet Understanding

In discussing the impacts on their parents, a significant number of adult interviewees alluded to a delayed effect, noting that during the Conflict their parents and indeed their grandparents, simply had to get on with life:

My mummy did get on with it, but she lived on her nerves. (PFG2)

'Getting on with it' often involved not talking about violence, death and injury and thus not dealing with it. These discussions typically related to mothers, reflecting the gendered aspects of the Conflict and women's role as 'family caretakers' (Green, 2018: 13). According to some, this had led to long-term bitterness, resentment, anger and/or depression. Not talking about pain and loss, or being provided with a space to do so outside of the immediate family, meant that such feelings were unresolved:

... I think my mummy still has a lot of anger, because she had a brother that was murdered, and she had to run the house. They were young when my granny and granda

died. So, my mummy has never ever really spoke, and been able to tell her story, and that's why she's angry. (PFG2)

The intergenerational nature of 'not talking' about and 'not dealing' with the past, and of delayed trauma, was discussed in detail in one focus group. Within the extract we see a family history of not talking about pain, yet knowledge of its existence, and an understanding of 'not talking' as a cross-generational coping mechanism:

They actually didn't even deal with what happened at the time, because there was so much going on. My granny lost her son, but two years ago she lost her daughter, and I think it was only then that she grieved for her son that she lost in the Troubles. She had two daughters in jail, a daughter shot, but lost a son, but all that, she had to just get on with it. There was so much else going on at that time, and she had other children, and grandchildren, and my grandad to worry about, who loved a drink. ... It was, like, she never really grieved at the time, and I wouldn't say they talked a lot, because I know my mother is the same. She [participant's mother] just didn't talk about it. It was just brushed under the carpet, and it was, at the time, it just wasn't talked about ... People didn't deal with it at the time. People just got on with it. (CRFG2)

While most individuals and families with these experiences have not developed serious mental health problems or disorders, a significant minority have, many of whom have not presented to services for quite some time, even decades (CVSNI, 2011). More broadly, however, these experiences can detrimentally affect their health and well-being, and that of their families.

Themes of the (re)emergence of pain and delayed trauma arose again in discussions with parents about their own experiences and young people's reflections on the long-term impacts on their parents' generation (see Section 6.6). More generally, in adults discussions of their own parents, they talked about 'numbness' and depression, the basis of which was often understood, but rarely discussed:

... a lot of depression, because partly with people losing people, and then just depression. So, like my mummy's depressed. I don't think she puts it onto me, but I feel for her, looking at her, because I know that she's depressed with the people she's lost. (PFG2)

As children growing up, there was little explicit discussion or understanding of the impacts of the Conflict (see Chapter 7), or of mental (ill) health in their families. A group of community

representatives in Co. Derry/Londonderry and Co. Donegal associated this with the stigma related to mental health in the past which, like others, they suggested was simply dealt with through prescription drugs. They noted the continual use in their homes of expressions like '*bad with their nerves*' and '*living on their nerves*' which shielded them as children as they did not understand the meaning (CRFG3). Numbness, some now understood as adults, was associated with prescription drug use particularly by mothers. Indeed, some spoke of their parents now being '*addicted*' to diazepam:

I always think that there was a habitual drug use during the Troubles because your granny or your mummy or whatever were living on diazepam which we wouldn't have known about but that's what kept people sane ... (CRFG8)

Summing up the general perceptions of their parent's generation, a parent said: '*I think the likes of our parents, they're a generation of you do it yourself.*' (PFG2). Not talking, not seeking support, and not acknowledging and dealing with pains were, therefore, identified as long-term behaviours for some, manifesting at times in suicide or substance misuse. A community representative, now a parent herself, told us of her family:

... my own uncle took his own life very publicly ... jumped off the car park roof ... and that is a legacy that we're feeling of that, and I could even see it in my own father. My own daddy has post-traumatic stress. Now, he won't tell you that – "Oh, no I don't have that". (CRI4)

While better understood as adults, as noted in the next chapter, as children there was often a 'sense' of something being wrong. We return to the issue of silence/ not talking in the next chapter, when exploring the impacts of the Conflict on family life and relationships. Also in Section 6.5 below in considering potential transference across generations.

6.4 The Parent Generation: Reflections on Impacts and Legacies

6.4.1 Reflecting on Conflict-Related Experiences: Parents and Young People

Parents and community representatives reflected upon the impact of the Conflict on the parent generation. Their discussions, many of them hugely personal, reflect the myriad of ways in which children (now adults) experienced the Conflict, and that childhood memories are easily surfaced when prompted.

Some shared memories of border check points and the impact on daily life, others of soldiers and armed police in their communities or raids on homes while growing up. Others still spoke of their

families being relocated, of witnessing violence at a young age, of family members being imprisoned, injured or killed when they were children. Some spoke of more recent experiences as adults – attacks/threats by so-called paramilitary groups; witnessing violence within their communities, and on some occasions, on their children (see Chapter 8); losing family to suicide which they perceived to be linked to Conflict legacy.

While many stories were shared, the excerpts below give an indication of the vivid memories of childhood fear, confusion and loss, and in some cases, attempts to make sense of these as adults:

In the early years I didn't know who the enemy was. All I saw was guns and people being shot. I saw a person getting shot. To this day I don't know where it was, but I was under the age of 6 ... and I saw him shaking on the ground, and the whole body was just shaking, and the blood coming out of him. (PI3)

... there was a lot of activity here, a lot of like paramilitary presence and then there were all your checkpoints. And as a child, as a very young child you don't really understand what that is and you just see soldiers with guns and then you hear on the news about bombs and you hear about people being shot. (PI4)

...then along came the Troubles and the Battle of the Bogside, Bloody Sunday and our life changed dramatically ... just overnight we were out of it [their home] and had to just grab what we could that night and we were shipped out [to another area]. (CRI3)

[I] lost friends, family in the security forces, paramilitaries, seen many people killed unfortunately and it did have a serious impact on my upbringing most definitely and certainly influenced me as a young man and this was, I was born in '72 pretty much right up 'til '98 with the ceasefire. Taking the wider impact of that, as a young child growing up I was constantly in fear, my mother was in the UDR at the time and we were always under threat pretty much. As well as the fact that there was constant daily trouble on the interface. It wasn't just the murder or the bombs, it was the constant rioting, the houses being attacked on both sides. (CRFG8)

... my brother was killed ... he was held for seven weeks and two days and then shot dead and left in [NI border county] ... (PFG1)

Despite some efforts to protect children from knowledge of family experiences (see Chapter 7), many young people understood the range of ways in which their parents (and grandparents) had

experienced the Conflict (see also Chapter 3). Some shared experiences of family loss, injury, pain and witnessing violence:

My mum, her uncle was killed in the Omagh bomb. So it's really, really close to her, especially when it comes to the bombing now in Omagh, like she's really scared of anything when it comes to that. (CYPFG9)

My mum ... she was in a fruit shop and a guy went up on a motorbike with like his helmet on and just shot a guy right in front of her. Like it was mad. But like she just recalls all the mad things that have happened. (CYPFG18)

More often, however, young people talked of parents (and grandparents) having to live with the constant threat of violence; 'seeing a lot' – bombings, shootings, armoured cars, soldiers and guns on the streets; being restricted in their movements because of curfews, parental fear, army/police checkpoints, spatial divisions; and disruption to daily life. In considering the reality of life for their parents some reflected the specific impacts and difficulty given their age:

They would have been our age when it was happening. They would have been our age or younger. (CYPFG5)

While young people's reflections on the parent generations experiences may not have been as detailed as those of parents themselves, they nonetheless reveal an understanding of the range of ways in which the parent generation experienced the Conflict. Despite parental desires to protect children, to not talk about impacts (see Chapter 7), and the assertion by some adults that 'kids don't understand what parents went through' (CRI1), as demonstrated below, young people are often perceptive to, and understanding of, the immediate and longer-term impacts.

6.4.2 Reflecting on the Impacts of Growing Up During the Conflict

Reflecting on their childhood, a number of parents and community workers spoke of the normality of life, and of violence and securitisation as part of that normality. Indeed, young people talked in more detail about the impacts on the parent generation as children, than parents themselves did. This is unsurprising given the backdrop to their lives in the 70s and 80s, and as outlined in Section 6.2, their own parents efforts to 'get on with it':

I don't think that I have been affected at all, because it wasn't something that was talked about. It wasn't something that was discussed. (CRFG2)

While some expressed little impact, despite sharing detailed accounts of the violence they witnessed or heard and the pain and fear they felt or sensed, their full accounts often suggested differently. What emerged was more of a resignation to the facts of life at the time and a lack of space to reflect on, make sense of, and talk about the impacts (often until older). Thus, similar to the findings of Cairns (1987) over 30 years ago, it appears that this generation of children living through the Conflict also 'coped' through denial and/or habituation. Speaking of her experiences of house raids and what she described as police intimidation, for example, one parent finished the account of her experiences with: 'So, *that's my memories of that, and you just, kind of, accepted that.*' (PI2)

A mother, exiled from her community as a young person stated:

We seen it as normal, you know what I mean? I was put out of the country ... and I said, "well, I went against the rules" ... Them was the rules that was put into the community, so I broke rules, and I paid the price a wee bit. (PFG2)

Another parent who now suffers from PTSD, and believes that he likely suffered from trauma as a child, explained that he could not understand or make sense of his experiences as a child:

I suffer PTSD. It was undiagnosed for years. I remember the first time I had a reaction when I was five or six. I took migraines. It started out with migraines, and nightmares, peeing myself in bed, and totally flipping terrified in fear ... (PI3)

His lack of understanding as a child, perhaps along with a culture of not talking, led him to internalise his feelings. After sharing some of his experiences he said:

So that's what happened to me. I was just a quiet shy wee fella, and seeing what was going on in the outside, without speaking about it. A lot of fear and anger. (PI3)

Thus, despite assertions of things being simply part of life, the parent generation often recognised that they were likely impacted as children, but were simply unaware of it at the time. As one participant explained of his experience:

... my first real experience of it was six massive bombs at the bottom of the street went off, no warning, people's houses got wrecked. ... getting blew off my feet while a policeman is carrying me down the street. Getting put in the Land Rover to protect me from the rest of

the bombs and that was just the start. So, it became normal, I think that's what I'm trying to say. Growing up as a young child I didn't really realise until I was much older that most people don't grow up like this and don't witness the stuff that I witnessed. (CRFG8)

The impacts of living through the Conflict were well understood by young people, with some seeing the continued impact and remnants on parents and/or grandparents today (see Section 6.5.2). Many spoke of the relentless threat of violence, how this led to constant vigilance, and feelings of unsafety. The theme of uncertainty was evident in numerous discussions with young people, demonstrating the extent to which this featured in the experiences relayed to them. Speaking of families in her community, one young woman explained the impacts of uncertainty:

I think they were just constantly on the edge and afraid of everything because they didn't actually know the way things were going to happen ... (CYPFG2)

Many spoke of the fear their parents did, or must have experienced, while others recognised the hurt and trauma experienced through loss or exposure to extreme violence. Indeed, discussions relating to uncertainty, fear and vigilance were reflective of some of the parent generations accounts of growing up, again demonstrating understanding and empathy among the current generation:

As an adult I can kind of make sense of it but I think ... as a child ... you're living with that sort of like uneasiness, do you know and that bit of anxiety and you don't really understand why. And maybe it wasn't as bad as I felt it was but as a child it felt quite scary. (PI4)

Reflecting on some of their parents' and grandparents' experiences, and the impacts on their lives, there was often a sense of incredulity and sadness:

It's sad like whenever you know that your family and stuff has went through it as well, like ... whenever you know your grandparents and stuff were in it. It's not nice ... (CYPFG4)

Again this is in contrast to the assertion of some adults that young people today do not understand the impacts of the Conflict. Indeed, there is evidence of a deep and empathetic understanding of enduring pain, trauma, residual anger and fear when young people are invited to talk and express their views.

6.4.3 Reflecting on the Lasting Impacts on the Parent Generation

Parents, community workers and young people reflected upon the continued impacts of the Conflict on the parent generation. They discussed the range of ways in which anger was unresolved, memories resurfaced and pain accentuated through news stories, commemorative events, historical enquiries and sometimes the sporadic recall of memories. The past had infiltrated the present in unexpected ways for some, leading to the discussion of a delayed impact. Issues not talked about or made sense of when children were beginning to be given meaning. While some of these enduring impacts are discussed thematically below, they are not mutually exclusive. How they impacted upon family life and the current generation is explored in more detail in Chapter 7.

6.4.3.1 Delayed Understanding and Impacts

While some found it difficult to articulate the impacts, they were aware these existed and perhaps were still making sense of them. Indeed, it was regularly stated that the current parent generation is only beginning to reflect on, or recognise, the impacts of the Conflict now. One parent noted, for example: *'We just lived in it, didn't we? We just lived in it. It's only when you look back now you realise how horrific it was.'* (PI1) Speaking of poor mental health among her generation she went on to suggest that:

... when the Conflict was on, I don't think there was half the mental health issues at the time. Now maybe it was and nobody recognised them ... Maybe we're only recognising these things now because we can focus on something else other than who's been killed that day. (PI1)

In this respect we see some similarities to reflections on the grandparent generation. A sense that some of the personal impacts and outworkings of the Conflict for what were then children, are only emerging in 'peace times'. Similar also, was a sense that memories had been '*locked away*', buried or denied and that some still were unable to make connections between personal difficulties today and experiences of the past. Speaking of marriage breakdown, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and a continued reluctance to '*speak to someone ... to open up and ... get help*' one parent felt that some of the parent generation '*... don't even realise that they are suffering with the after-effects of the Conflict.*' (PFG1). This was supported by a health professional reflecting on their practice:

I think for decades here we have been very good at denial, just a denial of the problems, and to me it seems strange that you meet people and you say, 'have you been affected by the Troubles?' and they say, 'no'. And then you start going into it with them and you ask

them, 'well, has this happened, or that happened?', and you find out there's a lot going on in the background, but that they're view is, 'well, no, it didn't affect me'. I think, often, that's what we're dealing with. (KS17)

Demonstrating the degree to which memories can be buried, or as this participant says 'locked away', a community representative shared her recent realisations. She describes a 'drip feed' of memories, prompted by talking and working with others in her community. The anxiety caused through consciously considering, for the first time, the impacts on herself and her relationships with others, including her children, are palpable:

... I probably would have locked that all away, and said that's in the past, and forgot about it, but the more that I've been doing this job then these memories have started to drip-feed back in again, and I've started remembering more and more, and then thinking, "Jesus, I maybe was part of that, I maybe was affected. How do I translate that to other people, to my children? What's my role in processing all of that?" (CRFG3)

Considering the continued impact of parents experiences was also difficult for young people. Many felt 'it definitely affects them [parents] in their life' (CYPFG16). Others recognised 'It would leave them scarred' (CYPFG11). Yet they often found it difficult to articulate the specific ways this manifested. This is evident in the extract below in which a young woman reflected that it was only recently that her mother shared her experiences:

I know it impacted my mum severe badly. I've only realised it recently. ... I would have heard stories recently of like my mum watching her mother getting beat by the IRA while she was dying with cancer and stuff. Mum said she didn't realise when she was younger she was held hostage. As a child, she thought it was a game, and being held like with a gun and stuff, and her and her younger sisters being told not to move, but obviously as she was growing up she started to realise it was real, and that's affected [her]. Like she has been affected quite badly. Like I've only realised that recently, which is probably why she moved to England at such a young age. (CYPFG9)

While there was little opportunity in a group situation to explore the impact of bearing witness to her mother's pain, and the young woman's views of the long term impact of this experience on her mother, such examples demonstrate that the sharing of pain is now only possible for some. Thus, some in the current generation are exposed to new pains within their families. The former two cases also demonstrate how memories can surface, unexpected, potentially at any time.

6.4.3.2 *The Resurfacing of Pain and Injustice*

Notions of delayed impact, delayed pain and/or trauma were expressed by a number of young people who understood that: *'whenever they [parents] were growing up ... it's just what they were used to and [it] was their lives ...'* (CYPFG17). Constant media coverage, what was perceived as political opportunism regarding some Conflict-related events, commemorative events and historical enquiries, it was felt, unearthed or reignited past pains, making it difficult for some to 'move on' with life. This is reflective of the notion that Northern Ireland as a society in the early stages of conflict transformation is 'haunted by a "conflict calendar in which every day is an anniversary" ...' (Lawther, 2020: 1). Considering the continued impacts of the Conflict on families in their community, a group of young people discussed the following:

F: Sort of the unresolved nature of some things around the Troubles and the Good Friday Agreement. Compromise, there has to be compromise on both sides. People feel things have been let go.

M: There wasn't justice.

F: Yeah, justice. And lack of justice for families, for some families. It depends on the people, it depends on the communities.

M: They're being disregarded.

F: Just left while everyone just moves on.

M: Yeah, people move on but some people have families that never know what happened to them, even just missing people that happened during the Troubles, not even just people that were found dead or injured, the missing, they don't know and for some people they've never been able to get closure. (CYPFG16)

Some also recognised the generational impact of such injustice, and how the current generation could take on the anger and pain of their parents.

Such discussions again demonstrate the astuteness of young people. Very similar issues were raised by several parents and community representatives regarding past injustices, historical enquiries and the retraumatising nature of these. Reflecting on one such enquiry, a community representative spoke of what she and others experienced:

... I sat through the initial deliberation from the PPS in the [location] watching grown adults retraumatised by the events on that day. It was horrific to see it and people feeling they didn't receive justice on that day, where they had high hopes built up, people being shattered and reliving that whole trauma experience again. (CRI1)

Another community representative, and parent, spoke of her family's recent efforts to gain information on historical killings in the family and being told that '*files are sealed from 1922 to 1998*'. '*So, there's still that effect there*' she concluded (CRI4). The manner in which the past could intrude on the present, and the personal difficulties, questions and concerns this evoked were articulated in the following interviewee's experience. Of optimum concern for him, was the magnitude of recent events and how best to deal with these to minimise the negative impacts on his children:

It's forty-three years ago my dad was killed, and we didn't hear anything, and then all of a sudden, the Historical Enquiries Team came to the door. And the police were waiting outside my work for me to go and do a statement, and ... asking people to come forward with information, basically, but we heard nothing back, and then all of a sudden, bang. ... There's arrests being made ... and you're just sitting going, 'right, this is crazy' because nobody had ever talked to us about any of this. Then within all of that I'm kind of going, 'how do I talk to my own kids whenever my dad's thing is on the news or whatever?' You don't really know what to do ... to help prevent things becoming transgenerational. (KS13)

While these are certainly personal pains, as this representative himself noted, they demonstrate the need for more than individualised medical responses. Social and political responses are also required to respond to the pains of injustice and the potential for secondary traumatisation (see also Gallagher et al., 2012). This broad point was also expressed by community representatives in discussing Conflict legacy. Connecting the personal with the social and political, a community representative reflected on his community as follows:

... I'm starting to see a lot of impact around negative mental health, seeing a lot of people struggling with what had happened during the Conflict and particularly how that's then impacting their children and grandchildren and how that legacy of the past hasn't been dealt with in a wider political sense is impacting people dramatically here ... (CRI1)

6.4.3.3 Poor Mental Health

By far the greatest impact identified was the long-term effect on some of the parent generation's mental health. Some utilised the concepts of trauma and PTSD, while most spoke of anxiety, depression, stress and poor coping skills. Aside from the intensification of trauma at particular moments in time, many spoke of the long-term difficulties experienced by some of the parent generation. Yet they often felt these went unrecognised by themselves and others, and hence had

the potential to impact the next generation (see Chapter 7). Like this parent, many knew there were 'problems' but did not fully understand or articulate them:

we do have mental health problems which we still don't understand which we're passing on to other generations. (PFG1)

Another parent (and community representative) recognised his trauma when reflecting on that of others. He spoke of the impacts on his well-being but how he chose not to engage with it:

*... definitely, the legacy of that is there for our older generation, but certainly, I know, even myself, for a f**king middle aged man, I have to shake myself occasionally from it, and there's an awful lot of trauma that came from that time that I'll never address. I'm never going to sit down and think about that, but I do have the cold sweats. I still wake up in the middle of the night, but it's my weans I find in a dream that are caught up in sh*t, and I panic about that, and I always have that. So, I would imagine that's true for everybody. (CRFG2)*

How this fear for children can manifest in the parenting of some, will be explored in the next chapter. Overall, however, accounts illustrated some of the personal, and what may well be cultural and generational coping mechanisms, discussed throughout this chapter and the next - not talking about and hence having to deal with past experiences.

Young people across many focus groups acknowledged that the Conflict had long-term impacts on parental health and well-being, particularly for the injured and bereaved. They recognised that '... the Troubles have affected people's mental health, like anxiety and depression and all' (CYPFG18)³⁴ that some families are 'stuck with it [pain and depression] for life' (CYPFG7). One group in particular demonstrated an understanding of PTSD and some of its manifestations in a similar way to that described by some adults. Speaking of their parents growing up in communities where there was violence and heavy securitisation they spoke of the pains of 'remembering that stuff', 'flashbacks', recurrent 'shock' and an inability to cope for some (CYPFG14). The depth and repetition of key points in their discussion might be an indication of an experiential understanding of some of these issues. A young man in another focus group spoke of his personal understanding. His father had been a police officer and he recognised that his

³⁴ There was an interesting exchange within this group about who 'deserved' sympathy and victim status. This emerged organically and was not, therefore, discussed in other focus groups. It may, however, be useful to explore this with young people given they are exposed to these issues through the media, politics, and potentially in their homes communities.

father's mental health had been impacted by what he had witnessed and experienced (CYPFG2). Parents and community representatives reflected upon their own experiences, those they worked with and those in their communities. Some spoke of the lasting impacts of daily violence, insecurity and intrusion in border town:

... the things that people witnessed or heard or seen or even the way that they lived ... there was that constant fear all the time ... even though I grew up with it, I didn't know, so I didn't actually know that it was a fear ... just constantly always being told ... 'don't go there, don't go here, make sure you're back there and speaking to that person, and if you see this just walk the other direction'. Then you had the whole being stopped by the army and being searched regularly every day on your way to school, your way back from school so you have all that happening as well. So, there was a constant kind of impact. I think that sort of long-lasting impact on people's mental health has to exist, you know, I don't think it's something that can't ... (CRFG1)

Others spoke of the 'mental scars' on individuals targeted, intimidated and physically injured:

My brother, he's been shot, like three times. Three times he got shot. He's mentally, you know, scarred from that. I can see people like that. (PFG2)

Others still, spoke of the poor physical and mental health of 'politically motivated' former prisoners³⁵ and the high levels of substance abuse as a means of self-medicating (see Section 6.4.3.4). Two participants spoke in detail of their own experiences of PTSD (both of whom reflected on the impacts on their children – see Chapter 7). One parent, as noted previously, had been diagnosed with PTSD which he attributed to his community environment as a child. In particular he spoke of witnessing a shooting at the age of four (see Section 6.4.1) but also of suffering 'multiple trauma throughout my life' (PI3). A community representative also spoke of PTSD explaining vividly how it manifested in his everyday life. One former combatant/former prisoner gave an account of how multiple experiences impacted on his mental well-being and how he revisits his past often:

I mean, PTSD, who knew what that was? I didn't, and I would suffer from it. ... four years in a cell with no clothes, no nothing, so it has to have an effect

³⁵ The terms 'politically motivated' former prisoner or 'former combatant/ former prisoner' refers to former prisoners whose incarceration was linked to the Conflict in Northern Ireland. Although those considered 'politically motivated' former prisoners are not strictly recognised as 'combatants' under international law, there now exists an increasing amount of literature which refers to those whose incarceration is conflict related, as 'former combatants'.

on you, and to think that it doesn't is just mental in itself. ... I mean, I can't remember last week in many respects. I can remember, and smell, and everything, an incident that I was involved in in 1976. ... I can remember, and smell, and everything about like an hour or so of an event. (CRFG5)

This participant spoke of friends with similar experiences 'hanging on to life by their fingertips', 'haunted' by past actions, 'traumatised by some of the things that they have seen', unable to talk and coping through 'abusing alcohol'. A community representative in another area made a similar point reflecting on former combatants in her family (CRI4). She suggested that these groups being unable to talk about their pains was teaching the next generation that they too should not talk about theirs. Indeed, while a fair amount may be known by young people about events and actions, there was a sense that little was talked or known about the pains. Thus young people may have a sense rather than a deep understanding.

6.4.3.4 Substance Misuse

Reflecting other research (e.g. Bunting et al., 2013; O'Neill et al., 2015), many participants in this study, including young people, drew a link between Conflict legacy, poor mental health and substance misuse. As noted in Section 6.3, some had previously highlighted addiction to prescription medication in the grandparent generation. This, alongside use of other substances, particularly alcohol, was identified as a form of self-medicalising in the parent generation 'to deal with everything that they've been through' (CYPFG16). A health professional referred to this as 'self-soothing behaviour' (KSI5), and a community representative noted it was a way to 'ease that pain or kind of ease that trauma slightly' (CRFG1). Self-medication and self-soothing, therefore, were identified as coping mechanisms and for some, a way to mask their pain. This was identified by one parent when talking about friends with experiences similar to him:

A lot of my friend's drink, and a lot of them are alcoholics, and recovering, and they're suffering. I don't drink. I suffer PTSD from the Conflict from I was a kid and I got a lot of help. So, I don't drink. I don't mask any symptoms. I see it raw and I understand it, but it's so difficult to try and get yourself normalised. (PI3)

For some, like the interviewee above, there was an understanding of their trauma and the potential impacts on their behaviours. While some community representatives, health professionals and those working with families and children recognised the basis of negative behaviours such as substance misuse, they noted it was not always understood among those involved in it. Some parents could, however, identify it in others. Linking alcohol use to delayed

trauma and a means of coping with re-traumatisation through reminders of the past in the present, one parent spoke of a friend whose father had been killed when she was ten:

... it's only now that I'm starting to see. She would drink nearly every night of the week. She does have mental health issues, and I would put that down to delayed reaction to losing her dad at the time. If something comes out in the news, or if somebody comes on that she doesn't agree with, she goes and gets a bottle of wine to deal with that. (PI1)

Another discussed her ex-partner who 'did a bit of time, when we were teenagers' and who lived through house raids and family arrests when he was a child. She spoke of his 'depression, and drinking more, never really talking about what had happened'. She, among others, felt that alcohol was used as a coping mechanism by men in particular as there was 'a fear around talking' (PI2).

Substance misuse was, therefore, identified among a range of groups within the parent generation – those injured or bereaved; those who grew up in communities and/or families involved in and/or heavily impacted by violence; those who participated in the Conflict/associated with paramilitary groups; families in which substance use had become normalised as a way of dealing with pain, depression or anxiety. As expressed by one community representative:

A lot of people I know take tranquillizers ... given what they've come through, there's a full scale conflict, people were killing people and people were being killed and homes were being wrecked and people were visiting sons and fathers or daughters or mothers in jail, I think a lot of people did turn to you know, medication and... there is an element of it and I think in some cases that has been passed on ... (CRI2)

This participant went on to discuss substance use as an intergenerational coping mechanism within families (see Chapter 7), but also across generations more generally (see Section 6.6). Indeed a group of mothers (PFG2) also alluded to their own use of prescription medication as a learned behaviour from their parents. This will be explored further in Chapter 7. In general, many were of the view that medicalisation of trauma through the Conflict, and in its aftermath, had been unhelpful. That new substances had replaced others that were once relied on. As articulated by a key stakeholder working in the child and family law stated:

... the over-reliance of a medicated medical system has been very unhelpful in addressing the impact of trauma. ... I think that we have all become so intent on moving on with life, and coping that sometimes not sufficient regard is paid to what has caused the way in which we cope ... I think the over-reliance on a medicalised system is very unhelpful. (KSI2)

6.4.3.5 Residual Fear and Vigilance

A final issue to emerge in discussing continued impacts of the Conflict on the parent generation was residual fear, lack of trust and what some referred to as 'bitterness'. 'Bitterness' referred to prolonged resentment towards the police, army, British State or 'other community' as a result of personal and familial experiences. Residual fear and what one community representative described as his long-term '*hypervigilance*' (CRFG5), like 'bitterness', was also difficult to dislodge. This was partly because fear had defined life for so long, but also because of a sense, for some, that a threat might still exist. The following interviewee explained this in relation to her past and her present:

I was married to a soldier, that's my legacy, it's a secret that I was married to a soldier for a time and I think the legacy of that for me is there's still an awful lot of secrecy about that for myself and for my children, having to keep all that under wraps. ... But there would still be that fear with me ... especially my younger son, "don't be telling anybody your father was a soldier". So that type of legacy, there's still that fear for me, maybe not as much as what it was when I was married to him or when the Troubles were going on but the fear still is here big time. (PFG1)

Another described his unremitting anxiety and lack of trust in others as a direct consequence of Conflict-related experiences. His account demonstrates the sense of foreboding still permeating everyday life:

Lack of trust of people still exists throughout, in my cells, because it's engrained into you. It's in yourselves. It's a survival technique, or it's a survival skill, for threat in the past ... I understand that that's only in case something happens in the future, but it affects me in peace time because there is no threat you don't perceive. You still expect that threat no matter what, you're still waiting on it ... (PI3)

Others spoke more generally of a sense of '*anxiety around people my age from that time*' (PI4). Again, some young people were perceptive to this fear or sense of anxiety among their parents. A young woman in one group, for example, employed a similar notion to the parent above, of fear being in their parents' make-up due to their experiences growing up:

It's the older generation, that's just the way they're wired, because they had to keep checking about the safety, because my mum was like, she grew up around it. She was like every time there was like a fag [cigarette] box, or something lying on the ground, she would walk around it because she didn't know if it was a bomb or not. (CYPFG9)

Others spoke of their parents fear or reticence to enter particular areas. This issue is returned to in Chapter 7 as young people and parents reflected on the potential impacts on parenting, and hence the current generation of young people. Despite the range of issues discussed in this section, and reflections in the next chapter on how these may impact the current generation, there was a sense that the parent generation was often a forgotten generation when it came to services and supports. A number of participants felt this was because of narrow definitions and understanding of 'victims' of the Conflict:

... like ones our age [in their 40s], there's nowhere for them'uns, and there's nowhere for them'uns to say, 'our houses got wrecked and ruined and we got beat, and my daddy was in jail, and my mummy was in jail', you know, everything that went on, but there's nowhere for them'uns to cope, and then they went on to be parents. ... But ... everything that they've went through, is a direct impact of what went on in the home. (CRFG7)

6.5 The Current Generation: Mental Health, Well-Being and Conflict Legacy

6.5.1 Young People's Accounts: A Summary

Young people were asked to reflect on the impacts of the Conflict on their own generation. As outlined in Chapters 5 and 8, the majority of these discussions revolved around divided schools and communities, and the presence of armed groups and residual violence. Within this latter discussion, some did speak of the impact on their mental health and well-being, and this was expanded upon by parents and community workers (see 8.5.3). Aside from this, few raised the issue of mental health in the context of the Conflict unless discussing previous generations. In generic discussions of the issues impacting young people in their communities, however, young people in all focus groups raised mental health and drug use as key issues. Many also discussed high rates of youth suicide in their communities. Some shared their own struggles with anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide ideation.

In discussing the issues impacting young people's mental health, conversation revolved around: school and exams; pressures relating to appearance; peer pressure; bullying; relationship difficulties; family pressures; poverty; lack of opportunities – no jobs, no money; drugs. Some of the explanations reflected the age of the groups with issues relating to financial difficulties, and lack of opportunities being raised by a significant number of those in the older age groups. The following are illustrative of the issues raised:

... it's the way you have to dress or be. Like in [area] you have to be like this certain standard ... I expected there'd be more different groups but in my school you have like ...

the ones who drink, who do drugs, the ones who do that, like that's the thing over here, it's like you have to drink, you have to do drugs ... (CYPFG2)

... people think there's nothing here for them so when they think that then they just get depressed then and then kill themselves. (CYPFG3)

People are just struggling for money and all and can't pay the bills. (CYPFG11)

Many, in communities North and South of the border, spoke of a relationship between drugs, mental health and on some occasions, suicide. Drugs were recognised as a way to cope, taken to ease stress, fill a void or as a response to lack of opportunities.

M: They smoke grass because they say it helps their pain.

F: Stresses.

M: To stop stressing and all.

I: So, do you think there's a link between mental health issues and the fact that people are self-medicating?

All: Yeah. (CYPFG4)

As noted below, community workers in a number of areas felt that for the most part, drug use was not recreational for this generation, but a means of getting by. Indeed, young men in one area spoke of some young people who '*take that much [marijuana] to the point where they can barely think*' (CYPFG14).

There was detailed discussion in some groups of the types of drugs available in their communities with the belief that almost every drug was accessible. Thus drugs were perceived as both causing or exacerbating poor mental health and being a response to it. Part of the problem, identified by a group in Co. Derry/Londonderry was that young people who were struggling with their mental health were medicated due to a lack of counselling and related services. They identified this as part of the drug and addiction problem in their area. Three young people in another group, in Co. Antrim, spoke of their personal difficulties, their experiences with the medical profession and being prescribed anti-depressants. Prior to this exchange, the young woman spoke of requiring mental health support due to '*a really, really, really traumatic experience*' and deciding to pay for private support due to the NHS waiting lists. She had been to visit her GP:

F: But they do just give you tablets

M: I got handed probably a strip of antidepressants – 'that'll do you a week' like.

F: I went to my doctor a few weeks ago and she handed me diazepam.

M: Yeah, the same like, even for me I appeared up in hospital ages and ages ago with like, I took a really bad panic attack and I turned up to the hospital and they just handed me two diazepam and said 'get an appointment with your doctor', they didn't even provide you know counselling or nothing.

I: And after the tablets, what?

F: I'm still on diazepam

M: Nothing

M: They just keep you on it. Keep you doped up

...

F: I'm still on the diazepam.

M: While you're on it you can't really get off it and it's like an endless cycle and then you're going to your doctor and they're prescribing you more drugs because of the bloody come down of diazepam is so bad.

M: I had to get off it because at that point when you're taking them you're thinking aye, it's helping you so you're looking for other stuff. So I was taking them antidepressants and then going to my mates and going 'aye give us a couple of them there' and I'd take a couple of them there and take more and I ended up just with a habit. I was getting near enough just addicted to drugs so I was just like, that's when I thought it's making me worse than having to deal with mental health, I'd rather deal with my mental health than be an addict. (CYPFG18)

There was wide understanding of gaps in child and adolescent mental health services, and that this led to the medication of mental health difficulties. Some knew this through their own experiences, others through the experiences of their siblings or peers. Notably, similar issues regarding mental health 'support' in the form of medication were raised in NICCY's (2018) review of mental health support for children and young people in Northern Ireland. A significant number also shared stories of themselves or their friends on waiting lists or being sent home without support or follow-up (another finding similar to NICCY, 2018). A young man shared his experience of visiting A&E due to suicide ideation:

I don't really talk about it but I went in because of self-harm one time but it was bad, it was, I actually tried to commit suicide, I went in about 2 o'clock, I didn't get seen to about 6 o'clock, 7 o'clock that day and then they just told me 'do you feel safe to go home?' I said, 'no, not really'. They were all, 'if you're not that safe then ring your mum' or something and

*then I got sent home and I was like, 'what the f**k, that's f**king pointless there'. I coulda just went home just snapped like that [clicks fingers]. (CYPFG15)*

Groups across the areas spoke of how poor services accounted for the high rates of poor mental health as problems exacerbated over time. A young woman in Co. Monaghan explained similarly to those across the sites in Northern Ireland:

*You see all the common things like stress over school, or anything like that, and then if you take into consideration the health system here there's not many things for mental health around **** [area] at all really, and you're waiting, and you're waiting. (CYPFG8)*

Thus some noted a lack of services and supports for young people as contributing to the high levels of (youth) suicide:

F: We actually have the highest suicide rate in Northern Ireland.

I: And why do you think that is? What's impacting on our mental wellbeing?

F: Because our support system is just bad. (CYPFG1)

Because they don't get enough help, like the waiting list is like 6 months long and by that time then they've gone. (CYPFG3)

The relationship between poor mental health, drugs and lack of services appeared to be multi-faceted: prescription drugs were prescribed due to gaps in other service provision; drugs (of varying sorts) were taken to alleviate stress or depression and often exacerbated feeling of hopelessness and could bring young people to the attention of paramilitaries (see Chapter 8); addiction issues led to increased demand for services that were in short supply.

A number of groups spoke of the high rates of suicide, and youth suicide in their areas. Many felt this was linked with substance misuse and feelings of hopelessness. Speaking of the scale of suicide in their area, and a recent spate of suicide among young people, a group of young people in Co. Antrim told us:

You're actually waking up to be told someone is dead. So, you prepare for it. Like now, you're just waking up to be told someone is dead. It's coming. You're waiting on it coming. (CYPFG11)

Youth and community workers in this area also spoke of this and the toll it had taken on them as they lost young people in their community and tried to support those left behind.

Another group of young men in the same area spoke of the impact of exposure to suicide on social media, which appeared to make it a viable option for those struggling:

When you're on social media it's [suicide] the only thing you'll see, everyone writing about it. ... I think that's actually like pushing more people to maybe do it because they're hearing about it so much. (CYPFG13)

While there was great awareness about mental ill-health and suicide, and in some communities it was very visible, there was still a sense that many young people who struggled did not talk about their problems. There was consistent reference to young people having no-one to talk to and/or being unable to talk about their struggles – '*people just don't want to say*' (CYPFG13). Some (mostly young women) identified this as a particular issue for young men. Others felt it was linked to a wider culture of not talking, or as outlined in the next chapter, a feeling that some adults did not understand their struggles. It was here that we began to see acknowledgement of some generational patterns linked with Conflict legacy:

... I think it's hard to talk to like parents and grandparents because they came from what, an isolationist, conservative, rural sweep it under the carpet, we don't talk about it. And then we come and we want to talk about it and they don't know how, and then people who had their issues never got to talk about it and then that made them worse and then they're maybe passing it onto their children nearly. (CYPFG16)

While there is limited space here for a detailed discussion, it should be noted that young people often spoke of the support provided by parents and/ or individual youth workers, key workers and community programmes. Indeed the accounts of many youth and community workers attested to the wide remit of their jobs. It was evident that they were increasingly filling gaps within statutory provision, and in the words of one youth worker, were expected to be '*the handy men and women of everything*' (CRFG7).

6.5.2 Linking Mental Health and Conflict Legacy

When probed to consider if any of the experiences they shared might be connected to Conflict legacy, most were unsure. Some groups pointed to the higher levels of suicide post conflict, noting that more people had died as a result of suicide since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement

than had died during the Conflict. They found it difficult, however, to consider this in terms of Conflict legacy. One group felt that a better understanding might emerge in time:

F: Yeah, but it's hard to know if it's to do with the Troubles or just in general.

...

M: It's hard to say that mental health is affected by the Troubles because as they said [others in the group], as well as stigmas and stereotypes around mental health so it's kind of hidden so like the fact that everyone, like the older generation isn't aware and we're still not aware of the mental health kind of thing, so our country hasn't actually figured out what it is and how to fix it and everything. So I think when that day comes we'll figure out if mental health is caused by the Troubles in Ireland potentially. (CYPFG16)

Others, however, saw no connection: 'I don't really think it's related to the Troubles anymore' (CYPFG4). While one group were certain there was a relationship. In the extract below, one young woman expresses her belief that not only is the health of individual families impacted, but that of the whole city:

*Do you know what I genuinely think the Troubles did for our generation though, I think it's like PTSD that our parents haven't f**king recovered from and it's passed down to people in **** [name of city]. Even people who aren't [originally] from **** [city], who came over and stuff, it's still there, that's why we've such a big, big drug outbreak and trouble with that there and everything else. (CYPFG15)*

Although not always making an explicit connection, many of the points young people raised were similar to those discussed by community representatives and key stakeholders in the context youth mental health and Conflict legacy: a culture of not talking about pain and suffering; the medication of trauma and substance use as a coping mechanism; poor investment in services impacting opportunities for young people, services and supports (see above Section 6.2). Demonstrating how all of these issues are related a community worker in Co. Antrim explained:

... [under-resourcing of communities] still the same about the legacy of the Troubles. It's still not being dealt with, and because it's not being dealt with our kids are suffering for it, and generations to come are suffering ... I just think the Conflict has done so much damage, and I don't know if it can be rectified, because we don't have the proper facilities here to deal with what's going on for either older people or young people, because we live in a community where people don't talk. People that talk are scared to be called touts, because they could end up getting shot. A person that has been involved in the Conflict

cannot go and do counselling because if they have hurt or maimed somebody they have to be reported to the police. ... There needs to be an absolution, because if we can do that then we can show kids that it's all right to talk ... Addiction is part of the Conflict and it needs to be tackled. (CRI4)

In two areas, community representatives felt there was a direct correlation between youth suicide and the Conflict. In the words of one worker in Co. Derry/ Londonderry

The amount of young people who are taking their own lives in these areas, which I think is a result of the Troubles, it's a post generational thing that's being passed down is mental health issues, is massive in these areas, and that's what the young people are facing. (CRFG4)

Drug use was tied into this explanation as it was with many discussions of young people and mental well-being. Indeed community representatives across a number of areas, similarly to young people themselves, spoke of high levels of substance abuse. They talked of young people 'self-medicating', taking tablets 'just to be normal, just to feel normal ... just to be' (CRFG2). Some connected this to a lack of opportunities and a sense of hopelessness among some young people, or to 'learned behaviour' (CRI2) within families and communities. In one group of community representatives in Co. Armagh there was discussion of the normalisation of prescription drugs as a response to trauma. Within the following exchange we see medication as a means of numbing pain, and essentially not dealing with it:

M: ... A problem that we have with those sedatives then is, the parents prescribe them to the daughters and the sons.

F: If somebody dies in the street your neighbour is going to be the first to come to you and say, 'give them [tablets] her, it will help her, it will settle her a wee bit, so that you can have a sleep tonight'. And we've had that quite recently from a girl whose son had hung himself and got buried during the week. A lot of people, and just good will, and have been coming and saying, 'how is she coping with that? ... The girl hasn't got out of her bed in three days, so she's not actually dealing with what's happened. (CRFG2)

A very similar point was made by community representatives in Co. Antrim. They said:

F: It's all about culture if anything happens. So, say something has happened and you're all over the place, so I'll go next door and get two diazepam, and give you two diazepam.

...

M: But what that translates to is now, the parents that weren't able to develop coping skills, now these kids are totally immune to it because they haven't the coping skills. These kids get hit with a challenge, it's straight to the tablets. (CRFG7)

These are the types of environments in which some young people grow up. While the drugs they use to self-medicate may be different to that of their parents and grandparents, the behaviour was essentially similar. And while some certainly identified these patterns within families (see Chapter 7), they were also identified as wider cultural and cross-generational issues.

Linked with this, and provided as an explanation to some of these methods of coping, was what some described as a culture of not talking about pain and suffering. This was identified by community representatives in Co. Louth and an area in Co. Antrim, as a particular issue for young men:

... I think being handed down to the young people, especially young men, is massive where, no, you don't talk about that stuff. ... you know, your parents don't talk about it. So, that link, yeah, it would be massive. (CRFG9)

One key stakeholder felt that the ramifications of this were only beginning to emerge:

... my fear around mental health is ... the stuff that's all going unseen in young people's lives, even our culture of we can deal with this ourselves, hold onto it ourselves, don't tell anybody, work it ourselves. ... We're only scratching the surface, I feel, around mental health. (KSFG6)

6.6 Conclusions and Rights Implications

There is a lesson to be learned from Northern Ireland and the lesson is: don't leave it as late as we did. If you're dealing with societal conflict, one of the steps that need to be taken is to begin to put in place effective, trauma-focused mental health services that can deal with the initial trauma but also the chronic trauma that will emerge in due course (Bolton quoted in Gallagher et al., 2012: 65).

The research reflects some of the experiences and impacts of the Conflict on individuals, families and communities across three generations. It demonstrates how, for many of the parent generation, childhood memories lie just below the surface ready to be exposed, often with little

prompting. For some, childhood experiences were being made sense of as adults, with memories and pains only recently realised or (re)surfaced as a result of Conflict-related news stories, historical enquiries or more openness in families. The research suggests, therefore, that the outworkings and manifestations of Conflict-related harm can be delayed (see also: CVSNI, 2011), despite impacting negatively on the well-being of individuals and families. As such, it may take considerable time before individuals seek or require help and support.

The lasting impacts on their well-being of growing up with fear, insecurity, experiencing and/or witnessing violence or loss, were well-recognised by others. The past can impinge upon the present in persistent ways whereby pain, anxiety or hypervigilance are ever present. Many had, like their parents, avoided, buried or minimised their experiences. Having emotionally regulated, 'locked away' feelings and/or dealt with pain or loss over many years, this generation had taken a burden some felt was not recognised in public or political discourse, or in service responses. While similar themes of Conflict-related harms being 'sectioned off' are reflected in other research, this study clearly illuminates the transgenerational nature of these strategies, as the parent generation talk about their own parents, and reflect upon themselves.

The medicalisation of pain during the Conflict has also left its mark. Not only are patterns of self-medicating evident among some older people (Jarman and Russam, 2011), but this research would suggest, also among subsequent generations. That is, those at the sharp end of the personal, social and structural legacies of the Conflict. Patterns of silence, internalisation and soothing pain, stress or anxiety through substance use were reiterated across generations, suggesting culturally transmitted coping strategies. While young people spoke at length about high levels of mental ill-health among their peers, they often did not relate this to Conflict legacy. Many of the issues they raised, however - lack of opportunities, lack of appropriate services, the medicalisation of poor mental health, lack of willingness to talk about mental health – are related to Conflict legacy (see also NICCY, 2020). There were suggestions of similar methods of dealing with personal stress and poor mental health among the current generation as was identified in the parent and grandparent generation (e.g. silence, avoidance and self-medicating). The enduring relationship between poverty, the Conflict and poor health is, therefore, impacting the current generation of young people. This is linked to the unresolved nature of Conflict legacy issues, including: ongoing paramilitarism; historical enquiries; ongoing, delayed or undiagnosed trauma among parents; lack of opportunities in some areas; and historical and contemporary under-investment in (mental) health services. The impacts may be exacerbated in rural and cross-border areas where access to services are particularly limited.

Over ten years ago, McMahon and Keenan (2008: 13) pointed to a series of gaps in service provision, including 'the inadequacy of mental health services for children and young people, and the continued under-resourcing in this area of provision'. Recently, NICCY (2018b) updated their analysis of mental health services and supports for children and young people in Northern Ireland. They found that mental health services were not fit for purpose, and that the system was under significant pressure, partly because of chronic under-investment, and historical patterns of funding allocation that do not respond to mental health needs. The findings from this study support NICCY's analysis, reinforcing that these issues make it difficult to respond to children and young people's mental health needs and compromise their rights to effective health care (UNCRC, Art. 24). Poor mental health, combined with lack of access to effective services, can enhance susceptibility to problematic drug and alcohol use. This was identified as a major area of concern among children and young people in this research, and by some adults as a transgenerational coping mechanism in the face of restricted services. Thus, when the right to effective health care is compromised so too can be the right to protection from illicit substances (UNCRC, Art. 33). Responses, therefore, need to be co-ordinated and integrated (see also NICCY, 2018b).

More broadly, mental ill-health related to Conflict legacy impacts children's right to survival and development (Art. 6, UNCRC), and it is well understood that when one right is not fulfilled, this impacts on the realisation of other rights. For those who are victims of trauma – either transgenerational or as a result of ongoing Conflict-related violence – they have a right to responses that promote their physical and psychological recovery (Art. 39). If children are not diagnosed as experiencing transgenerational trauma, or if their interactions with paramilitary-style groups are not defined and recognised as abuse, exploitation or victimisation, they are unlikely to have access to services.

While many of the stories shared in this research were those of individuals and families, the Conflict's lasting impact on deprivation, opportunities and investment, under-resourcing of communities and essential services was widely discussed. As such, the need for responses beyond medical interventions framed around individuals was called for. The danger of a narrow focus on Conflict-related trauma and psychopathology has been outlined by Gallagher et al. (2012) who note that this can divert attention from the need for social, economic, political and cultural change. Mental health responses in isolation will not attend to the impacts of Conflict legacy on the health and well-being of the current or future generations of young people. Economic, as well as social and political responses are required to respond to injustices and unresolved issues of the Conflict including segregation, ongoing paramilitarism and historical under-investment.

6.7 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, and consultations with our advisory groups, we make the following recommendations:

- Given the delayed impacts and understanding of Conflict-related experiences, there is a need for long-term funding of victims services.
- Safe spaces are required to discuss and share Conflict-related experiences. Community-based programmes should be developed (in consultation with communities), and Community workers trained and supported in delivering programmes exploring the Conflict and its impacts. These could be integrated into already existing community-based programmes (e.g. VSS-funded community programmes, the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme).
- To ensure that mental health services are sensitive and responsive to legacy issues, screening tools should be enhanced and training in trauma informed practices a priority. Regional Trauma Network³⁶-led research and service delivery provides an opportunity to disseminate learning and best practice across the health and victims sectors.
- There is a need to develop psychological, social, political and economic responses to address the social determinants of health related to conflict.
- CAMHS and DAMHS are not responding to the needs of children and young people, compromising their rights to effective health care and, for some, to survival and development. The recommendations from NICCY's (2018) review of mental health services and supports for children and young people in NI should be implemented.
- The relationship between substance misuse and Conflict legacy is becoming clear. This requires recognition in substance use strategies and responses. There is an urgent requirement to enhance social and educational measures to protect children from substance misuse.
- There is need for future research into the impacts of Conflict-related trauma and poor mental health on physical health.

³⁶ The Regional Trauma Network (RTN) is a collaborative initiative between HSC Trusts and Community based health and well-being providers delivering psychological trauma support. See http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/download/Consultations/regional_trauma_network_and_eqia/Regional-Trauma-Network-FAQs.pdf

7 Impacts and Legacies III: Parenting, Family Life and Relationships Across Generations

... if you think about through the Conflict, I think there was something like twenty thousand men went through our prison system as political prisoners. So, an enormous number of kids are encountering members of their family who were affected by that, and whatever they did before they went to prison, but often it's not spoken about and if you look at the victims of attacks, again, you're talking many thousands of people. (KSFG6)

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the impacts and legacies of the Conflict on the health and well-being of three generations - the grandparent generation, the parent generation (those in their 30s-50s) and the current generation (young people aged 14-25). Within this chapter we focus on the impacts of the Conflict on families and family life across these generations. A mother and son dyad is provided as an illustration of some of the issues that arose in examining the impacts of Conflict legacy across generations within the same family. More broadly, parents reflected upon how they were parented and considered how Conflict-related experiences may have impacted their family lives as children and young people. Some considered how these experiences, layered with additional personal experiences, subsequently impacted themselves and the parenting of their own children.

Young people were also invited to reflect upon the potential impacts on the parenting of their own generation in light of parental experiences of the Conflict. While they were often able to discuss possible long-term effects of growing up during the Conflict (see Chapter 6), they found it more difficult to consider the impacts of this on (their own) parenting. To supplement young people's perspectives, we draw heavily on the accounts of those interviewed as parents, and many

community representatives who themselves belong to the parent generation and have children similar in age to our youth sample (the current generation). Within the chapter we focus on family environment and family relationships and where possible draw connections across the three generational groups. In particular, we explore the issue of transgenerational trauma directly with participants and in our analysis of their accounts. While complex, this research adds to a growing body of research supporting the broad notion of transgenerational trauma – that the trauma experienced by some parents is felt or passed on to children, through the impacts on parenting and relationships, learned coping strategies, shared pains (e.g. McNally, 2014; O'Neill et al., 2015).

In the spirit in which personal stories and pains were shared with us, some are relayed here at length and in detail. For this reason, and unlike the approach taken in other chapters, we do not associate the participants with areas. While this is to maintain privacy, place is not an important factor in the analysis of Conflict legacy, parenting and family life. The research areas are those in which families were all disproportionately impacted by the Conflict, and hence by its legacies. It is noteworthy however, that very few of the accounts drawn on here are from individuals accessed through victims' services. This means that many families either do not identify as victims or that their difficulties have not been identified as Conflict-related. It is likely, therefore that a significant number of families have no supports, and are only likely to come to the attention of services at crisis points.

Finally, as is evidenced in the experiences of 'Ciara' and 'Conor' towards the end of this chapter, it is important to recognise the continued impacts of Conflict-related violence on the family lives of those who experience coercive control by paramilitary-style groups today. For some, this is an extension of the pains and anxieties experienced by their families across generations. This is discussed further in Chapter 8.

7.2 Understanding Transgenerational Trauma and the Impacts of the Conflict on Families

Given the scale of the Conflict, there was recognition among many participants that families are still impacted by the trauma of the past. For the most part, as a health sector representative said, families are '*getting on with life*'. The impacts do not manifest, are not known by those affected, or are not recognised by others:

There's a lot of families that I suppose are below the radar that are quietly kind of carrying their trauma and ... the difficult experiences from the Troubles and they're just getting on with life ... (KSI5)

While some families may be less affected, there was wide belief in the transference of trauma within other families. While some utilised the concept of transgenerational trauma, others spoke more generally of *'how trauma has spread [to] our generation [from] previous generations to subsequent ones'* (KSI3). Many drew on personal and practice experiences to reflect on how this played itself out within families, and its subsequent impact on children and young people. A majority focused on family relationships and environment, particularly parenting styles and parental coping mechanisms. Some (a smaller number) also spoke of epigenetic trauma. A representative from the health sector explained that research in this area was in its relative infancy in Northern Ireland. Young people in three focus groups, however, had clearly learned about this and felt that it could explain the poor mental health of some young people in their communities. The process was explained as follows by young people in two different areas:

... so if someone in your family has got like severe trauma it travels through your brain so like when you have a child that child will still have a bit of that trauma and it will just continue and continue until like five generations or that ... See like a young person, like that one who will have it, they'll not know they have it and they'll wonder why they always have mental health things but it's to do with the trauma that their parents and all felt. (CYPFG12)

PTSD has been proven to be hereditary, so it can be passed down through generation to generation. ... that means that even if someone's father or someone's mother or whatever had PTSD after the Troubles, that could have been passed onto them, if they had it during the Troubles and it went away for a while it still can be passed on. (CYPFG17)

Others, however, warned against individualist explanations of trauma, pointing to *'the social characteristics of trauma'* (KSI3) (see Chapter 6). A parent also felt that genetic explanations could be limiting, arguing they could distract from what was going on for some children in the here and now. Of the genetic nature of trauma she said:

That's something. But I think more so than that, it's just compromising a young person's sense of safety and wellbeing at home if mum or dad, if the wheels have come off, so to speak. There is a very real fear there among the young person of what happens now, this person that's supposed to be keeping it altogether isn't well ... I think it can have a devastating impact for their sense of safety. (PI4)

Overall, while the precise processes, pathways and mechanisms of transgenerational trauma may be difficult to identify in a clinical sense, as is untangling personal difficulties from those passed

on, there was widespread belief that children of some parents impacted during the Conflict were themselves adversely affected. Indeed the 'pathways' only became clear for some once young people were referred to services:

... we're very aware that in that process will be young people who will come to us and receive our services who won't have been directly traumatised by the Troubles themselves, but it will come from families that have been traumatised. (KSI7)

There was a sense, however, that many were not identified or referred, as '*... transgenerational trauma is often not very obvious at all*' (KSFG6). This is reflected in the following extract in which a representative from the child and youth sector spoke of the complexity of the issue, its manifestations, and hence the need for holistic responses. Connecting personal and family difficulties with individual, family and social responses she states:

some of the manifestation of the Conflict and the impact of the Conflict on families, [are] obviously being felt by children and young people today and not sometimes even known or acknowledged, and sometimes it manifests in families where there might be family breakdown or there might be parents who maybe are struggling and have their own mental health issues. So, this is about having that co-ordinated, integrated approach that is actually going to look at what are the needs of the family, what are the needs of the young people, how do we support them but then also looking at the longer-term systemic things that have to change. (KSI4)

In the remainder of this chapter we draw on the accounts of young people, parents and those working with and for them to consider some of the impacts of the Conflict on family life. We begin by drawing primarily on the accounts of the parent generation – some of whom we interviewed as parents, community representatives or key stakeholders - to consider their experiences of, and reflections on, their families' lives and the perceived impacts of the Conflict on family environment, relationships and parenting practices.

7.3 The Parenting and Family Lives of the Parent Generation

7.3.1 Silence and Secrecy

Adult participants considered the impacts on family life of parents living through the Conflict, with some reflecting on their own experiences and others drawing on their work with families and communities. Of particular note, a key stakeholder felt that women's narratives of the past are

often missing, thus little is known about what it was like parenting alone when a husband was imprisoned or killed. The lack of space for women to talk, along with a reluctance to talk due to fear of impacting children and the family, may account for the lack of data on this issue. Indeed, as outlined in the previous chapter, most adults stated that their parents simply 'got on with life', as did they.

While most discussed the broader impacts of growing up in families and communities impacted by the Conflict, some reflected on family-life and being parented. Again the issue of silence, and not talking about loss, injury and pain within families was raised. This was despite the child's obvious knowledge and the perceptible impact of it on parents and the family. As research with holocaust survivors, and recent research in Northern Ireland has found, 'the unspoken can be omnipresent' (Lawther, 2020: 14). Reflecting on his childhood and the killing of his father, a key stakeholder intimated that the silence made the loss more present:

I do remember myself, and it's still an issue for me around my family, my dad's family, you know, growing up. It's like it never happened. So, it almost felt like my dad didn't exist. So, why did we go into this whole thing of just not talking about it, and not communicating?
(KSI3)

Silence and secrecy also caused fear among children as they had partial knowledge of parents' concerns, sorrows and the potential dangers within their families and communities. Indeed the following extract would suggest that some parents felt that if conflict and violence were not talked about, children would not be impacted. Yet the opposite was true:

I definitely think it would have been in the time of the Troubles, there was a lot of secrecy ... you wouldn't have been as open in talking about stuff. I remember thinking about the IRA and being completely and utterly petrified ... when you asked what was all the rioting about or what was all that about, there was no explanation given for anything really and you were just to be quiet. ... We never probably would have been asked "how are you feeling?" ... if you were a wean [child] you had nothing to worry about, you were grand, just get on with it ... (PFG1)

Also evident within this extract and alluded to by a number of others was the functional, rather than expressive nature of parenting as 'getting on' with daily life was prioritised. Overall, children (now the parent generation), like their own parents, were afforded little opportunity to reflect on

and discuss the impacts of the Conflict. It was effectively normalised through the lack of attention given to what were, in fact, extraordinary events.

7.3.2 The Ripple Effect: Attitudes, Behaviours and Well-being

One parents group, who had been provided with the opportunity and support within their local community to discuss (among other things) their experiences of the Conflict, reflected on the '*ripple effect that it had from your grandparents, to your parents, to us, and to our children*' (PFG2). Having the space and support to reflect upon and discuss these issues in a safe and non-judgemental manner had been both difficult and cathartic, and their discussion of intergenerational impacts and legacies was expansive. Considering the impacts on themselves they spoke of the transmission of support for armed groups ('*We seen things happening to our family, so that made us ... sympathise with them [paramilitaries], growing up*); repeating patterns of the use of prescription drugs to cope; and the limitations on opportunities afforded to them due to parents dealing with a range of pressures:

I always think it was also just very hard for anybody to see a better future because of the mental health problems within the area, but also then the kids, they weren't getting no goals or aspirations ... look at the difference in different areas of how much kids would think differently, but it's just the ripple effect right down because of how much the Troubles has affected. If you think of your parents, and then us, our lives, trying to survive through that, and most people didn't even want to go to school, and they weren't pushed that way to go to school. (PFG2)

This group, and a group of community representatives from another area, spoke of the impacts of living in families that were under threat – by the army, police and/or armed groups. Not only did they experience heavy protectionism and the regulation of movements, but one participant spoke of her continual fear, specifically the transference of her parents' fear onto herself and her sister. She had only recently come to realise the long-term impact through working with others in her generation similarly affected:

... when I was five ... I have very, very, very vivid memories of things like that ... how my daddy behaved, and how that transcended to me and my sister, because then we always had a fear of a man that we didn't know. We'd no face on this man. ... for about eight years this invisible man was out to get my dad, and that was from his own trauma, [my father] being part of an organisation then ... We weren't told any of this until I was about eighteen or nineteen ... we just, at that time, just knew men were there to get, wanted

daddy, but we didn't know why they wanted daddy, or anything else. It was never discussed. But definitely, that anxiety, and the closing of the curtains, and making us sit inside, and wouldn't let us go out. ... Definitely looking back now, that, sort of, Troubles-related trauma, I suppose, in a way, did ripple through to me and my sister. (CRFG3)

This participant went on to talk about the poor mental health of both herself and her sister, noting that this manifested in anxiety and depression after she had her own children. This further demonstrates what was noted in the previous chapter, that the impacts of trauma and Conflict-related experiences can lie dormant, and emerge sometimes unexpected at critical junctures in people's lives. In the next section, we come back to this participant as she reflects upon the impacts now on her children's mental health.

Another parent spoke of the impacts of growing up with a mother who had mental health difficulties and an alcohol addiction. For him, this was evidence of the existence of transgenerational trauma:

... My own mum lost somebody when she was a child due to the Troubles, and she's also a full-blown alcoholic now, with serious mental health issues. That's, sort of, from [when] we were wee. ... I needed counselling and all to get the life I have now and get over the trauma that she put me through for after the trauma she'd been through. So, it definitely has an adverse effect, it definitely did, and I would have been quite rebellious as a teenager. (PI1)

This participant's experience, combined with his own direct experiences later in life, now impacted on his own parenting. Within these two examples, therefore, we see how fear and trauma within families impacted parenting, family life and children's experiences in a range of ways. This was the case, as evidenced in the first example, when issues were not spoken about with children. Hence, processes of non-communication could be as damaging as the explicit sharing of traumatic events (see also McNally, 2014; Hanna et al., 2012).

Finally, community representatives in two areas, like the parent above, spoke of young people their age developing 'rebellious' behaviours. This, they felt, was a direct impact of, or response to, their homelife. Speaking of some of the less well recognised ways in which the parent generation were impacted as young people one group explained:

... growing up, a load of us would have had quite a lot of big families, and they were all involved. ... Daddies going to jail, and mummies going to jail, and homes being raided and

ransacked every night. ... And then it sort of, it then filters down, it was getting ready to come to the Agreement and things like that, and then that sort of generation, they were dealing in self-destructing, and trying to cope, and it was all sorts of behaviours, and it got labelled as crime, and anti-social behaviour ... The ex-prisoners centres only support ex-prisoners as republican and loyalists. They don't support them for being DCs ['decent criminals' – involved in non-political offending] ... (CRFG7)

While there may have been supports for 'politically motivated' former prisoners and their families, it was felt that if their children became involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour, there was no support available to them through these organisations. Again, the aforementioned group went on to discuss the children of these individuals today, many of whom they felt were repeating patterns of substance use.

A similar point was made by those in a Border Region area who spoke of '*young people from republican families, who went off the rails, got involved in drugs, crime ... probably rebelling against their home*' (CRFG5). Some, now in their 40s, we were told, had addiction issues. This representative explained this as the outworkings of '*childhood trauma*' as a result of parental involvement in armed groups.

As alluded to here, the accounts of some participants might suggest a three-generation impact of Conflict legacy within some families. It was, however, often a much more complex process than direct transference as the parent generation had often their own direct experiences of the Conflict, and/ or additional issues they were dealing with.

7.3.3 Second Chances?

Finally, in reflecting on the impacts on their parents and intergenerational relations, a number of adult participants made reference to family disruption due to parental imprisonment (see also Shirlow et al., 2005). Two participants, based on their practice observations, felt that these past family experiences may have led to closer relationships between grandparents and grandchildren as a means of compensating: '*... I think they're closer to their grandchildren than they are their own children because they've missed out on all of that by being ... a combatant*' (CRI1). This was supported by another community representative who himself was a former combatant/former prisoner, and now a grandfather (CRFG5).

While a number of other participants made reference to the close relationships between grandparents and children in their communities, some suggested that these were in fact taking on

a (partial) parenting role. This was often explained in terms of a parent being unable to offer adequate care themselves due to poor mental health and/ or substance misuse. While there was some suggestion that parenting stress (see below) could be a consequence of a combination of factors, including Conflict legacy, the connection between this and kinship care was unclear. As noted below, however, this was raised separately in interviews with individuals across three sectors (child, young people and/ or families, legal/ justice, health).

7.4 The Parenting and Family Lives of the Current Generation

... we're the generation where we are in the parenting role now. We're in that parenting role of the next generation. What we pass down to them, to my kids, and then their kids, and their kids after that, but we're the ones that witnessed that [the Conflict] as children and seen that. I mean, you're recollecting childhood memories very vividly. (CRFG3)

Many, as noted above, through their work in communities and with children and families were certain that the personal and family impacts of the Conflict '*filtered down*'. For youth and community workers this came from a detailed understanding of the lives of the young people with whom they worked, and witnessing first hand some of the problems that young people experienced. While they often strongly sensed transgenerational impacts within families today, they were not always able to pinpoint or explain the process. This was often because the connections between the Conflict and parental health and well-being had themselves not been identified. Speaking of mental health difficulties, for example, one parent said:

we do have mental health problems which we still don't understand which we're passing on to other generations. (PFG1)

Not understanding or recognising their own problems and how they might impact on children, meant parents could not respond to them. One community representative felt this was widespread as many were denied victim status and thus explanation for, and legitimisation of, their experiences. He felt the lack of recognition meant there was no response:

... there's so many people out there who are suffering in silence. ... you have to be deemed as a victim if you were injured or you were physically hurt or whatever that may be but actually, most people who I still see everyday of the week, they are still living a nightmare and they're not recognised and they're not getting any help whatsoever and they're going to their doctor and they're on antidepressants and they're getting all this medication but really they're stuck in time. ... and that has had a knock-on effect ... and I

have seen the impact it has on them [young people] because their parents or grandparents have struggled badly with what happened to them and mental health and all the other things that come along with that. It's just filtered now down the line, right down to their very grandchildren. (CRFG8)

There was also a sense that some of the issues families were experiencing were not discussed in terms of the transgenerational impacts of Conflict legacy, but more often in isolation as poverty, addiction, mental ill-health, parenting stress. Those working at the coal-face knew of the links because they knew family and community history. As articulated by one focus group of community workers:

I don't think any of what we have talked about today is acknowledged by anybody that the work that we're doing is directly related to any kind of conflict ... We know that ... it's not bad parenting that we're working with. It's a fallout of the back of whatever. I think it's in its infancy, I think it hasn't even touched the surface as to what we're doing, but we deal with that every day in different aspects of it. (CRFG8)

Time and space to reflect upon and share experiences enabled those in this focus group to articulate the basis of much of their work. Within this, there was the belief that they are perhaps only beginning to experience the legacies and transgenerational impacts of the Conflict now.

Among parents there was also some recognition that the long-term impacts on themselves may impact upon their parenting and thus their children. For some, this was the first time they had been asked to consider this, and conversations were difficult as self-realisation evolved. One benefit of the group format was the unearthing and discussion of this as a collective. Some, very quiet at the beginning, began to share as they realised their experiences, pains, anger, coping mechanisms and concerns for their children were not individual but shared. This started to remove some of the blame that research participants inevitably began to place on themselves. Demonstrating the lack of reflection on these issues, a number of the parent generation noted the research was the first time they consciously considered generational impact within their own families. As one mother, in the group of community workers above reflected:

... as parents, nobody would ever think of this only we're sitting here talking, is any of this what's going on in my family? Even my mummy, is that why maybe or my daddy, was that a direct result of Conflict and the way you grew up and how you lived? (CRFG8)

While painful, making sense of the past and its impacts on their lives, including parenting, can lead to consciousness raising. This can serve to remove individualised blame by connecting the personal troubles of individuals with the public issues of history and society (see Mills, 1969).

Young people, as outlined in the previous chapter, identified many continued impacts of the Conflict on the parent generation. Consideration of how these might impact parenting or family life was, however, more difficult. Many sensed there would be an impact, but were often unable to elaborate. It is possible that this is a reflection of the nature of our questioning. We did not, as noted in Chapter 2, want young people to share personal experiences within the focus group setting, so the discussion may have been too abstract. Despite this, in four focus groups, some young people appeared to draw on their direct experiences.

Below is a discussion of some of the ways in which the impacts of the Conflict, many of them identified in the previous chapter, were felt to impact family life and relationships for the parent generation, and thus the current generation of young people. We begin with reflections on 'talking' given the prominence of this theme throughout the research.

7.4.1 Talking about the Conflict and its Impacts

The theme of talking, or more specifically 'not talking', dominated adult reflections of their family life growing up. This emerged to a lesser degree in discussions with young people. As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, within some families talking about the past was commonplace, spoken about – '*all the time*' (CYPFG11) by grandparents and/or parents. Some parents/community representatives attested to this, noting the importance of children 'knowing their history'. Equally some young people told us that their parents never talk about the Conflict and its impact on themselves or their families. For the most part, however, family discussions about the Conflict and its personal impacts appeared more casual, spontaneous and short-term, prompted by a memory, news event or question from a young person.

Interestingly, a representative within the victims sector reminded us that rarely within any of these scenarios is the young person given '*the space to formulate their own ... thoughts about the whole thing with the parents*' (KSI3). We cannot assume, therefore, that 'talk' equates to effective communication and the active involvement of children and young people in discussions. Indeed a group of parents, who reflected on the lack of talking within their families while growing up, spoke of the importance of open conversation with their own children:

There was loads of stuff that we hadn't a clue of, and yet we lived through it. So, I think it's really good to encourage kids to talk and us to be open in that conversation. (PFG2)

A community representative from another area, also a parent, explained the need to talk on the basis of the continued impacts on some families today. Thus, the importance of not repeating the patterns of 'not talking' identified in the previous generation:

When they [children and young people] ask the question you need to tell them, you don't have to force it down their neck but there is children and families who live with this because it's a constant. (CRFG8)

There was little elaboration by most young people on why parents, and *their* parents in particular, did not talk about personal impacts of the Conflict. In some cases it appeared that the assumption was that it had little impact or was simply in the past. That said, some young people did note that if parents had mental health difficulties related to the Conflict that:

They don't show it ... because they don't want their weans [children] to know and then be worrying about them. (CYPFG3)

Hence there was some awareness of parents' efforts to shield young people from the impacts. Interestingly some young people noted that they could 'sense' this anyway. Parent and community representative accounts attested to this, suggesting that not talking to young people about personal impacts and pains was often a deliberate decision, akin to Hanna et al's. (2012) notion of 'shielding'. Not talking tended to revolve around a number of intersecting issues – a desire to protect children from emotional or physical harm; a concern with passing on 'bitterness' or resentment; a belief that they simply did not need to know. One father, for example, told us that his daughter did not know that he had been a 'politically motivated' former prisoner, and thus had been unaffected:

It hasn't affected her, but I'd never told her that I was inside. I never told her about my past. I wanted her, you know, I was protective of certain things ... (P13).

Another, despite his father being active in the civil rights movement and living in a border town in which he frequently '*seen rioting happening, and seen people getting beaten by the police*' said he and his wife '*hardly ever*' talked to their children about the Troubles (CRFG3). Similarly, one mother spoke of how she had not yet explained her family experiences (Conflict-related death, imprisonment and poor mental health), to her children. Although she felt she would have to when they got older:

I certainly wouldn't tell my children any of that. They know that mummy [their grandmother] went through a bad time, but they really have no idea how the, sort of, cycle of anxiety and

depression, sort of, accumulated over years, but I would never tell my children about how my daddy behaved at that time. What I seen, how he behaved when were children, because I am very conscious then of passing that onto my kids, who then will be imagining in their heads what life was like for mummy [her]. (CRFG2)

Speaking of some of the deliberate lengths she goes to in order to protect her children from knowing her past and how it still haunts her, a community representative shared:

*... I have seen sh*t loads of stuff. The bombs, people getting beat by the police. I've seen people getting nearly run over by landrovers by the police. I've seen somebody getting hit on the head with a plastic bullet. I've seen all that kind of stuff myself, but do I tell my kids that? The answer is, no. No. And you do get flashbacks of those things, and sometimes I even think of myself, have I post-traumatic stress disorder, because I can remember all these flashbacks, but I don't, but it's just memories. You just have to be careful. I don't want my kids to see or hear some of the stuff. (CRFG3)*

These, and many other examples, illustrate the desire of parents not to pass on their pain, or details of painful events, to their children. Yet there was a recognition among some that they may have little choice but to do so, given ongoing historical enquiries and/ or the possibility that they might hear partial versions from other sources. Further, not having the language or skill to talk with young people, the fear of saying too much or too little, was identified as another reason why there was little direct conversation with the current generation:

I wouldn't know how to talk to a young person, including young kids about what happened here. Part of you don't want to put it all on top of them, but also want to be able to ask your questions, and you don't know what to do. You're in that kind of, funny space. What are they interested in, and what are they not interested in? (KSI3)

Despite this, and as demonstrated below and in Chapter 3, '*...inevitably children will learn in their own particular way*' (KSFG6).

7.4.2 Parenting Stress and Poor Mental Health

In considering the impacts of the Conflict on parenting, the main issue raised by young people was the impact on mental well-being, and thus their ability to parent effectively. In a small number of focus groups, in which we perceive some members of the group had personal experience to draw on, there was discussion of the impacts of trauma on parenting. Within one of the groups

(which primarily included care leavers), two young people asked for a break while discussing parental impact, and chose not return. Their worker informed us that they had found the discussion too difficult. This reminds us that while there may not have been a lot of detailed discussion of these issues, this should not imply that young people are not affected. Not only are such experiences difficult to talk about (particularly in a group context), but they are also difficult to recognise and, as noted throughout this and the previous chapter, have traditionally been silenced. That silence was a coping mechanism in this context also, should not be surprising. Within one group in particular, however, it was recognised that trauma could manifest in anger and/ or alcohol use, thus impacting on parenting ability, and ultimately the well-being of children:

It's also too, see with PTSD as well, parents could end up with that and end up with the angry side of it and because of that there they're screaming and shouting and all that there at their children which is leaving their children with depression from that there. (CYPFG15)

The impact of Conflict-related experiences on mental well-being and an ability to effectively parent was raised by a significant number of community representatives and key stakeholders. Based on their practice experience, individuals working in family, social care sector and family law felt there was a correlation between Conflict legacy and the higher rates of children entering the care system due to parental distress, 'self soothing behaviours' (e.g. substance misuse) and domestic violence (KSI5).

Some spoke of 'parenting stress' in areas most impacted by the Conflict, pointing to a link between conflict, poverty, mental ill-health, substance use and hence family relationships. One young man articulated the meaning and impacts of parenting stress, encapsulating the sense of desperation and cycle of depression as follows:

... like the Troubles and all. Adults would be, would commit suicide or like feel down because like some people just can't like deal with stuff properly, it would be hard for them to get money or they keep failing everything and then they have a few kids and they're taking care of them all on their own, or it's just hard to take care of them and then you feel down about it. So they don't like to see their own kids feeling down or hurt. (CYPFG14)

Several of those working with young people noted that for some 'their parents are there but they are not there' (CRFG2), due to mental ill-health and/or addiction issues. One stakeholder spoke of the impact of 'the grief journey' on family life – ups and downs, and periods of finding it difficult to cope (KSI3). This is reminiscent of discussions by some in the previous chapter, who reflected

upon the personal impacts of sudden memories or historical enquiries. Several participants felt that the parenting styles of some of the parent generation was a product of their own parenting, combined perhaps with the impacts of trauma or poor mental health on parents themselves. A community representative spoke of what they observed through their work:

It would be like a numbness as a coping mechanism, and if you're numb to feeling the bad stuff, you're also numb to feeling the good stuff, and then you have a coldness ticking over where you become detached from the people around you, and you can see how that becomes intergenerational, because we have some parents of younger people in the area who were in the thirties grew up surrounded by house raids. I'm not saying their parents weren't loving, but they were nearly like tunnel vision. (CRFG2)

A parent and community representative in another area stated that based on their own experiences of being parented, that their '... generation doesn't know how to parent ...' (CRI1).

A number of participants observed these sorts of experiences manifesting in negative behaviours or outcomes among young people. Thus they saw the potential for the reproduction of behaviours of the parent - poor mental well-being; reduced coping mechanisms/ resilience; substance misuse; potential relationship difficulties in adulthood. Key stakeholders across a range of sectors spoke of the intergenerational nature of poor relationships as a direct consequence of the Conflict. Some attributed this to 'attachment issues'. The following is illustrative:

... there is a huge legacy which is attributable to the trauma that was caused during the Troubles and it wasn't one-off, it was a way of living that permeated the extent of family life in an immeasurable way ... a disruption of attachment patterns and that is intergenerational because we learn from our experiences as a child, and if our caregiving is not good enough ... and there isn't continuity, there isn't stickability around that caregiving just because the parent is traumatised from what they have seen or from the new experiences that they have had as a child, then it seems to pass through generations. (KSI2)

As noted in the previous chapter a representative from the victims sector spoke of how young people now entering their programme were experiencing relationship issues. She explained:

there's a huge problem with mental health and in relation to forming relationships, healthy relationships, friendships. (KSI1)

While she, like others, did recognise the range of issues impacting youth health and well-being, these observations might suggest young people within families identified by the victims and survivors sector are experiencing relationship problems as a result of their parenting/family environment. Indeed connecting with the points raised above about parental presence or lack thereof, she said of these young people: *'they don't have support at home so they're quite isolated in their lives'* (KS11).

In particular there was much discussion of the impacts of poor parental mental health (as a result of Conflict legacy) on children. There was lengthy discussion of this among a group of parents who had worked through this very issue in their parenting group. Their exchange went as follows:

- F: My daughter suffers a terrible lot of mental health, so she does*
- I: Do you think any of it has got to do with the legacy of the past in terms of, kind of, the out workings of the Conflict, what we're left with now?*
- F: Yeah, I think so. If you think of, say even when we were younger, and when we had our first kids, [member of the group] calls them our learner kids*
- I: Because your first one is your learner?*
- F: Yeah.*
- F: That's true but -*
- F: - Well, I would say that's mine as well. If we weren't going through the Troubles and Conflict, more than likely you were going to parent so differently, and your own mental health, look how much that was suffering while you were trying to do this [parent] so that was affecting your child.*
- F: It was hard like, in areas like this it's hard [to] bring up kids. It is, and trying to keep them away from it [violence], and if you do it's a bonus. You just can't be with them 24/7.*
- F: If you look at the much work we've done and how much you'se would have beat yourself up of things you'se have done, even myself, you would say "why did I do that?" and whatever, but what we said, "we knew no different, and we did what we did"*
- F: But now we know, we do better*
- F: We do better now. So, that's our wee motto. That's our thing.*
- (PFG2)*

Recognising the cycle had enabled this group to identify, contextualise and be at some peace with the impacts of their parenting on their children. Identifying the issues also enabled them to, in their words, *'do better'*. While these parents had come to realise the impacts of their own trauma and/

or poor mental health through an informal parent group, another mother had come to this realisation through attending family therapy with her daughter. This was the same participant who, as outlined above (see Section 7.3.2), felt that her childhood experiences and her father's anxieties had 'transcended' to herself and her sister, manifesting in anxiety and depression in her 20s. She was now beginning to consider how this might have impacted her parenting, and her own child's mental well-being:

My child is going through CAMHS. My oldest child [now aged 15] has been going through the CAMHS service from she was eleven ... Now, when we've been doing family therapy, they're now saying to me that my anxieties have definitely translated onto my child, which isn't nice to hear, but I suppose that makes me think as a parent how I actually behave. ... at home I would get very highly strung about things. So, whenever I'm talking to my kids and all, they were saying to me, "some of your anxieties obviously has transferred onto your child". ... and I suppose that's making me more conscious about how you can actually pass on your own trauma, and all that kind of stuff, too. (CRFG3)

Two young people, despite our recommendation not to draw on personal experiences, did so in discussing the impacts of their parents' mental well-being on themselves. One had been in contact with CAHMS and had made sense of his feelings and behaviours within the context of his family life. This was a young man who previously discussed the negative impacts on his father's mental health of his previous job as a police officer. The follow discussion took place in relation to transgenerational trauma:

M: Well I'd say if a parent has depression and all that, that could affect the kid.

M: That is true, I didn't grow up with it but my dad from being in the Troubles he was cutting himself; he did do multiple overdoses and all that. From my sister's point of view, she's 10 years older than me so she would have seen more of it, I only seen tiny snippets, there was only one time where I saw him in hospital about a year ago because he had an overdose, he was just fed up with stuff but from my point of view and what CAMHS say I've got it from my dad, my depression because if they see that a parent has it they'll put it on that parent, like saying oh, it got onto you. (CYPFG2)

This and the parents example above would indicate, therefore, that some young people presenting to CAMHS today, are experiencing poor mental well-being that might in part be attributed to their parents Conflict-related experiences/ legacies. The other young person had started to make sense of the relationship between her own mental health and her mother's within

the focus group itself. She argued, in contrast to her peers that children had an awareness of poor parental health even when parents attempted to hide this from them. This was the young women, who as outlined in the previous chapter, told us that she had recently discovered that her mother had been kidnapped as a child. She explained that from the age of seven she started to develop an understanding that her mother was having difficulties, despite her mother not talking about this, and trying to hide it from her. She explained:

... when I'm, maybe say about seven onwards, she was obviously not able to hide it as good. She never done anything bad, but it was just when she was down, I was sensing she was down, and I was getting down, or if she was taking panic attacks and stuff, I just didn't understand. Like, you can't hide a panic attack so that would have scared me. So, I do think, in a way too, some of her mental health problems have brushed off on me, and I think she knows that, which makes her worse, because she gets upset about it, but it's not her fault. (CYPFG9)

Evident within this young woman's account, again, is the relationship between 'shielding' and 'sensing'. Despite parental efforts to shield children from pain or violence, the 'sense' that something is wrong can be foreboding, creating confusion and anxiety through a lack of full understanding. We see also in the discussion to date, the additional pain mothers experience as they begin to understand that despite their efforts to protect their children, they too are struggling.

Finally, a further parent who had '*suffered multiple traumas*' noted that his daughter also '*suffered*'. He identified his efforts not to talk about his feelings and experiences as failing not because his children '*sensed*' his pain or difficulties, as was the case with the young person above, but because (in this view) trauma was passed on genetically. He stated:

I know everybody says that their children are born blank, they aren't, to an extent they are, it is passed on. It has to pass on. It's passed on through the cells ...It's very difficult to understand something what you don't see, but it replicates itself. It's definitely passed on, but if you talk about it all the time, where I didn't, it's definitely going to be passed on. It's just one of them things. (PI3)

While removing the possibility of self-blame, these sorts of explanations may also create a sense of hopelessness and lead to a lack of intervention.

7.4.3 Family Breakdown and Relationships

In addition to parenting stress, and indeed connected to it, participants also spoke more generally of family disruption, with some suggesting a high incidence of family break-up due to Conflict-

related experiences. Considering the impacts of conflict legacy on parents, for example, a young man in one focus group suggested that poor mental health '*could lead to a divorce, and that could affect the child ...*' (CYPFG7). Adults tended to explain relationship breakdown or difficulties as a result of: difficulties in forming emotional attachments; pain manifesting in anger, substance misuse or poor mental health; physical or emotional absence. Some spoke of the stresses on relationships and families due to parental imprisonment, a parent being in the army and or a parent experiencing, for a range of reasons, PTSD.

A community worker, now herself a parent to a young person in the current generation, spoke of intergenerational impacts in terms of relationships and coping skills among her generation. She drew a clear link between her parenting and her relationships suggesting that we:

Come out and do a study on the impact of the mummies, the grannies that was left to look after the children, and rear them, and look at my generation. Why have we failed? Why have we failed in partnerships and stuff? Because at the end of the day we didn't have the coping skills. (CRFG7)

Three parents reflected upon their relationship break-ups from very different perspectives. One, a 'politically motivated' former prisoner who had previously stated that his experiences had not impacted his children, now suggested otherwise when discussing his family life:

... I was over-protective of my own children, so much so that it had a detrimental effect on my wife. It was two people and two kids. The kids come first and not her. I learnt later on that she should have been first all the time. It breaks my heart. ... Whereas, the best protect[ion] I could have had, ... [was] if I put her first ... I'm not saying ... ignore the weans, I love my weans, but my love and protection of her, the weans would have seen what's normal and passed that on. (PI1)

The impact of over-protective parenting is discussed in Section 7.4.6. Evident from the above extract, however, is a recognition among this participant that how he parented (and partnered) could impact his children's learning. Another parent (also a key stakeholder) spoke of the relationship between her daughter and her ex-husband whose father had been killed during the Conflict. She drew parallels between their ability to express love, again suggesting the learning, or at least reciprocation, of some behaviours:

... my ex-husband ... I can see the impact it's had on him losing a parent at a young age and the impact on his parenting skills and his lack of parenting skills and how that has

impacted on his relationship with her and how they communicate with each other and how they feel about each other. And I'm quite sure they both love each other but it's just neither now know how to really show it. And it's sad too to see. (KSI1)

A third parent, previously married to a soldier, reflected on her (abusive) relationship, the parenting of her children and the long-term impact. Here we see a potential relationship between aggressive parenting and poor mental health, and thus another way in which the current generation have been impacted by the legacies of the past:

... whenever I was married to a soldier he was very, very authoritarian and then very, very authoritarian in the house with my children, very, very much so to the stage where my two older children both suffer from probably mental health. ... my middle daughter, she has borderline-personality disorder, she's still awful and she has no relationship with her father at all ... they weren't [living] where the rioting was but there was this authoritarian figure who was in the house for two weeks and then was out of the house for two weeks, he was in and out, he went to tour for two weeks at a time so he was there for two weeks, so there was a bit of ease for two weeks and then there was nearly fear coming back into the house again. ... it was the trauma within the house. (PFG1)

While this interviewee does not directly frame her relationship as abusive, key stakeholders raised the issue of domestic violence and Conflict legacy as a live issue. Some in the parent generation spoke of domestic violence in their homes in the past – again an issue that was silenced, and which interviewees passed over fairly quickly. Others spoke of continued violence in the home, particularly those in which fathers were still involved in armed groups. Based on his work as part of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme, a departmental representative reported:

We know rightly some of the highest prevalence of women receiving abusive behaviour is in paramilitary families. If your husband or partner doesn't think twice about breaking somebody's legs, why would he think about giving you a slap ... and if the mum's getting a battering there's a fair chance the kids are as well, or her behaviour can change under stress to give the kids a wallop. (DRFG2)

The impact of the violence itself along with the potential for learned behaviour among young men was identified by youth and community workers in one area. They spoke of the manner in which some young men interact with young women, their use of language, attitudes and relationships as being related to what is '*... quite normal really in their home environment or their community*

environment.' (CRFG9). They felt this was '*directly in line with the Conflict or the Troubles*' given the position of men as aggressors and sometimes heroes, where '*alcohol, drug abuse, domestic violence*' was excused because of the Conflict.

7.4.4 Intergenerational Coping and Not Coping

The notion of learned behaviours also emerged strongly in discussions of coping mechanisms. As noted previously, many spoke of parents coping with stressors and residual trauma through medication – prescription medication or self-medicating through drug and alcohol use. Self-medicating, as noted in the previous chapter, was identified as a potential cultural response to stress, anxiety and depression, linked also to a culture of not talking. This theme arose again in relation to families. That is, the repetition of patterns of not talking, not learning effective coping strategies and adopting harmful coping mechanisms. Young men, it was felt within one focus group, learned within their own families (and indeed their communities), that men do not talk about their problems:

... being handed down to the young people, especially young men, is massive where, no, you don't talk about that stuff. ... your parents don't talk about it. So, that link, yeah, it would be massive. (CRFG9)

A range of key stakeholders and community representatives also spoke of substance misuse among children who they identified as coming from families impacted by the Conflict. Some spoke of this as a consequence of a lack of parental supervision or attachment, others as a learned coping mechanism. A young woman in one focus group who had previously discussed the impact of Conflict-related PTSD in families, identified drug use among young people as a form of escape:

*They're trying to escape what you've learned from your parents if that makes sense and stuff like that there because they haven't dealt with all that sh*t, you know what I mean, and then they're trying to escape it and trying to cope with it. (CYPFG15)*

Some community representatives identified substance use as the outworkings of not learning coping skills. One community representative implied a three generation relationship. That is, the parent generation who were unable to develop coping skills as a result of their parenting, now unable to demonstrate or communicate coping skills to their own children (CRFG7). Recognising the potential link between their actions and those of their children, the parents groups previously discussed spoke of how they had made efforts to change the ways in which they responded to their trauma:

... we all were going through a lot of trauma and mental issues that was filled with tablets. It's something that probably you'se ones [the rest of the group] knew of as well, take a tablet, and yet you'se are trying to do things differently ... (PFG2)

Community representatives in two areas spoke also of the high levels of drug misuse and suicide among young people whose parents had been imprisoned, or had been politically active. Yet the reasons again appear to be complex and layered – some spoke, for example, of these young people also being abused by paramilitaries.

It may also be the case that there is a group missing from this particular piece of research. There was some discussion of those in their 30s who now have young children themselves who had been impacted by family affiliations and the manifestation of destructive behaviours. The following example is concerning in that it warns of the potential for another generation of children to be impacted:

....we had three deaths from December right through to a month ago ... of three ex-prisoners, their three children who would be between the ages of 25 and 32 have all taken their young lives and then they have children ... So, there's a definite link between the Conflict and then children of the Conflict and how then they're expressing themselves and how the mental health has been deteriorated. (CRI1)

7.4.5 A Generational Divide?

Related to discussions about some parents still living or dealing with the pain and trauma of the past, was the notion of a generational divide. Similar to the point expressed by a key stakeholder that some parents are '*wrapped up in their own trauma*' (KS11), a group of young people spoke of how the experiences of the parent generation could impact their ability to see beyond their own pain and '*sympathise with other people*' (CYPFG16). In the exchange below, we see the notion of a generational divide, whereby young people perceive that the parent generation in their community, because of their past experiences, find it difficult to understand or empathise with the troubles experienced by young people today:

F: Yeah and for years they'd see the airing of the Conflict and the Troubles on the TV every night and I think they nearly become, it's terrible how used to the violence and the bloodshed and everything that they've become, and then when our problems is

- nearly like, we're called snowflakes and stuff actually because our problems aren't nearly as -*
- M: *- Tough*
- F: *Yeah tough because they grew up with people in their family being shot and killed and murdered and I didn't get an A in my test or something, so nearly you can't connect. I think there is a big divide in the generation because you'se can't relate to each other at all like I can't -*
- F: *- And they're always comparing. Their problems were always worse because of what they lived through, whereas some of us could maybe have lived through something that could be equally as bad or worse. They can't get a similarity or what's the word -*
- M: *Comparison?*
- F: *No, like they can't sympathise with other people.*
- (CYPFG16)

Interestingly, this issue was also raised in a number of focus groups with community representatives, many of whom work with young people. A mother also recognised this behaviour in herself, stating that she needs to keep check of her attitude:

I probably need to check my attitude at times because I think I lived through lots of very difficult things and I lived with some in even my own children's lives and I'm thinking – you're not experiencing what I've experienced. (CRFG8)

While young people's understanding may have its limits, the perception that they do not recognise at least some of the pains of those impacted by the Conflict is mistaken. Being told their problems and pains do not compare, may result in young people disengaging and not seeking support as their experiences are not acknowledged. Thus opportunities for cross-generational dialogue may enhance understanding of each generation's stresses and strains, possible similarities and connections between them. This may respond to what many identified as a lack of intergenerational talking within families about the past and its impacts, and what one key stakeholder felt was the wider societal issues of '*...what the Troubles done to how people relate to each other*' (KSI1) in Northern Ireland.

7.4.6 Over-Protective Parenting

As discussed in the previous chapter, young people and the parent generation alike recognised residual fear as one of the enduring impacts of the Conflict. In considering ways in which parents' experiences may impact upon the current generation, most often young people spoke of the

transmission of attitudes, and how the remnants of fear could lead to over-protective parenting. It was recognised that a mistrust of 'the other community' and the everyday fear experienced by parents was difficult to dislodge. And while some spoke with incredulity of their parents' attitudes, others understood it as *'just the way my dad was raised'* (CYPFG18) or a product of their experiences – *'he [went] through quite a lot of stuff even from being in the police ...'* (CYPFG2). Several young people saw it in their parents' actions, reactions and movements, some of which they felt was not recognised by their parents themselves:

... it's just what they were used to and it was their lives but now that it's over and they'd maybe drive past a certain part of [city] they might feel unsafe, even though they aren't and it's just left an impact of what you can and can't do, that they didn't know was even bad before. (CYPFG17)

According to young people, how this impacted them was through the regulation of their movements and heightened parental concern at particular times of the year. Parents themselves were aware that their deeply engrained attitudes and fears could be passed on to their children and/ or limit their children's opportunities – *'we probably transmit them to our kids in some way'* (CRFG8). One parent spoke of his fears and lack of trust being *'passed on'* to one of his daughters who *'now suffers anxiety and stress the same way as me'* (PI3). Another spoke of how her daughter *'would worry about her Daddy'* due to his past experiences with dissident paramilitaries (PI2).

Some community representatives also spoke of how parents' fears could be a barrier to their work with young people, and to young people's development:

Like some of ours are nearly overprotective, a lot of our parents. Like nearly even scared for them coming down to us ... nearly like over supportive and nearly not letting him go out and be his own person and I would say it's installed a lot of fear because they're constantly telling them what not to do and what's not safe and don't be doing this and don't be doing that. (CRFG1)

These findings add weight to those of Smyth and McKnight (2013) who found that parenting in divided situations can reproduce sectarian attitudes among children due to mothers perceived need to protect children. As we report here, this is particularly the case for parents, both mother and fathers, who themselves grew up with the threat of violence.

Parents recognised some of these behaviours in themselves. One spoke of her awareness of the relationship between *'how my mother behaved, and how my grandmother behaved, and then how I now behave'* with regards to her daughter. She noted wanting to check on her daughter's well-being, to hug her, but also being concerned that she was *'going to make her weak'* (CRFG2). Others were aware they had restricted their children's movements, not allowing them to enter particular areas (generally those associated with 'the other community'), because of perceptions, understandings or experiences rooted in the past. How residual fear impacted on the parenting of their children was discussed by one group of mothers. Their exchange demonstrates an awareness of its basis and the difficulty in moving past it. Indeed some participants were visibly upset reflecting on how their actions, which *'came from a good place'*, may have negatively impacted their children. Reflecting on the impact on her children, one mother stated:

I think in the beginning they probably have more fear going to Uni, and I know I done that. My oldest wee lad, I don't even think I let him go near any Protestant, to be fair. I didn't. ... I think that still affects him, because he'd be a wee bit more, like, not as sociable, and I blame that on me, because I know I did, I done that on him. I wouldn't have let him move.
(PFG2)

While we do not know the degree to which parental attitudes and experiences are imbibed by young people, some of those in one focus groups did recognise that their fears of entering particular communities came from their parents:

I'd lock my car doors [in a Catholic area] ... I feel like it's hostility that's been passed down ... So my mum and dad were afraid, they passed on that fear to me even though I have no reason to be like that. Even though I have no reason to be (CYPFG18)

The degree to which this is a consequence of the transmission of parental attitudes alone is, however, debatable, given the multiple ways in which cultural messages are learned (see Chapter 4).

7.4.7 Family Reputation: Intergenerational Discrimination

Finally, a small number of community representatives, again mainly those who were parents themselves, spoke of how knowledge of a parents' past could impact how their children were treated and/ or the opportunities open to them. One community representative for example, spoke of discrimination against children of 'politically motivated' prisoners in his county (CRFG5). A community representative from another area spoke of their knowledge of a young person being *'knocked back'* from a job with a security firm *'because of his father's political beliefs and saying that he lived in the same home as him, and he'd be a security risk'* (CRI1). While there has been

some research noting the long- term stigmatisation of 'politically motivated' prisoners (e.g. Shirlow et al., 2005; Jamieson et al., 2010), this has not extended to a detailed analysis of the impacts on their children. The history of paramilitarism, and dissident [paramilitary] activity, in another community had led to what a group of community representatives called '*intergenerational labelling and stigmatising*' (CRFG7). This they believed (and a group of young men from the area attested to), impacted on how young people were viewed and responded to by the police and educators. Other participants spoke to other experiences of stigmatisation, for example one mother expressed how the potential stigma attached to her ex-husband being in the army was one reason why she told so few about his occupation, and also instilled this in her children (PFG1).

The recent past, parental beliefs and behaviours, and family reputation (as also illustrated in Chapter 8), could therefore continue to impact negatively on the current generation.

7.4.8 A Desire not to Repeat the Past

It is important to note that despite some of the intergenerational impacts evident within families, such experiences are not pre-determined. A number of parents, for example, identified just one child within the family as being affected. It was not within the scope of this research to explore this in more detail, but this may raise critical questions regarding additional stressors that lead to the manifestation of problems, or factors that may make particular children vulnerable (e.g. the first child).

Aside from this, parents also spoke of their desires for life to be different for their children, to learn from how they were parented and to parent differently. Active steps were taken by some to encourage their children to integrate. The parent group who explored parenting together, through sharing their experiences and their pains, now understood the context of their actions, and those of their own parents. It was their moto to '*do better*' and to remember that behaviours were the product of circumstance. They spoke of encouraging their children in education in ways in which they had not been encouraged.

As families and communities impacted disproportionality by the Conflict, they also spoke of the support they found through this group - as parents whose children were experiencing similar issues. This allowed them to move forward, to shed some of the self-blame that burdened them and to acknowledge their trauma:

I never would have spoke about it [her experiences of the Conflict]. When I first came in here different conversations kept coming up. So, every time bits of it were coming out of

me, I used to just sit and cry. But trying to deal with it, ... if I had to carry that for the rest of my life I would probably sit and be bitter and twisted, because the more I've talked about it, the more that's helped me. ... I've never went to a counsellor ... but I feel by just ... being with you'se ... how much that has helped me to get through the Troubles. (PFG2)

Overall and importantly, there was an understanding that some of the transgenerational legacies came from a position of unknowing, or a place of love:

I think there's a deep love there which maybe that's obvious from the parents with their kids but I think it's a bit like I saw sometimes, you're not quite aware of the things you're doing to the other person or how you're engaging with the other person and how you speak to them and how you interact with them because of your own issues and your own insecurities or your own uhm history ... (CRFG1)

A desire for the past not to impact the next generation was also expressed by 'Conor', interviewed as part of a mother-child dyad. The accounts of 'Ciara' and 'Conor'³⁷ below illustrate some of the themes discussed throughout this chapter – silence and secrecy, unacknowledged trauma, protective parenting, residual fear – as experienced across now four generations of the one family.

Ciara describes hers as a 'very strong republican' family, with her father and other family members once active in paramilitary organisations. Despite the imprisonment of her father, she describes a 'good' relationship with her parents. Remembering events from her childhood/youth and drawing on family accounts Ciara knew of the impact of the Conflict on her family and others in the community, although the personal trauma experienced by her parents specifically was not spoken of. In particular, Ciara spoke of her mother's protective parenting when she was young:

... we weren't allowed to leave the immediate couple of streets that we were in, and I feel like I had a really safe childhood, but when I think back it... was a wee bit abnormal. You weren't allowed to move in case anything happened to you. ... I felt safe, but it was clearly ... your mummy and all, and the greater family making sure nothing happened you in the area. So, it was a wee bit, I don't know, it was like suffocating. (Ciara)

³⁷ Any names used in the report are pseudonyms.

As an adult Ciara *'openly had a conversation'* where her mother, for *'the first time'*, spoke of her own suffering: *'it was all male soldiers, and they had raided my granny's home, even when they were growing up as young women, how they were treated, and stuff like that'*.

Despite describing her mother as *'very traumatised'*, suffering from *'PTSD'* and still *'extremely terrified of the police and soldiers'*, Ciara notes her mother's lack of recognition of the impacts:

My mummy is like old school. My mummy doesn't really believe in mental health. My mummy believes that you should just get [up] and get on with it, go to your job, you've an awful lot to be thankful for. (Ciara)

Ciara described how she individually dealt with the impact of her family life and experiences, *'trained'* by the older generation to *'just take it all on'* with a view to protecting her own children from the impacts of the past. Demonstrating the intergenerational and gendered nature of *'getting on with it'* and holding the family together, she felt she had learned this from her granny: *'... I don't know if it was my granny that made me like that in the family ... but it's always just been I need to get on with it, because I'm all they have'* (Ciara).

With her own children, Ciara described balancing a *'very open'* and *'honest'* relationship with protecting them from financial or emotional struggles, as well as from the trauma experienced by her parents. The impact of the past on her parents, however, was noted by her son, Conor, who spoke of his grandparents' experiences:

I know hands down because I suffer from it, my granny and granda suffer from PTSD but won't say it because in their eyes mental health problems don't exist, I know for a fact my granny suffers crippling anxiety and won't say that she has it because that's life. (Conor)

Ciara described Conor as a 'hyper' child who took 'high risks' and required constant watching. Conor assessed that his '*ma done brilliant with me ... if my mummy wasn't my mummy... I'd end up on three routes. I'd either be doing a life sentence, dead or freaked out and joined one of them paramilitary organisations*'. Conor had, however, lived with 'drug addiction' which he attributed to living 'under threat' from paramilitaries from his early teens.

Conor and his mother described the two family backgrounds which shaped his early experiences: the involvement of Ciara's family in paramilitary activity and the involvement of Conor's father in 'very serious criminal activity' (Ciara), with periods spent in custody impacting Conor's ability to maintain a 'bond' with him.

Whilst Conor described a 'brilliant' and 'normal' childhood from his 'mummy's side', on the other hand he described his childhood as 'robbed' as a result of '*paramilitaries and being criminally exploited by my dad and his mates*'.

Conor had engaged in '*organised crime, stealing cars, drug dealing, fights, carrying weapons, being pursued by paramilitaries, police ...*' (Conor). He and his mother described the time he spent living with his father as having a significant impact, something which Conor described as '*intergenerational trauma*':

I was a victim of parental neglect and criminal exploitation through my father ... To be fair, the person that exploited me was himself exploited by his parents so it drops down through the generations but I have to put a stop to it and it will not be coming through me... (Conor)

Given the division in his family background – between 'criminality' and 'republicanism' – Conor was described as having brought shame on his family, not only due to his own criminal activity but as a result of numerous attempted suicides and self-harming. Ciara explained:

Quite a lot of my family still would be very much in favour of paramilitary attacks, quite a lot of the older generation, and this would cause quite a lot of conflict for us actually. They would believe they should be taken out and given a good hiding and things like that, and I think there would be quite a lot of shame then would have been placed on Conor because my family would have been ashamed of him'. (Ciara)

Now diagnosed with PTSD, Conor described the continued impact of living under threat in his life in the context of the relationship with his partner and home life:

... there's been nights I've jumped up and put my hands through walls and punched windows and ran out of the house while I'm still sleeping. Even to this day there's still two big drop bars behind my door... That's because of the threats. ...I still sleep with a claw hammer down the side of the bed in case somebody comes into the house, you know what I mean? ... How many [young men] do you know live like that? (Conor)

Conor also spoke of his hopes for his child (and future children), reflecting on involvement in 'anti-social behaviour' or 'republicanism' and its impacts, and his determination for another generation not to be affected: *'I don't want that for my family, I don't want that for my kids. ... I hope by the time that my kids are my age that they'll not have the debilitating conditions that I have'.*

7.5 Conclusions and Rights Implications

Exploring the transgenerational experiences and impacts of the Conflict within families is complex. Many affected in the past continue to live in communities experiencing the coercive control of paramilitary-style groups. Disentangling the impacts of past and present Conflict-related experiences on family life and parenting is, therefore, complicated. Equally, reflecting on the nature of family life growing up as well as considering the parenting of one's own children, is highly personal and emotive. As this research attests, there are few opportunities for such reflection by parents across the generations, and recognition of transgenerational effects is most likely to emerge at crisis points. Realisation of generational impact can be painful given the lengths many go to, to protect their children from the hurts they themselves carry. Feelings of self-blame were poignant, and may explain why silence and numbing have become established coping mechanisms. There was a sense, however, that many 'quietly carry their trauma', 'suffer in silence', or that transgenerational impacts are not yet known by those affected, or not recognised by others.

This research adds to a body of evidence identifying silence as a means of coping, and a strategy employed by parents to avoid passing traumatic experiences to children (e.g. Hanna et al., 2012; Downes et al., 2013; McNally, 2014). The cross generational approach applied demonstrates that

strongly linked to 'silence' is 'sensing'. Members of both the parent generation and current generation, reflecting on their family lives, talked of 'sensing' something being wrong. 'Silence' and 'sensing' had led to confusion, half-truths, heightened anxiety and feelings of insecurity among children, some of whom noted that this remained with them into adulthood. Silence, therefore, acted in opposition to its intent and could be a means through which trauma, or the impacts of Conflict legacy, could be passed on generationally (see also Gilligan, 1997; McEvoy-Levy, 2011). Traditions of silence mean that recognising its existence and impact is difficult. Yet some parents knew, like those in Downes et al.'s (2013) research, that despite efforts to shield their children through silence, they were still affected.

Silence could also impact the nature of relationships between children and parents. Some of the parent generation spoke of a lack of emotionality within their families growing up. Silence through avoidance and denial numbed the pain, but it numbed other feelings also. Additionally, some of the current generation did not want their parent/s to 'sense' that they knew something was wrong with them, as they did not want them to hurt further. Silence, therefore, reproduced silence, with some parents identifying that it had filtered into their own parenting, and some young people noting that their generation were reticent to talk of their problems.

The transgenerational impacts of Conflict legacy were also discussed in terms of children growing up in homes where parents were physically or emotionally unavailable, angry or aggressive and/or overly-protective. Some parents spoke of how their experiences of over-protective parenting as children now caused them to be anxious as parents. This had impacted on their children's mental health, and their freedoms and opportunities. While emanating from a place of care, this could reproduce mistrust of the 'the other' community and fear and insecurity among young people (see also Smyth and McKnight, 2013). There was also evidence that family disruption, aggressive parenting and domestic violence linked to Conflict legacy, could impact the long-term well-being of children, as well as their future relationships with peers, partners and children. Damaging also was the emotional unavailability of some parents who were 'stuck in time', overwhelmed at particular points in their 'grief journey' or who 'numbed' feelings through substance use. As historical enquiries (re)surface pain young people may be faced with parental grief, anger and hurt for the first time.

Supporting research by O'Neill et al. (2015), many in the current study spoke of the impacts of Conflict-related trauma on the ability to parent effectively, and thus on children's well-being. As a result of Conflict-related trauma parental supervision and attachment were difficult for some, manifesting in substance misuse and destructive behaviours among children. Examples were also

provided by parents to suggest the reproduction of parental behaviours/experiences among children- poor mental well-being; reduced coping mechanisms; substance misuse; potential relationship difficulties in adulthood. Some parents reflected on their home life while growing up, and the impacts on how they now parented, and some young people reflected on how their parents' poor mental health impacted their well-being. These provide further evidence of transgenerational Conflict legacy. Stories shared suggest that some young people presenting to CAMHS today, are experiencing poor mental well-being that might in part be attributed to their parents' Conflict-related experiences/ legacies. This may be the case for others, but the connection has not yet been traced.

Despite some of the transgenerational impacts evident within families, such experiences are by no means pre-determined. It is instructive, for example, that parents often identified one child within the family as being most adversely affected. This raises crucial questions about additional stressors that lead to the manifestation of problems, or factors that may make particular children vulnerable (e.g. the first child). Added to this, it is difficult to isolate family effects from those of the community and others factors impacting children's lives.

That said, this research does add to a body of research demonstrating ways in which Conflict legacy can impact families across generations. The consequences for the current generation can be far reaching as parental trauma/ the impacts of conflict on family life can impact family relations, children's development, their feelings of safety and security, their freedom and opportunities, and their sense of well-being. There are of course implications for children's right to family life if their parent/s is not able to care for them or keep them safe, and this research certainly points to the need for further exploration of the relationship between Conflict legacy and children in care. Parents should, however, be provided with the resources and supports to fulfil their responsibilities to children (UNCRC, preamble). While specific reference is made to facilities and services for children, facilities and services for parents (impacted by Conflict legacy) could also support their child-rearing and enhance parental ability to protect and promote children's rights. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016b) in their analysis of compliance with the UNCRC in Great Britain and N. Ireland reiterated the importance of assistance to parents, as provided in Art. 18, recommending that that the State Party 'intensify its efforts to render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians, including informal kinship carers, in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities' (para 52a).

While supporting parents to meet their responsibilities to care for children is important, so too is children's rights to access health care services (Art. 24). The mental well-being of some children

is negatively impacted as a consequence of their parents' Conflict-related experiences, yet there are significant delays to accessing CAMHS within N. Ireland. Thus, a range of supports are necessary – those focused on young people, those focused on parents and those focused on the family unit.

7.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, and consultations with our advisory groups, we make the following recommendations:

- The gendered experience of the Conflict, and its legacy, is still relatively unexamined. Little is known about parenting during the Conflict. Further research is needed to enhance knowledge and direct service provision.
- The various manifestations of transgenerational Conflict legacy within families, and the potential impacts on children, should be shared widely with health professionals. This could enhance recognition of symptoms in children and signposting to relevant services.
- That many do not identify as 'victims' or recognise the issues they experience as Conflict-related is further evidence of the need for long-term population-wide mental health initiatives like the Regional Trauma Network.
- Some of the current generation are exposed to parental pain, anger, numbness for the first time, or in more obvious ways. This may mean that increasing numbers of young people require support:
 - VSS-funded transgenerational and youth services will require additional funding to enhance programmes to support children and young people in recognition of the transgenerational impacts of trauma and Conflict legacy.
 - There is potential within the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme initiatives (e.g. Communities in Transition; Women's Involved in Community Transformation; youth programmes) to explore some of the issues identified in this research: understanding and breaking cycles of silence; recognising transgenerational trauma and its impacts on family life and parenting; recognising negative coping mechanisms and identifying alternatives. A trauma-informed approach is necessary for work of this nature, as is support for the staff involved in programme delivery.
 - The findings of this research should be widely disseminated as a form of awareness raising, and information provided to the youth and community, and children and families sectors, regarding support services (e.g. how to refer to the RTN and relevant VSS-funded services).
 - Timely and holistic family therapeutic interventions are required.

- There is a need to encourage recognition and help-seeking behaviour, particularly among those living with the consequences of trauma and adversity experienced as young people. This might be done through increased public and political discourse which both destigmatises and 'denormalises' Conflict-related trauma.
- Given the persistence of silence as a harmful (transgenerational) coping mechanism we endorse Hanna et al's (2012:10) recommendation that services support survivors '...in communicating their trauma experiences in appropriate and adaptive ways, in therapy and within their families.'
- Learning from existing parent support programmes and resources developed from similar programmes (e.g. Parenting in a Divided Society/ 'We'll never be the same' – see Burrows and Keenan, 2004) should be collated to inform future community-based parenting programmes.
- The potential relationship between Conflict legacy and children entering the care system in Northern Ireland requires further investigation.

8 Impacts and Legacies IV: 'Paramilitarism' and Policing

8.1 Introduction

In the twenty years following the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement there have been almost 3000 recorded 'paramilitary-style attacks' (PSNI, 2008; 2018³⁸). While not disaggregated by age, research demonstrates that young people were often the main victims of these abuses during the Conflict, and that this remains the case in its aftermath (Kennedy, 2001; Knox, 2002; McAlister et al., 2018). Many experiences of paramilitary violence go unreported (Hamill, 2011), and children and young people have often been hidden victims (Kennedy, 2014 in Nugent 2014). While there has been greater recognition and response to paramilitarism in the past five years or so, rarely has the issue, and its impacts on children and young people been framed as a children's rights issue (see McAlister and Rodgers, 2019).

Yet States have a duty to protect children from all forms of 'physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse' (Art. 19, UNCRC) and to ensure that 'no child shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment' (Art. 37a, UNCRC). In the current research the issue of Conflict-related violence was explored with all cohorts. By far the greatest discussion of ongoing violence related to paramilitarism. Discussions of other forms of Conflict-related violence, including domestic/family violence and sectarian violence are covered in Chapters 5 and 7. Combined, these demonstrate the enduring legacy of violence 'post conflict'.

This chapter gives voice to the knowledge, experiences and attitudes of young people and parents, demonstrating how the threat of paramilitary-style violence remains a daily reality for many. They see, hear and feel violence regularly. Multiple examples of the physical and psychological impacts of violence are discussed by those working within communities, and the exploitation of children by paramilitary-style groups appears well-known. These experiences raise

³⁸ Security statistics available from: <https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/security-situation-statistics/>

questions about the degree to which duty bearers are protecting children from violence and exploitation in some communities. The research further demonstrates the difficulties in responding to this issue - an issue which may have evolved from the past (see Napier et al, 2017), but is deeply rooted in the Conflict-related history of communities. That is communities that experienced regulation, control, and perceived protection from paramilitaries in the past; negative interactions with the police; lack of investment and resourcing.

While mindful of debates regarding the validity of concepts such as 'paramilitaries' and 'paramilitarism', we utilise them throughout the chapter as they were frequently employed by research participants in discussing the ongoing violence, and threat of violence, perpetrated by powerful individuals and groups across the island of Ireland. The chapter begins, by exploring from the perspectives of four cohorts, the ongoing presence and violence of paramilitary-style groups.

8.2 Paramilitary Presence and On-going Violence

Many interviewees expressed the view that the Conflict is still ongoing and that some young people continue to experience conflict and violence in both direct and indirect ways. A significant number of community representatives, key stakeholders and departmental representatives spoke of the continued pervasiveness of paramilitarism within some area. Typical statements and observations included:

paramilitaries are everywhere. (KS17)

... there's still paramilitary stuff going on, and still threats for young people. (KS18)
even still today you know we're still getting paramilitary shootings, and they're shooting kids. (CR14)

Discussions on the pervasiveness of paramilitaries were to a large extent focused on towns and communities in Northern Ireland. However, participants in a few Border Region research sites also reflected on the presence of paramilitaries in their communities, noting for example, that it had 'dwindled' but there was still 'pockets' of activity (CRFG5). For others, their proximity to towns in Northern Ireland meant there was an awareness of a paramilitary presence close-by. Some in Border Region areas also spoke of the increase in paramilitary groups/ activity, or fear of an increase, in light of Brexit and discussions of a possible hard border.

Young people across the areas were also aware of the continued presence of paramilitaries in communities across the island of Ireland, and the violence and threat of violence associated with this. They heard through the news, parents, and friends of bomb scares, shootings and beatings. Some had greater knowledge than others based on the presence of such groups within their own neighbourhoods. Typically there was a general understanding that paramilitaries, in some form, were still active. Across most of the research sites, responses to the question 'are there still paramilitaries in this community?' demonstrated knowledge of continued presence:

Aye. There's still things that go on. There's still people who get shot in [this community] to this day. (CYPFG13)

Well, there's still paramilitaries and punishment beatings and all that. They're still ... present. (CYPFG14)

They haven't gone away yet. (CYPFG11)

Yes, they're just not as big. (CYPFG7)

There would be more organisations now ... there'd be all the new ones ... (CYPFG16)

While young people in two Border Region sites did not think that paramilitaries were active within their local areas, some spoke of knowing of their existence, and the fear this invoked. One group, for example, spoke of the fear they felt due to their proximity to an area in which there was ongoing violence:

...

M: Scared

M: Not scared. Like worried in case they might come over here, because [this area] is close to [area across the border]

F: I'd be worried if a bomb would go off, like if you're in school, and near the school. (CYPFG6)

It is important to recognise, therefore, that children and young people outside communities within which violence is directly located, can also be impacted. As noted below, knowledge of violence or the threat of violence can cause fear and anxiety for some.

Among the adult sample, paramilitary-related violence was identified as both a legacy of the Conflict in terms of the fear, harm, suspicion and mistrust it had left, and also a 'live issue' in many

communities. Distinguishing this form of violence and the related trauma from transgenerational legacy, a health representative reflected from their practice experience:

A lot of young people are still impacted in that way, and that's my experience. ... many of the young people we met had been directly affected by paramilitarism, either dragged into the paramilitary groups involved, or attacked by paramilitary groups for intimidating the paramilitary groups. ... that's not transgenerational. That's simply the ongoing effects of what's been happening. (KSI7)

Community representatives across a number of locations highlighted young people's awareness of Conflict and its pervasive nature in the communities in which they worked. One youth worker in an urban area noted their frustration at international perceptions of peace:

There's still conflict here and young people are still aware of it and I think that's not good enough because people are perpetuating around the world that we've eradicated our conflict and they're showing us as an ambassador for hope, but our young people within certain communities, within [this area] particularly are living in conflict, when masked men are still running the streets, they're still shooting people ... we're still living in conflict, so where our politicians are saying around the world we've eradicated all this – it's not true. (CRI1)

A similar point was made by young people from the same area as they discussed how paramilitary attacks were still taking place, albeit to a lesser extent than in the past, but these rarely made the news:

I think they don't want to put it in the newspapers to make everybody else scared because say it happened in America, they'd have it on the front of the papers everywhere like headline news but over here they'd try to keep it more quiet so it's just not as big. (CYPFG15)

Community representatives in another (Border Region) area, also spoke of how the perception, to those outside, may be of peace. The reality for those on the ground, however, was very different:

So, from an outside look in, if you're not working and involved in the community or youth side of things, I think a lot of people [are] under the perception that this is all done and dusted, and to get the agreement settled ... and peace, and all this money coming in is

helping. But when you're inside ... it's [paramilitarism] more of an undertone and an undercurrent of everything, but it is definitely influencing young people, and how young people are engaging in new projects, are engaging in society, and how they're engaging in their communities. (CRFG9)

Likewise community representatives in a rural area described the more 'subtle' and 'hidden' forms of paramilitarism still presenting a 'huge problem', particularly in relation to drugs, intimidation and violence. It was argued that these groups and individuals were not known to all, as appeared to be the case in other communities, and that this had led some, including funders and policy makers, to believe there was little need for dedicated responses or resources:

I live in an area that has paramilitaries, splinter ones ... There's a lot of hidden paramilitarism ... intimidation, but in its most subtlest forms. It's directing it at one person, and it's on social media. It's spraying things up on walls ... I think rural paramilitaries keep to themselves definitely...they're there, but they're hidden. (CRFG3)

Similarly, young people in another rural area (in the Border Region) felt that paramilitary violence was ongoing but was 'more ... secretive' (CYPFG16) than it had been in the past. Thus, while young people in some areas felt that paramilitaries 'try to keep themselves hidden' (CYPFG7), in other areas there was a sense that 'everyone knows who they are' (CYPFG3). Discussions across the communities demonstrated that paramilitary-style groups may take a range of forms, some making their presence more visible and known than others. Yet the 'undertone' or 'undercurrent' felt by their presence should not be underestimated and visibility alone should not dictate responses.

8.3 Knowing and Seeing Violence: Young People's Accounts

Hidden or otherwise, knowledge of paramilitary presence was part of a localised knowledge that while, as one young woman told us is 'silent', was clearly discussed regularly among those within communities. It was evident from some young people's accounts that hearing about paramilitary presence and activity was commonplace. Asked how they know paramilitaries are present in their communities they told us: 'everyone knows', 'you just hear about it', 'people go on about it', 'just hearing stuff', 'people reminds you'. Stories about attacks, which groups are active and responsible are 'just being spread around', from adults to young people, within young people's friendship groups, and/ or through social media. Their explanations of 'knowing' about this form of violence, and the rationalisation of this reality on the basis that it has 'calmed down' from the past

or is not as bad as '*back in the day*', demonstrates the degree to which it is a feature of life for many young people living in communities in transition.

For some young people, it appeared hard to escape the knowledge and impact of paramilitary presence – they know it because they hear it, see it and live it in a myriad of ways. The following extract demonstrates some of the ways in which young people know such groups are active in their communities:

- I: How do you know they're still about?*
M: Because there's still shootings happening here
M: And they're claiming this, like they're saying aye this is INLA done that.
M: Writing on the walls and all. (CYPFG12)

Those living in areas in which paramilitary presence was most prolific shared their knowledge of the types of activities they perceived them to be involved in. Some knew this first-hand – directly experiencing, hearing or witnessing violence – others knew it through the experiences of family and friends, or hearing stories that circulated in their communities. '*You hear the bangs [of gun fire] on the street*' (CYPFG11) one young man told us. A young man from another area explained '*you hear about people getting done in [beaten] and all*' (CYPFG14). Whereas a young woman in a third area spoke of watching paramilitaries sell drugs to children, and of her sister's ex-boyfriend receiving a threat to be shot because of his alleged involvement in drugs.

Commonly discussed was paramilitary involvement in drugs. This included, the sale of drugs, the regulation and control of drugs within the community, involving young people in the sale of drugs, and violence against those who had drug debts or who sell drugs. The perceived relationships between paramilitarism and drugs is expanded upon in Section 8.7.1. Aside from drugs and verbal warnings and intimidation, there were some notable differences in how violence was enacted across the research sites. Among the groups in Co. Derry/Londonderry and those in one area of Co. Antrim there was discussion of guns, shootings and knee-cappings, as well as beatings. Some spoke almost indifferently in telling us this:

Sometimes you get the auld odd shooting like ... well that can be all year round actually.
(CYPFG12)

It's only people who deal them [drugs] that get shot. (CYPFG15).

Unsurprisingly given the fieldwork period, a number of young people from Co. Derry/Londonderry spoke in detail about the shooting of young journalist Lyra McKee. Discussions amongst members

of these focus groups demonstrated, in action, the nature of 'paramilitary talk' and how details, information, and speculation circulate. The depth of debate and discussion of this event demonstrated its profound impact on young people living the Derry/Londonderry area.

Among those in Co. Armagh and another area of Co. Antrim, there were no discussions of shootings in their communities, but instead of physical attacks and 'punishment beatings': '*... there's still paramilitaries and punishment beatings and all. They're still like, present*' (CYPFG14). Within the same area of Co. Antrim there was also much discussion of paramilitary involvement in financial extortion – forcing local businesses to pay 'protection money'. On the other hand, those in all but one of the Border Region sites had no knowledge of paramilitary activity in their local areas. In the site where there was discussion of it, this revolved around recruitment of young people (see Section 8.6). Overall, discussions in focus groups further illustrated the very local dynamics of paramilitary-style groups, how their activity can recede only to intensify quite rapidly, how new groups emerge and others seem to disappear, and how their methods of coercion and control vary. Also importantly, the extent to which all of this is part of local knowledge which children and young people are party to is key to critical discussions about the post-conflict, ceasefire generations.

The young people accounts also revealed the unpredictable nature of paramilitary violence. While some argued that those involved in drugs and those '*who wreck the community*' (CYPFG12) were at risk of paramilitary violence, and those who '*don't do nothing wrong*' (CYPFG18), or don't get involved '*in dodgy stuff*' (CYPFG14) are not at risk, their discussions often revealed a different reality. In effect, the presence of paramilitaries meant that the potential for violence, and hence victimisation, was always there. One young man reflected that '*saying the wrong thing to the wrong people*' (CYPFG7) could result in coming to the attention of paramilitaries. This was reiterated in a second community in which the group relayed a story of a local man being stabbed by paramilitaries because his son '*gave someone a dirty look*' (CYPFG18).

The shooting of Lyra McKee crystallised for young people in the Derry/Londonderry area the immediacy of the threat to their own safety. While they noted other recent incidences of violence in the community, and the long-term presence of paramilitaries, this event was a vivid reminder of how easily violence could touch them personally. This moved violence from being in the background of their communities, and their lives, to the forefront:

It's so scary, it is so scary like. One of us here [from this group] could have easily been up there that night, ... what if that had have been one of you'se, what if that had have been your friend ... it could easily have been somebody we knew. (CYPFG4)

As can be discerned from the discussion so far, young women as well as young men demonstrated knowledge of paramilitary presence and activity in their communities. They too are touched by violence (McAlister et al, 2021), and the realities of living in communities in which its threat is ever present. Some focus groups explored the issue of gender in more detail, considering if young women and young men are affected in similar or different ways. One group of young men acknowledged that young women were targeted but '*you wouldn't hear of it much*' (CYPFG13) in comparison to during the Conflict. There was more discussion among another group within which a young woman was adamant that young women were also targets of paramilitary violence. The ferocity with which she argued her point might imply personal knowledge or experience:

I: ... Do paramilitaries pick on young women and young men, or is it just young men?

F1: Yes! They do do girls too, they do.

F2: I personally never heard a story of a girl.

F1: No they do, they go after us girls too, they do, yeah they do, just as bad as the boys ... if you're there you get threatened like a wee boy

...

M: It doesn't matter, if you do the same as the other person does then you're going to get it, that's what it is. (CYPFG15)

That some participants '*never heard a story of a girl*', or that we do not hear about the impacts on young women as often as we do on young men, should not be taken as an indication that young women are not victimised, or impacted more broadly by paramilitary violence in their communities (see McAlister et al., 2021).

8.4 The Experiences of Young People and their Families: Adult Reflections

For ethical reasons we did not ask young people about their personal experiences with paramilitaries. This was to protect their emotional and physical safety given the sensitivity of the topic and the group context within which data was collected. We did, however, ask community representatives and key stakeholders to share their experiences of working with young people and/or families who had experienced paramilitary violence.

As noted above, one of the main ways in which adult interviewees identified young people as still being impacted by the Conflict was through present-day paramilitarism. Speaking of changes in supporting young people over time, for example, a representative from the victims and survivors sector noted:

... maybe people would perceive it [the impact of the Conflict] as not as quite as direct, but it actually isn't, because there would have been more young people coming in [to the organisation] because of intimidation within their communities, and things like that happening maybe as opposed to maybe losing a parent directly, just as time moved on. (KS13)

Some provided vivid accounts of abuses against children and young people in their communities. This involved young people being intimidated and threatened, extorted for money, shot, beaten and maimed, and/ or manipulated (to sell drugs, commit violence) and being sexually exploited. Speaking of the link between paramilitarism and drug dealing, and the exploitation and control of young people, a community representative in one area explained that:

Some of the kids are under paramilitary threats. There are five different paramilitary groups in the community vying for control, who the young people might sell drugs for who will then come and tax them on a Friday night for selling the drugs, but it's their drugs they're selling for them. (CRI4)

Workers from the same area shared similar stories, here of a young man who was under threat from a paramilitary group being pressured to attack a police officer, resulting in him receiving a five year period of detention. They told us:

... and he put the barriers through and broke the police officer's teeth. They [the paramilitary group] came to his door the week before that, and he had a pizza box pretending they were delivering a pizza, and he opened the box and there was a gun in it. He had an active threat, basically had an active death threat on him, and that [attack on police officer] was his way out. ... That was just disgraceful. He was a 15-year-old, 16-year-old. (CRFG7)

Many youth worker participants recounted similar experiences of young people under threat from paramilitary groups. They spoke of having to drive the streets of their communities to find young people who had 'an appointment' to be shot, and provide much needed support where other services were reluctant to step in:

The last young person that I had was actually under threat from an armed group in [ROI town] because he owed money for drugs, and the social workers didn't want to take him in the car, and didn't want [to] do this, and didn't want [to] do that. So, I had to take him on a daily basis for nearly three months out of where he lived in [town ROI] here ... (CRFG5)

A similar experience was relayed by workers in a second area who felt they had little support in protecting a vulnerable young person:

One of our weans [children] last week, as well, in supported living, peelers [police] come to his door at two o'clock in the morning, knowing full well the situation of the wean and saying, "you're under threat by an organisation". Two o'clock in the morning. So, the wean is running the streets from two o'clock in the morning to half past eight until we pick him up, until we find out that he'd been running mad around the streets, and then whenever we go to the peelers about it they say, "who isn't under threat? They [the community] go to the dissidents, not us." (CRFG2)

As noted in Section 8.8.2, a number of youth and community workers reported feeling an expectation to support young people sometimes risking their own safety, because the support was not coming from elsewhere. A number of accounts also referenced the levels of exploitation and torture experienced by young people, and the impacts on young people, families and the community:

*They drive me f**king mad... because they torture our kids. We're seeing a higher number of them trying to recruit young people ... They sell drugs for them. They tax them, they criminally exploit them, they sexually exploit them, and then if they don't do what they tell them to do, they come around [and] shoot them, and that re-traumatizes a child. You never get over that. They've destroyed lives. (CRI4)*

Others spoke of what they had learned from working closely with social workers, teachers and the police. Illustrating how one encounter with paramilitaries (through a financial loan) could lead to longer term intimidation and exploitation, a Departmental representative relayed a story of a mother borrowing money to pay for family essentials whereby the group then '*... refused to take the money [back] because they had the son carrying drugs into school for them, and that was how that debt was piled on*' (DRFG2). Another Departmental representative, illustrating the wider impacts on families, spoke of being told of '*families that are crippled through getting into the hands of the loan sharks ... much of [which] is paramilitary controlled*' (DRFG2). Community representatives relayed similar stories, as did a mother in one community, who also drew the link between paramilitaries and drug dealing:

Drug dealers do play a big part in teenagers [lives], because that's who they get the drugs off, and they can't pay them. The mummy's are left to pay the bills. (PFG2)

The impacts on, and concerns of, parents are discussed further in Section 8.5, and the perceived relationship between recruitment and family traditions and pathways is explored in Section 8.6.1. Family connections were also noted with regards to some young people who were being victimised today either having family members who had also been beaten or shot by paramilitaries, or who had been involved in paramilitaries groups themselves in the past. The implication may be that the behaviour of these young people is directly affected by their parents' involvement in Conflict-related violence, imprisonment and/or victimisation. The following example is illustrative:

... something we've been looking at recently and seeing a worrying pattern of [is] young people whose parents have been involved either in the past conflict or continue to be involved in some levels of conflict, so some people local here that their father was imprisoned maybe nine years ago, both have sons, one was shot by a paramilitary organisation for his behaviour and the other boy was involved heavily in drugs and had attempted to complete suicide on numerous occasions due to poor mental health so there is a direct correlation between those. (CRI1)

These accounts are particularly worrying as they suggest transgenerational harm and victimisation.

While this section has provided a summary of some of the experiences shared with us, there were many others like them. The scope and volume of these demonstrate the myriad of ways in which children, young people, families and communities continue to experience violence, intimidation and coercive control. While many of the discussions and examples revolved around young men, two participants did speak of specific knowledge of young women being directly victimised – through extortion and sexual exploitation. Indeed one spoke of their recent efforts to support a young woman to break her ties with a paramilitary group (see Section 8.6.1), and there was acknowledgement within a focus group that '*... we actually need to understand better how girls experience this environment*' (KSFG6). This is returned to in the next section.

8.5 The Impacts of Exposure to Violence

8.5.1 'Normalisation'

As noted in Section 8.3, some young people spoke of the presence of paramilitaries as simply part of their lives – '*it's just how it is you know*' (CYPFG13). It was only to be worried about if you came to their attention, and that wouldn't happen '*if you aren't doing the wrong thing*' (CYPFG12). Indeed the pervasive knowledge of violence and the threat of it serves to control young people, to

create a sense of reluctant acceptance, and in some cases, a belief that anyone that '*flies into their radar*' (CYPFG13) does so because of their own negative behaviour. Even the young people who expressed these views, however, recognised that this was not 'normal' or acceptable, but was simply an inescapable fact of their lives:

M: ... Whenever I was growing up my mum always said to me, don't be scared of them, if you're not scared of them they'll not come for you.

M: I was always taught they're not going to come for you if you don't bother them -

F: If you don't do nothing wrong -

M: Yeah, but we shouldn't be living like that in this society. (CYPFG18)

Their accounts, therefore, symbolised resignation, rather than acceptance, and this sense of resignation came across strongly in five focus groups in three research sites. A young man explained it as follows:

I think it's because we're used to it, it doesn't really bother us or nothing. Probably you know like people who were from out of the area and they moved in here, they'd be like "what do you mean there's people in this community?", they'd probably think it's mad like but see us, we're used to it. (CYPFG12)

The unnaturalness of this reality was also reflected on by community representatives in some areas:

... if a helicopter goes up the first thing a young person in my youth club will say is "Who was shot tonight?", so they're aware of it and they live in that surrounding. Like if you asked another 13 or 14 year old in another part of the north, a rural part of the north, or even somewhere in England, Scotland or Wales if they see a helicopter up, the first reaction is not "who was shot?". (CRI1)

Parents in another area spoke of a power cut in the area the night prior to data collection. They said that their first assumption was '*something is going to happen*' (PFG2), thinking that someone powerful in the community was going to be shot. They used this to illustrate how paramilitary violence, and its threat, was engrained.

These examples demonstrate the continued backdrop of violence for many. Things may have moved on, be better than '*back in the day*', as a number of research participants noted, but in

some communities violent incidents were commonplace and the threat of violence was ever present. Thus, when young people responded that they did not care or were '*not bothered*' by the presence of paramilitaries in their communities, the reality was often more complex than first appeared. This is demonstrated in the following exchange with a younger age group:

- I: ... How do you feel, as young people, about paramilitaries being here?*
M: I don't really care.
I: It doesn't bother you?
M: You might wake up to a wee gunshot and that's about it, or it's on Facebook.
I: Does it not make you fearful at all?
F: Yeah.
M: We just cope with it. (CYPFG11)

'Not caring', not engaging with it, not thinking about it could, therefore, be a means of coping (similar to coping strategies outlined in Chapters 6 and 7). Indeed a community representative, also a parent, told us that despite a gun attack on her home she needed to get on with life, caring for her children rather than reflecting on the reality of the situation. Normalisation was, therefore, essential and perhaps reflects a coping strategy passed down generationally – from their parents to themselves, and now to the current generation of young people:

But we do normalise it. When my bedroom window was shot through, I wakened up, and I was like, the window is broke ... I phoned my mother and my mother was, like, "well sure, get the wean on to school, phone the police". It wasn't, like, "why do you think it was shot through, do you think were they trying to hit you, is everybody okay?" It was, "how much do you think it's going to cost now that you've got a window to put in? I hope somebody's going to be paying, you shouldn't be out the money for that". That's [the] reaction, and it was the reaction that we continued on through. My wean went on to nursery, and I came on to work, phoned the police, and paid no further heed. That's the nature of the beast. (CRFG2)

Stating - '*we saw it [violence] as normal*' - community workers and parents in another research site expressed concern that violence had become normalised, to their parents, to themselves, and now to their children. A number of young people spoke explicitly of trying to ignore continuous reports of paramilitary activity as a means of preserving their mental well-being. This is illustrated by a young woman who told us of the personal impact of knowing about ongoing violence, and the potential for future violence:

... I don't really want to learn too much about it, because, like a few, was it last year, or something, like Facebook was getting me scared, because there was a load of things going on, and even now still, the bombs and stuff, and these bomb scares, I don't really want to read into too much, because I've like severe bad anxiety, like mental health. My own mind would go mental. So, I don't really want to think about what could happen. So, I don't really know too much. ... it does interest me. It's just the thought of big things happening again would be scary. Because I don't want to really see it. (CYPFG9)

A young man from another area expressed a similar view, noting that he avoided any thoughts or discussions of paramilitary activity in his community. That this is an active and deliberate activity demonstrates its necessity:

I steer clear of everything, I actively avoid it because I don't want to listen to it. I don't want that news, I have got enough things going on in my life as it is. (CYPFG17)

Some community representatives also spoke of how young men in particular coped with their reality through humour:

There's a lot of dark humour around the IRA, and the UDA, and the UVF. It was joking, but I think it was one of their ways to cope, especially in areas predominantly run by the paramilitary groups, and for them to cope with that they joked. They would joke about kneecapping each other, or punishment beatings, but it wasn't anything serious ... It was their way of coping with what was going on in their area and making light of the situation. (CRFG4)

These forms of coping - through humour, normalisation, shrugging off their experiences - could easily be misconstrued as acceptance or endorsement. Care must be taken, therefore, in how we interpret young peoples' 'paramilitary talk' and their engagement with this issue. That children and young people wake to hear about shootings, or are woken by gun shots, and that this has become normalised is an indictment to claims of peace and a peace generation. That for other young people paramilitary violence becomes a talking point, details of attacks are passed around their social media accounts and this creates great interest is equally worrying. The circulation of violent incidents on social media was raised by a number of adult participants and used as another example of how violence, particularly paramilitary violence, had become a normal aspect of young people's lives in some areas:

...there was an incident in this area where a young guy was shot and literally within minutes young people throughout the area were getting very graphic images through Snapchat and whatever other platforms they were using, and that is normal for that, and there's an excitement about it. I find that really disturbing. (KSFG6)

This speaks to the need to challenge violence as a way of life and as a backdrop to life in communities dealing with Conflict legacies and ongoing Conflict-related violence. Indeed workers in one community spoke of the relationship between excitement, fear and trauma, and the complexity of young people's engagement with paramilitary violence (see Section 8.5.3).

8.5.2 Fear

While some young people said that the presence of paramilitaries in their communities did not bother them, or they simply tried not to engage with it, many others said it created a sense of fear. Indeed a young woman noted that one of the roles of paramilitaries in her community was creating fear – '*fearmongering*' (CYPFG18), and it was this that made people scared and paralysed to do anything to challenge it.

As noted above, young people in Derry/Londonderry spoke of the real sense of fear the shooting of Lyra McKee had created – '*It's so scary, it is so scary like*' (CYPFG4). Some of those in the Border Region of Ireland spoke of the sense of fear that came with living close to towns in which there were bombs scares, bombing and shootings. And the reality of living in communities with a persistent threat of violence was illustrated in many groups. The following exchange is illustrative:

- I: So, how do those sort of things impact young people? What's the impact of living in a place where there might be paramilitaries?*
- F: It makes people think they are going to get shot next.*
- F: Scared in their own community. (CYPFG11)*

While this particular discussion was with young women, young men in the same community spoke of an undercurrent of '*paranoia*', of feeling that something might happen and that they did not know who they could trust within the community. Knowing that paramilitaries exist, but not knowing who could be involved, created unease. This featured in a discussion among young people from a Border Region site. One young man spoke of knowledge even among children in his community, and the impact of this:

... I know kids would be afraid to play knock doors and run ... me and all my friends walk past messing with the kids saying "oh, why don't you play knock, door, run?" ... they just go, "no, we're too afraid", I was like, "why are you afraid?", "that fella there is an IRA man, that fella there is INLA, he's IRB or he's this". They know so much kind of thing.
(CYPFG16)

A youth worker working in the same area spoke of 'an air' of fear, similar to that which existed during the Conflict, resulting in the silencing of communities:

What we've noticed is that this kind of fear, that would have been there back in the Troubles, all this, kind of, wall of silence, you know. If something goes wrong ... there is a presence and an air there where people aren't willing to talk and they're not willing to come forward. For young people then what that ... leads to is that some of them are starting to fear, and won't actually open up about what's going on. (CRFG9)

While finding it difficult to verbalise, young people in another area also alluded to an air of fear or sense of foreboding:

M: I don't know, it's hard to put it into words. It's like, it's hard to put into words, I feel there's a threat sometimes.

I: From?

M: Groups.

I: Paramilitary groups?

M: Yeah, stuff like that, yeah ... (CYPFG14)

Parents and community representatives (many of whom were also parents) attested to the impact on their children of living in communities with a paramilitary presence. Following gun shots in the community, one parent spoke of their child '*wakening up with a nightmare, and going to bed overanxious*' (PFG2). The impact on children's mental well-being is explored further in Section 8.5.3. Parents also spoke of fears for their children getting involved with local paramilitaries through drugs (debts, or dealing), the promise of money or status (see Section 8.6), or other forms of victimisation³⁹.

³⁹ Most of these discussions implicitly related to young men. It was only when asked explicitly about young women that parents reflected that they had not really thought of this before. This demonstrates the need to ask specifically questions about young women in order to disaggregate experiences and impacts and create space for parents to explore these issues in a safe environment.

*... we live in [border town] and my wean goes into [area] almost every frigging night of the week, and he parks in [street]. He always parks in [street], and goes down into a bar to play pool, or whatever it is, to meet his mates ... [after a bomb in that area] I dreamt about that for two weeks, that bloody bomb going off and him getting f**king annihilated ... (CRFG2)*

While this parent spoke of current concerns for her child (now a young man), another spoke of future concerns for hers, the next generation:

As a mother speaking, I don't want my two year old growing up in a city ... where people think that it's okay to lift a gun and shoot somebody, or it's okay to give somebody a hiding [beating], or it's okay to take the law into their own hands. (CRFG2)

Similarly, a young man noted that his knowledge and experiences of paramilitaries (his family having to be relocated during a paramilitary feud in his area) made him fearful for his future children, and determined to work to get out of the area:

... I don't want my kids growing up in that environment, like hearing people get shot of a night. I want my kids to be like in an estate where they can feel that they are safe and they can run about. (CYPFG18)

For parents and young people, fear manifested in multiple ways: through reflections and memories of past experiences of paramilitary violence; through the present-day threat of paramilitary violence; and through future fears for themselves and their families.

8.5.3 Mental Well-being

While some young people alluded to the impact of paramilitary presence and violence on their mental health, more often this manifest in discussions of fear, paranoia or the coping mechanisms employed to preserve mental well-being. Among the adult samples there was much more discussion of the impact on children and young people's mental health. Indeed, based on their direct work with young people, a health professional believed:

... paramilitaries are everywhere, and have an absolute impact on the wellbeing of young people, and their outcomes in terms of mental health outcomes. (KS17)

For others working at the community level the knowledge and witnessing of paramilitary violence by young people was felt to be damaging and potentially traumatising. Speaking of a new generation of children being exposed to Conflict-related violence through witnessing physical attacks and their aftermaths, representatives from an advocacy group provided the following example:

... we're exposing kids to stuff they should not be exposed to. I remember talking to a colleague in [area] about the shooting in the [area], and it happened during the day. Very blatant brazen attack, and it actually happened whenever the local primary school was getting out, and they went down to the... scene and found all these young kids standing around the victim on the ground, and parents standing with them, and they tried to move the kids away and one of the parents actually told them off and said, "they need to see this". This was, like, 5 and 6 year olds. (KSFG6)

A group of youth workers also spoke of the trauma, fear and 'excitement' young people they worked with had experienced in witnessing a paramilitary shooting. One worker explained how the event was highly charged with mixed emotions. She articulated fear that violence had become 'romanticised', while at the same time recognising the trauma those witnessing it would experience:

... in all my years of being involved in youth work, and doing interface work, and being around really high charged situations, I never felt the feeling like I felt. The kids actively destroyed evidence and all. There was like this feeling. The kids were panting. ... One particular group of young people actually wanted to go to the streets, because they're all local, and sit there to see when this paramilitary organisation was going to shoot them'uns. It was like they were panting for it. They were traumatised as well. Everybody standing and seen that was traumatised. It's a feeling I've never felt before ... (CRFG7)

While these sorts of occurrences may appear extreme, and are perhaps not the experiences of all communities, they are nonetheless current examples of children and young people being exposed to, and in some cases, drawn into violence. That is, children and young people who become victims as a consequence of the Conflict-related circumstances within which they are growing up.

Experiencing personal threats or direct violence was also traumatising. One worker reminded us that the threat and experience of violence never served the alleged intended purposes of changing behaviour. Indeed, a number of participants noted that it simply exacerbated problems for young people that were already vulnerable:

Further traumatising a child is not going to stop the behaviour and that's what keeps happening, it's the cycle of - we'll threaten him, we'll shoot him that's going to stop it - it's not. Shooting people doesn't stop it and if you ask any young people who have been through that, it doesn't stop it, it's created a further trauma and a further issue for them ... (CRI1)

In addition to exposure to violence within the community, research participants also noted that children and young people were impacted in those families in which parents or other family members were victimised by present-day paramilitaries, through extortion, eviction and/or physical attack. Exploring, for the first time, the potential impacts of paramilitary-style violence on their daughter, a group of parents considered:

- F: Their brothers could be getting beat up or kneecapped, and they've to live through all the same trauma that everyone else has. They'd be no less affected than us but you don't even think that like*
- F: Because, yes, we were all young women [a number of women in the group had previously discussed having brothers, fathers, uncles etc killed or injured during the Conflict]. (PFG2)*

The emotional impact on the family of, for example, owing money and being threatened as they were unable to pay 'debts' (from 'local loan sharks' or 'drug debts') was also raised. Indeed, there were a number of examples of family 'debt' and its consequences discussed in focus groups. Some young people's exposure to violence, therefore, extended to the home where they witness violence, or its impact, on family members:

Because some of the parents, one of them in particular, she had been beat and tasered in her own house three times because of her son's criminal background, and what he was doing and stuff, and it was done in front of his siblings. So, we've been able to go in and work with them families and stuff. (CRI4)

Others reflected on 'the trauma that ... [a young person] suffered because their front door was kicked in and their mother was beat by a hammer' (CRFG7). Two mothers spoke of the impact on their children of past and more recent experiences with paramilitaries. One spoke of having been exiled from the community when younger, and her daughter (now in her 20s) having to live with her mother until she was permitted to return. The other reflected on the impact on her daughter of her house being attacked by dissident paramilitaries:

...there was a couple of nights we were attacked in a row, and it was frightening. My wee girl had got up out of our bed and she would have been really feared, you know, actually waiting on it ... (PFG2)

Again, it is important to reiterate that these are present day examples impacting families, and children and young people of what has been defined the peace or post-conflict generation. While some of the physical impacts of paramilitary violence are known, we know less about the psychological impacts of knowing, hearing, witnessing and experiencing this form of violence. The need for further research is clear:

There are studies written by surgeons all about the physical consequences, you know, the shattered limbs. So, those studies are there, but there's nothing about the shattered psyche. (KS17)

8.5.4 A Culture of Violence?

Finally, some adult research participants felt that exposure to violence could effectively breed further violence. Indeed a major impact of paramilitary presence, noted by community workers, parents and key stakeholders, was the potential exploitation of young people, through recruitment and/or incitement to violence (see Section 8.6). Beyond this, however, some felt that the combination of a normalisation of violence, and fear, could lead to a situation where young men in particular learned that violence was a means to a. achieve what they wanted and/or b. protect themselves. In one community, youth workers reflected on the need to be violent, or prepared to be violent, in order to survive. Hence arguing that fear and violence are interlinked. This view was reflected by others:

My experience would be mostly with the young people in [area]. The prevailing thing is fear, probably is what I would say, if they have been directly affected, under threat, not even just from paramilitaries, even from just the atmosphere in the area around violence, and the bravado attitude that you have to fight to survive, and that is intertwined and interlinked with paramilitarism as well, either standing up against them, or going along with them. (KSFG6)

Learning violence, or needing to be violent are issues that require deep engagement as we move forwards in responding to Conflict legacy and its impacts on current and future generations of children and young people. The lack of acknowledgement of, and response to what one participant called '... the extraordinary levels of violence that many young people experience and how it gets normalised' (KSFG6) is a children's rights concern given the State's duty to protect children from violence, abuse, exploitation and punishment (UNCRC Arts. 19 and 37a). Indeed

many discussed the multiple, and what might appear contradictory effects of exposure to and experience of violence – fear, normalisation, trauma and violent behaviour. What is clear, however, is that victims continue to be created under the current circumstances of 'peace': *'... victims and survivors continue, you know, new victims and survivors, every day, every week, ... it didn't end in 1998.'* (KS17).

8.6 Recruitment

One of the main impacts of a continued paramilitary-style presence in Northern Ireland is that some children and young people are vulnerable to exploitation through recruitment. Young people and community representatives from the same five research sites asserted that young people were still recruited into, or on some occasions at least, acted on the instruction of such groups. A number of key stakeholders and Departmental representatives also shared their knowledge of the recruitment of children, and parents in one area expressed concern for their own children being *'dragged in'* (PFG2).

Within their discussions there was the belief that the groups young people were being exploited by today were, for the most part, different to those that existed during the Conflict (see Section 8.7.1). As such, they defined the activities and behaviours young people were drawn into as *'low level crime'*, *'criminality'* or being on *'the thin line of criminality'* (CRFG5). Yet in sharing knowledge of some of those they knew or worked with, the activities ranged quite dramatically from: stone throwing, rioting, selling stolen or counterfeit goods, drug dealing, assaulting other young people, delivering threats and carrying out shootings. Often it was felt that young people did not know the consequences of becoming involved with these groups, and that it was for this very reason that children were being targeted and exploited. Asked why paramilitaries focused on young people, one young person suggested it was *'because they can manipulate them'* (CYPFG11). Involving children in their *'dirty work'* also kept these individuals clean – legally and reputationally (e.g. it was young people selling drugs to other young people, and in the community).

While all reasons for involvement amount to the exploitation of children, and indeed many research participants identified this, four (often interrelated) themes emerged in discussions: family pathways; politicisation at particular times of year or around specific events; the allure of money, status and power due to a lack of legitimate alternatives and opportunities; safety and protection due to particular vulnerabilities. Some young people and adults used the language of *'manipulation'*, *'exploitation'*, *'grooming'* and/or *'child abuse'*. Others implied this through talking of young people being *'dragged in'*, *'preyed on'*, *'leaned on'* or *'harassed'*.

8.6.1 Local Histories and Networks: Family and Community Influence

A number of community representatives spoke of the almost natural pathways into paramilitarism for some young people. A Departmental representative referred to historical and intergenerational 'hard wiring' in some communities whereby paramilitaries had been glorified and normalised, something there was a 'pride around' and a reticence to let go of (DRFG2). Related to this, others spoke of family connections and the glorification of paramilitarism within families:

I've met young people whose had grandparents, or an uncle, that was in the IRA, or something like that, they have a slightly different perspective [than those] who didn't have a family that was part of the IRA. ... There's a slight glorification in it, because the way it is seen on paper, you know, they fought for the country but the nitty gritty, the ugliness of it, is not discussed. They don't know. They can't find out. They can't really understand the ugliness of it. (CRFG9)

Stories, or half stories, passed down in communities and families were identified as a potential pull to the current generation, many of whom had limited opportunities. Indeed the potential power/ danger of stories and messages being filtered to children at an early age is illustrated in the following example. Here the workers discussed how the child's 'narrative'/life story had effectively been written for them at a young age:

F: That wee boy I done individual work with ... he'd be about 14 now ... he drew a wee picture of a gun, and I says "why are you drawing me the gun?", "because when I grew up here I wanted to shoot somebody". Now, he was only 8 or 9 at the time, and I went "what you mean you [wanted] to shoot somebody?", but his da was in jail because he was in whatever organisation, and his granda [was] high up [in the organisation] ... in the '70s or '80s here ... That's what he seen was his family legacy.

...

M: So, his narrative was going to be -

F: - I'm going to be a gunman. I'm going to kill somebody when I grow up. (KSI8)

Young people in two communities also recognised the power of family influence. Speaking of his area, one young man told us there were 'younger groups of paramilitaries' similar in age to himself. His perception was that these groups 'probably had dads and like uncles and stuff in it' (CYPFG7). Another young man in the same group believed these young people 'could be ... very influenced by them [family]'. Similarly, young people in a second community felt that their peers continued to join paramilitaries 'because of their das' (CYPFG11).

Most of the discussion about recruitment either explicitly or implied related to young men. It was interesting, therefore that one focus group participant spoke specifically of supporting a young woman to break her ties with a paramilitary group. This example demonstrates that young women can also be vulnerable to recruitment. It also illustrates the power (the **pull**) of local histories and networks and the difficulties in working out '*how you break that control, [when] it's from such an early age, where their parents are in paramilitary groups*' (DRFG2). Breaking the control early on is difficult. So too is breaking the affiliation once it is established as it effectively means cutting what have been life-long ties with family, social and community networks:

I've had a very challenging experience ... this year working with a young woman who does not want to be involved in whatever she has been involved with. This is the paramilitary groups, and she's involved in a church who are trying to really support her, and to help her to move on to the next chapter of her life, but she is being grabbed back in every time she tries to take a step away, and that's really hard because she is a young woman who is trying to do her best, and who wants to change, but actually there's always that pull, and it is because of families, and friends, and communities, and those things that we align ourselves with. (CRFG4)

These examples and discussions demonstrate some of the challenges of responding to intergenerational and intracommunity pathways into, and out of, paramilitarism.

8.6.2 Politicisation and Incitement to Violence

Some noted that at times of heightened tension young people were still used by powerful adults in their communities to enact violence. A Departmental representative acknowledged: '*There's still the use of young people to bring violence onto the streets ...*' (DRFG2). This could be at particular times of the year, during cultural celebrations, football matches or when the police came into the area. Some felt that these were taken as opportunities to politicise young people, yet the degree to which young people understood the politics was debated.

Speaking of a spate of interface rioting a few years ago, youth workers from one community explained how '*kids were out but they were being influenced by the more sinister older people*' (CRFG8). They discussed, however, how a focus on the behaviour alone resulted in a number of the young people being criminalised. A similar point was made in relation to young people being used to sell drugs in schools which resulted in their exclusion. It is the behaviour of young people, not their exploitation that is the focus of responses, and their lives can be seriously impacted:

it ... impacted so much on both of the communities because people came from everywhere to defend each community. The children of that generation, there's not many of them 14 year olds that haven't got a conviction, criminal record now because of that, because if they weren't arrested right away they were arrested after it and they were charged with riotous behaviour. (CRFG8)

Community representatives from another area similarly spoke of young people being exploited, and the risk of harm they experienced as a result of this:

What I have a problem with is exploiting young people. What I have a problem with is them getting young people to do their dirty work. What I have a problem with is putting young people at risk of significant harm. That's what I have a problem with, and that's what happening, and it happened on Easter Monday last year when children were provided with petrol bombs ... they [paramilitaries] were seen giving them out, crates of petrol bombs. (CRFG2)

An issue around which it was felt young people were being politicised was Brexit. Indeed a number of young people and community representatives from cross-border areas (North and South) noted concern about a rise in violence emanating from fears about the reinstatement of a hard border. Young people in one area felt this was being used to recruit young people:

there would be a lot of recruitment as well targeted to this generation as well because before the border and everything, so in case it's an actual physical border. (CYPFG16)

Some groups, we were told, exploited community fears and uncertainties and used the situation as an opportunity to engage with young people from already quite politicised families and communities:

- F: And it's the vulnerable young people that you would worry about being exploited like*
M: Yeah, a lot of young people in this community, there's a lot of young people getting into paramilitaries now like.
M: The uncertainty too of things, not just the government but the kind of European stuff, the Brexit stuff, you know, it gives maybe a vacuum for to play on people's fears, people's insecurities, play on people's vulnerabilities. (CRFG5)

These examples demonstrate the fragility of peace, and how uncertainty, change, and times of heightened tension can be utilised by those in positions of power to **pull** young people into violence. While some suggest there is no political basis to 'paramilitarism' and its related violence today (see Section 8.7.1), these examples demonstrate that such violence is firmly located in the legacies of the past (i.e. struggles and disputes over identity and territory).

8.6.3 Lack of Opportunities and the Lure of Paramilitaries

By far the most commonly raised issue in relation to young people being vulnerable to recruitment by paramilitaries related to what some called the '*lure*' of money, status and/or power. The reason it was felt '*everybody knows*' who paramilitaries in some areas are, is because of their visibility – their cars, expensive clothing, accessories, and lifestyle. Alongside the lifestyle came status and respect. These were the people with power in the community and it was felt that some young people (most often shorthand for young men) aspired to this:

I: Why are they doing it [selling drugs for paramilitaries]?

...

M: They see that lifestyle of aul flashy watches and BMW and they think I want that one day (CYPFG18)

I: Why would a young person want to join?

M: Trying to be like have more power.

M: Trying to be cool. (CYPFG7)

... they're being dragged into it through their addictions, and through them aspirations of - if I go out and I join this paramilitary, or I go out and I'll just help drug dealers, I'm going to get power, and I'm going to get money, so I will be okay. ... it's all they see, and it's all they think they can be. It's definitely one of the key issues, just low aspirations'. (CRFG7)

Some key stakeholders linked the allure of these groups to a search for meaning, identity and belonging. While others means of attaining a traditional masculine identity (linked to toughness, aggression, bravado) might not be open to them paramilitaries could offer an alternative route to achieving this:

Even from my own experience growing up in a real loyalist estate there is that bravado of trying to prove yourself. It is that culture. If there's those older guys around, that's the way they behave, you have to think that you have to behave in that way. ... How you link [that]

to the paramilitaries ... they are the leaders that some of the young people get groomed into to try and impress. (KSFG6)

Whatever the reason, there was general acknowledgement that young people were searching for something that they were unable to access through other means. Therefore almost all who discussed the 'allure' of these groups did so within the context of young people's lives. Against the background of a lack of opportunity, poverty and marginalisation, and 'lack of exposure to other possibilities' (KSFG6), community representatives spoke of the alternative opportunities presented to young people through paramilitaries 'flashing a pound to them' (CRI3). The draws were not, however, only economical, but linked with a search for status, respect and power, or a means of escape. In a number of areas it was suggested that paramilitaries were a response to a sense of hopelessness:

... I think in particular areas ... there's a hopelessness particularly amongst young men that there isn't much of a future and they might be in school ... and definitely might struggle to get a job so what are the other influences around them. Drugs, paramilitaries, some of them see it as an easier way if they get involved to make money or feed their habit or have influence. (CRFG8)

Community representatives working in another area spoke of the longstanding nature of limited opportunities. One worker in particular felt that the issues facing young people today were little different to those during the Conflict. This suggests that historical under-investment and limited opportunities linked to Conflict legacy have endured in some towns and can **push** some young people to seek out ways 'to rise up against' or out of their situation. In his words:

They [young people] might not fully completely understand how they're feeling, or why they want to act the way that they're acting, but they understand that nothing has changed for them. They're facing down the same barrel, or the same poverty gun that everybody else did, and they want to try and rise up against it, but there's nothing for them. There's no employment opportunities in this town still. They're educational attainment is still incredibly poor, our education system is failing terrible, and this community is in exactly the same place that we were forty-five years ago ... (CRFG2)

The sheer volume of discussion around this issue and the sense of hopelessness in some accounts demonstrates the urgent need to tackle systemic issues that may lead to some young people feeling paramilitary involvement is the best option they have open to them.

8.6.4 The Exploitation of Vulnerabilities

It was felt that paramilitary-style groups exploited the vulnerabilities of young people and communities – '*feeding on*' young people and '*festering on the community*'. This language, along with the use of the term '*lure*', captures the insidious and deep-rooted nature of paramilitaries in some areas and the sense of abhorrence felt by many participants in speaking of how children and young people were enticed, manipulated and groomed. When we have young people '*who have no respect [from others], who feel so disengaged, and maybe getting a bit of respect from somewhere, it's easily done*' said one participant (CRFG5).

Children and young people being approached to '*do wee jobs*', or make money through '*selling stuff*' was discussed fairly regularly, and was a known activity in a number of areas. It was felt that some were '*being drawn into paramilitary activity ... very subtly, without even realising it ...*' (DRFG2). Parents in one community spoke of their concerns:

F: There's so many [paramilitaries] ... People are just joining. I think to have that there power behind them ...

F: We would have a wee bit of a fear for our kids ... if they try and come to them ones to join in, or to sell stuff, but you don't know. We talk to our kids all the time about them, well, I do. Never join up with none of them and if anybody approaches you come and tell me. (PFG2)

On the one hand, it is positive that parents are aware of the dangers and talk with their children about them. On the other, that they have to, should be a matter of grave concern.

Many understood that these types of approaches were often part of a grooming process that led to children becoming more deeply involved in drug taking and/ or violence. Describing the process in a town near him, a young man explained:

*There's a few areas in **** [name of town] that would be known to try to recruit some of the youngsters – "hey do you want to do this for me and I'll give you a few bob?" ... (CYPFG16)*

This is similar to the grooming process outlined by others. A young woman spoke of children in a town⁴⁰ within which she volunteered being 'groomed' to sell drugs. She explained the process of befriending (the **pull**), the progression from drug use to drug debt, and the consequences:

⁴⁰ The town the young woman spoke of was not one of our research sites.

... they take in these young people, make mates with them, "I'm your youth worker, I'm great, blah, blah, blah", as soon as they hit 13 they've got a great relationship and then they're like "here, do you want to make a wee bit of money? Here do you want a joint? Here do you want to sell that?" And then they get into debt and then suddenly they're up for being shot because they can't pay back their debt and they're 16/17. But it's grooming, it's a grooming process. (CYPFG18)

That young people did not know the consequences, and that the allure soon disappeared when they were in too deep – owing money, or expected to return a 'favour' – was acknowledged by young people and adults alike. As workers in a research site in the Border Region noted, the sense of power dissipates when young people realise they are under control rather than have power and control:

They kind of give you this, you know, raise you up the pecking order amongst your peers [as you have status and money]. So, that sense of power is there. Which can be quite misleading, because when the power is taken away then, when you realise what position you should be playing, it becomes really, really dangerous, not for just you, but your family as well, because everybody is involved once you get involved. (CRFG9)

A group of young people also engaged in a discussion about young people's powerlessness once 'involved'. They spoke of this in relation to rumours about the involvement of a young person in a high profile shooting in the area. While the factual basis of the discussion is unknown, the nature and intensity of the exchange illustrates the firm belief of some that young people are being groomed and coerced to enact violence due to fears for their own safety. We quote the exchange at length here as it demonstrates: the young people's knowledge of and engagement with the issue; the power relations they identify between the adult (man) and the 'child'; and the inability of the child to escape a situation they have, unknowingly, been groomed for. Interestingly, this was one of two groups of young people that talked about these sorts of issues as constituting child abuse:

M: I do know they are influencing younger people, they are getting younger people to do their dirty work.

*F: Sure what about the riot last year? Apparently, an older boy handed a younger boy a gun and that's the gun that shot *****

...

M: That was down the street from me

M: That there is child abuse.

*F: It's hardly child a-f**king-abuse.*

M: It is, you're handing a child a gun! And you're telling a child to do something. So are you telling me if someone with a gun handed you a gun now and told you to shoot someone, they'd have shot you if you didn't do it.

M: You'd have to take the gun or you're getting shot – it's life or death.

F: Yeah, if you're under threat

M: Why would you not feel pressure not to do something like that?

M: You'd have to not think twice and just do it immediately.

M: It's what they'd call your survival instincts kicking in, that's all it is.

M: See when you're 16 or 17 and a man comes up to you and asks, you do what he tells you to do.

...

M: What I'm trying to say, these people signed up to do this stuff and they're not aware of what they're going to do. So what I'm trying to say is when he hands him that gun, he's signed up for this and he just can't back out. You have to do what they tell you to do. All these young people think it just -

F: - It's glorified. It's glorified what they think they're getting into but they don't realise the consequence that they might be ... handed a gun and say they say "we done this for you so you do this for us".

M: Exactly (CYPFG15)

In addition to 'preying on' children and young people who lack status and opportunities, there was also discussion of targeting those with additional vulnerabilities. Those it was felt would have little power or option to resist coercion and control and would join to preserve their safety, or '*feed their habit*'. Here there was much discussion of the relationship between paramilitaries and drugs, and of a cycle whereby some young people with addictions, sell to nourish the addiction, end up in debt and have to repay this through whatever means the group deems necessary. The follow is illustrative of the process spoken about in a number of the areas:

... you've got young men that are mixed up using drugs so they've probably got drugs on tick [loan] and they're racking up debts and stuff and they're doing that with the wrong people, they're racking that up with paramilitaries and then unfortunately they're faced with "you can't pay this, you either join up or you do this or you do that" and all that is leading to a life of criminality. (CRFG8)

The need to see behind the behaviour was again emphasised by a number of community representatives and key stakeholders. There were push (poverty, addiction, lack of opportunities) and pull factors (powerful groups, family and community networks and histories) acting together to draw young people into crime and to engage in behaviours that youth workers noted were often contrary to their character. In many areas it was felt that drug addiction was a major push factor, and was exploited by groups to pull young people into criminality and violence. There was a sense that it was these groups who provided the drugs in the first place, hence creating some of the addictions and problems within areas. The 'drug problem' served these groups in a number of ways: it provided an income; it was used to legitimise their existence with a claim that they controlled the flow of drugs in the area and dealt with problem users/dealers; it provided a ready supply of 'recruits'. While this was very much a perception, and there was in fact much more talk about prescription drugs as the gateway to addiction, it nonetheless reveals some contemporary discourses around paramilitary-style groups.

8.7 Attitudes to Present Day Groups

The nature of participants' discussions to date, in terms of the exploitation and victimisation of children and young people, and the negative impacts of exposure to violence, is an indication of attitudes towards the existence of paramilitary-style groups. Attitudes and views are categories under three main themes: a comparison with past paramilitaries; the political basis of current groups; policing and protection. These were not, however, mutually exclusive and most often there was a blend of views within accounts. In other words, while many rejected present day groups, they might support some of their roles or understand their continued existence. The reality of attitudes, as one Departmental representative put it, were '*maybe more complicated in the picture on the ground*' (DRFG2).

8.7.1 Perceptions of Paramilitaries Past and Present

Some refused to give current groups or the activities they were involved in the status of paramilitarism, instead referring to them as '*criminal gangs*' or '*gangsters*'. As noted previously, many associated these groups with the sale and control of drugs within communities. One young woman argued that: '*they're all drug dealers. ... you will not find drugs being sold if they're not from a paramilitary*' (CYPFG18). Other activities they were allegedly involved in included extortion, theft, sale of stolen/counterfeit goods, exploitation of children and young people, in addition to intimidation and physical attacks. It was some of these activities that led participants to label them '*gangs*'.

Comments like the following were commonplace:

I don't think they're paramilitaries now. I think they're gangs. We need to stop giving them that status of paramilitaries. (CRFG7)

I think because before we would have had paramilitary style groups, as they're referred to and now we have a growing gang culture in some communities across Northern Ireland ... (KSI4)

Years ago they were paramilitaries. Now they're just gangsters. (PFG2)

This change in language among such a wide spectrum of adult participants might, in part, reflect the impact of recent moves to re-frame paramilitary activity as criminal activity.

Many, including some young people, drew a distinction between present day groups and those active during the Conflict. Despite some noting that '*the people who were involved in the Conflict are still running the show*' (CRFG9), others claimed that the groups and individuals involved today were very different:

M: ... they're breakaways, they went off and did their own things just how they treat you and all.

M: I wouldn't say they're the same now.

F: The IRA would be more seen as a political vehicle of what they think. Today is more seen ... like the breakaway.

I: So, do you think they have any political - ?

M: - Not the ones now, no.

...

M: Aye. Most of them are drug dealers.

M: Hoods with guns. (CYPFG13)

That's the difference in then and now. Then they were acting like terrorists and nowadays they're just local drug dealers and if you do something in their territory that's all they can do, is hurt you. See then even if they knew who you were, that was it. If the UVF man found out a Catholic was in their area they were shot then. But see now, you sell drugs in their area you're done. They're drug dealers now, they're not big terrorists like then. (CYPFG18)

Community representatives working in some areas also noted a lack of political or sectarian motive to current 'paramilitary activity', replaced by a focus on power and making money:

... they're not in it for the glorified political reason. (CRFG9)

The focus is all now in making money and getting power in these communities. Not a struggle anymore, not a political struggle, or a struggle for freedom, and it's now about power and crime and money ... (CRFG7)

For some it appeared to be the removal of a political and community-orientated motive that led to the redefining of behaviours from being 'paramilitary activities' to being 'gangsterism', 'corruption', 'criminality' and 'child abuse':

*... A lot of these ones, the paramilitaries, half of them weren't even f**king born during the Conflict. They wouldn't know what a Republican was. They don't know what it stands for. It's about corruption and money. It's power and control... at the end of the day you're not only [a] paramilitary if you're beating and shooting, you're a child molester, you're abusing kids, and it's not seen like that here, which is wrong. (CRI4)*

This notion of there no longer being a political or community-orientated reason for their existence, and their activities, was picked up on by a group of parents who discussed fears their own children would be recruited and end up in prison for actions with only a criminal purpose:

I: Is there any, in your sense, is there any politics to it?

F: ... I would see no purpose in anybody going to jail for a paramilitary now. Years ago, there was a war –

F: - that was for the cause.

F: - but now there's just criminality, and your child is going to get sent out to do something, to beat somebody else's child, or to do anything, and go to jail for years. (PFG2)

Activities associated with these groups – drug dealing, the exploitation of children, communities living in fear of them – were said to distinguish them from paramilitaries of the past. These were, apparently, actions that would have been 'against their rules' (PFG2). Groups today, it was claimed, caused community problems rather than responded to them. This is despite the fact that 'community problems' were often responded to in similarly violent ways in the past. Indeed in

some accounts there appeared a somewhat romanticised view of paramilitarism during the Conflict and a denial, or lack of knowledge, of the control and violence enacted on young people, as well as the more hidden forms of violence against women. This narrative was evident in the accounts of some parents and community representatives, despite themselves having shared harrowing stories of the victimisation of family and friends by paramilitary groups during the Conflict.

Indeed, if we compare the discussion of young people in one area about the role and actions of paramilitary-style groups today, with that of community representatives in another about the role and actions of paramilitary groups in the past, there are similarities. While the young people's account speaks of these groups selling drugs and shooting people often linked with the sale of drugs, the community representatives account speaks of people being shot for taking or selling drugs:

Young people:

M: Aye. They're not what they used to be back then, but they haven't gone away yet. There's just a wee change. Back then they were more... people would go to them ones instead of cops and all that, and they were like the protectors of their community, but now they're more -

M: - Controlling

M: They're controlling I think maybe now. They're selling drugs and all, and shooting people in their own community and all that, instead of what they were doing. (CYPFG11)

Community representatives:

... paramilitaries would have been more involved in keeping your community in check so you didn't know what a drug was ... Lots of people lost their lives through getting shot dead for not because you were a Catholic or a Protestant but because you were into drugs. There was a lot of lives lost because that was contained in an area. (CRFG8)

While actions may be similar, the difference was in the detail, aim and orientation. The point appeared to be that '*they're not doing it for a reason*' (PI1) – it was neither furthering a political agenda or '*stopping problems in the area*' (PFG2) – thus there was '*no sense in it*' (CRI3). At least the violence of the past had a cause, a higher aim and purpose. It was deemed to be community

and/or socially orientated. Much activity today was instead viewed as individually orientated and morally corrupt.

8.7.2 Remnants of the Past?

The contextual history and legacy of these groups and individuals was, however, acknowledged by some⁴¹. There was an understanding that the communities they operate within were those impacted most adversely by the Conflict, and were those controlled by paramilitaries in the past. Some community representatives clearly positioned these groups in the legacies of the Conflict and the outworkings of 'peace':

I believe if we had have dealt with the past accordingly we wouldn't have the environment for paramilitaries. Unfortunately, we still don't have a functioning proper police force here, in this community and that gives legitimacy to paramilitaries. (CRI1)

The issue of police legitimacy will be returned to in Section 8.8. In a separate interview with a community representative from the same area, discontent with political settlement was identified as a reason for the continued existence of paramilitary-style groups:

they're there and they're there for a reason. They're there because of the political situation ... I think they're a symptom of the problem and I think that once we always have that problem which is the violation, the legal violation of Irish sovereignty, then you will have all the issues that come out of that and armed groups are just one of them. (CRI2)

It is for these types of reasons that others suggested there were differences in the groups that exist today. Some did have a clear political basis while this was less evident in others. In a focus group of workers also from the same area, one member enforced that there were different groups with different ideologies and motives. He acknowledged while some were individually motivated, others were politically and community-orientated:

... yes, you have those people within movements that are always going to be out for themselves. But equally, you have the ideological people who aren't driving flash cars, who aren't taxing drug dealers, who live next door to us, who live in this community, whose

⁴¹ These views were expressing mainly among participants in one research site, but also among some key stakeholders and Departmental representatives. They were not raised by any of the young people with whom we spoke.

children attend our youth clubs, and who are absolutely passionate about their community as well. (CRFG2)

Others felt that some groups themselves believed they had a legitimate ideological purpose. They existed for a reason '*because they believe in something*' that is '*just passed down*' (PI3). This linked with discussions about intergenerational pathways to recruitment – through families and communities (see Section 8.6.1).

This again demonstrates the complexity of the situation, and the importance of not neglecting political and historical factors in responses to these groups. The circumstances of the Conflict and Conflict legacy enables them to flourish as there is a history of violence and control in these communities:

If you grow up in an area like this these attacks had happened for more than two generations now ... there's a sense that this is how things are done, and it will always be like this ... (KSFG6)

Added to this, are the social disadvantages and limited opportunities that can make joining these groups 'attractive', as well as a perceived swift and certain justice for those who disrupted the community.

8.7.3 Protectors and Providers of 'Justice'

Attitudes towards present-day groups were often more complex than participants' accounts first suggested. While expressing anger, revulsion or fear on the one hand, ambiguity often emerged. This is evident in the following short exchange:

I: Do you think there's any place for paramilitaries in the community?

M: Nah

M: I don't want to, but they do keep certain people in their place

M: Aye

I: What sort of people do they keep in their place?

M: People like breaking into houses and just doing criminal acts

I: So, why wouldn't people go to the police for those sorts of things?

M: Because police won't do anything. (CYPFG13)

Actions against some people and some behaviours were, therefore, deemed legitimate on the basis that it kept the community safe. There was, however, a lack of agreement on which actions

were, and were not supported. While a young woman spoke of her distaste for these groups with regards to drug dealing and exploiting young people, she expressed support for them with regards to punishing rape, which she understood as notoriously difficult to prosecute (CYPFG18). Likewise, a young person in another area felt that while these groups had a role in communities, he drew the line of acceptability at them taking weapons onto the streets (CYPFG6). Among many participants it was recognised that a rejection of paramilitarism was hampered by the perceived swiftness of 'community justice' and a lack of police legitimacy:

... some of the communities ... see them as their protectors, where they lift the phone and if something happened in the community, like they phoned the police, they don't see anything happening, so if they phone 'John' down the street, he'll have it dealt with within 10 minutes sort of thing. So, you're fighting against that as well. (DRFG2)

This very belief was expressed among some young people in one of research sites:

*F: ... Young people hate the police and don't trust the police, young people hate the paramilitaries and don't trust them but who do they know, if they have an issue, is going to do more? The paramilitaries. And that's why they're still about because people are still going to them, still giving them money to fix an issue, whatever that issue may be.
M: That they [paramilitaries] probably made it in the first place.
F: Well, it depends. If the police aren't doing something and you know someone else will and it's really, really effecting you, what are you going to do? ... (CYPFG18)*

Others recognised that paramilitaries themselves used these sorts of feelings to legitimise their own existence - 'they [paramilitary-style groups] think the cops don't do enough so they do it' (CYPFG12). A similar point was expressed by community representatives in a second area:

They will tell you they're here because there's a need for them to be here, that they're not doing it because they want to do it, they're doing it at the request of people in the community. (CRFG2)

Indeed in a third area, we were told the community were 'crying out for a coat of arms', 'to bring back the gun' and 'looking for a return to paramilitary control' (CRFG9) in light of an increase in crime and drug dealing and a perception that this was out of control. Added to this, community representatives and key stakeholders reported that in some instances when a person was

assaulted, a typical reaction was '*they didn't get shot for nothing*' (CRFG2). Indeed some young people expressed this view despite having earlier rejected these groups and their actions:

... when they get caught, they'd be let out the next day and all. People get let out and all a few days later. You see them about the roads. So, you're better giving them a beating.
(CYPFG11)

We see how in all of these instances, feeling of insecurity and perceptions of a lack of police efficacy can combine to provide tacit support for paramilitary-style groups. There may be, as outlined earlier, a sense of normalisation and expectation of swift and punitive responses to perceived community problems. Added to this, of course, are historical relations with policing in many communities which impact feelings of trust and a willingness to report crime. Also, the view among some that current policing is still not impartial:

... I suppose the policing end of things within communities hasn't really either reached or fulfilled its potential of the targets of the Good Friday Agreement for it to be an impartial police force and be a police force that was representative of all communities and that communities would accept. ... Hence communities feeling the need for paramilitary involvement, maybe even in terms of security or protection for their own community ...
(CRFG1).

8.8 Policing, Communities and Paramilitaries

There was little space within the research to explore the broad area of policing and Conflict legacy. We focused primarily on policing as part of discussions on paramilitaries. Within these, general attitudes to the police as well as perceptions of the policing of paramilitaries emerged. Some young also spoke in depth about their personal relations with the police, and given the primacy of this within their accounts, we give the issue some attention here. It is also important because as identified in the previous section, negative experiences and perceptions of policing, can lead to support for alternative forms of policing and 'justice'.

8.8.1 Historical and Contemporary Attitudes

Community representatives across a number of the areas noted poor community-police relationships, recognising that these were often based on historical experiences of discrimination and violence. Stories regarding policing experiences were passed down within families and communities and some parents themselves, were certain that they passed on their own negative attitudes to their children. This was based on fear for their children's safety as a result of their own

experiences when growing up, and a belief that change was limited. One father expressed this as follows:

... it's passed on. Stories are passed on. It's re-lived. It's massive. It's massively affecting people, I think. But peace, especially in [area], nobody has any faithfulness in the police, or the RUC, or PSNI ... They don't trust them. They can change the name but it's still the same shop. The same owners, and nobody trusts that ... (PI3)

A group of mothers also spoke of how their own attitudes and experiences impacted their children's views of, and relations with, the police. Their discussion is worth quoting at length as it reveals the multiple fears parents in some areas have for their children – coming to the attention of the State police, and those who 'informally' police the community. It also highlights the combination of factors that lead to paramilitary-style groups not being reported to the police. In this exchange it is clear, that in their view, an understanding of historical relations with the police, and the rules of 'touting', are essential for their children in the present day in order to keep them safe:

F: ... I wouldn't go to the police. ... I wouldn't go to them so I wouldn't, unless they had to come to the house. If there was a murder or something, I would get them for something like that. No, I wouldn't go near them and I would instil that into my kids

I: You would, or you wouldn't?

F: I would. Never to be afraid of them, because they tortured me too. I was tortured, I mean my family was tortured. Other people's was tortured. I mean, they used to beep the horns and squeal down the street to me on a regular basis, and I would have real angry issues against the police.

...

I: So, you said that you know you've passed that onto your kids. Would that be similar to other people in terms of maybe passing on attitudes, like if you don't trust the police?

F: Yeah.

F: Yeah

F: I think kids grow up thinking anyway 'the wee tout'. I think a lot of them, and that's not instilled in kids. Everybody just grew up, and it's just generations, generations always grew up that you just don't go to the police.

F: I think too it's fear that's put in, because our fear was, you did have fear. You'd get shot dead. So, you would more encourage your kids not to go near them out of fear. I

don't even think, well trust, I don't know, I think it is more fear for me. I was just afraid. So, I would have been more to my kids just not to be [going to the police] for fear.
F: *As you say, you've to change with the times, but sometimes it's hard. (PFG2)*

Some young people verified that views were passed on generationally and that they had some understanding of '*what they [the police] done. What went on back then*' (CYPFG13). The '*really, really deep, deep distrust of the police*' in a border area was understood by young people in one group who acknowledged that attitudes '*don't change overnight ... it doesn't go away*' (CYPFG16). And a young woman in a third area spoke of her mother explaining differential policing on the basis of religion. In a fourth area, all but one of the young people in a focus group expressed their mistrust of the police, with one young woman explaining how she had come to this position:

We have a massive problem with police. See like off my brother, my brother has always taught me like all Catholics are targets and stuff like that there and I think that originated from the Troubles and even now, there's a lot of crime that don't be reported because if you go to the cops, you're being a tout and stuff like that there. (CYPFG15)

These attitudes and beliefs impact a willingness to report crime to the police. This was particularly the case with paramilitary-related activity whereby reporting on the community was still viewed as 'touting' and brought with it potentially violent reprisals. Explaining why young people in his community did not report their knowledge or experience of intimidation, control and abuse a young man said: '*they're scared too because then something happens them'uns for trying to talk*' (CYPFG12).

Changing with the times, as one mother said, could be difficult and some felt that this was made more difficult by the modes and methods of policing in their neighbourhood. Some rejected the notion that policing had been 'normalised', pointing to continued discrimination on the basis of ethno-national identity (e.g. the disproportionate stop and search of young people from particular areas), and the heavy, almost militarised policing of some communities:

... the police here don't come in and police like the normal police would do in any European city, so what we have here is convoys of police come in heavily armed, they come in here with assault rifles, they come in here in Land Rovers ... (CRI1)

Young people's exposure to these forms of policing, alongside narratives of the '*pain and suffering inflicted*' (CRFG2) in the past, consolidated negative attitudes to and engagement with the police:

We still have house raids. We still have stop and checks. We still have the police up around and driving around in Land Rovers, driving around in cars, on a daily basis, and that's what our young people see. (CRFG2)

8.8.2 Policing Paramilitary-Style Groups

Alongside a continued lack of trust of the police in some areas, and fears of reporting paramilitary-style activity, those in a number of communities expressed the view that the policing of paramilitaries was ineffective. On a number of occasions it was stated that '*everyone knows*' the individuals involved in these groups, and this extended to the police. Some felt that the police did not care about their areas, that they would simply '*just drive in, drive out*' (CYPFG1) when things were quiet but were not present when needed. There was a sense in some communities that they had been left to deal with the issue of paramilitary control and violence alone. Parents in one area, for example, felt that the police came to the community:

... after things happened to let people see that they'd been in, but, I mean, they know who's doing what. And they let them just do it themselves [talking of paramilitaries]. I think that they know who's doing what, who's out there doing whatever, and they don't care. They can come into the area a lot of times when things have happened and they just come in to be seen ... (PFG2)

Youth workers from the same area relayed stories of a lack of police support when paramilitaries tried to enter their premises, or took over streets, or when they arrived after a so-called punishment shooting:

... I get frustrated that no-one else does anything, and I get frustrated with the police, because the police, to respond to that shooting ... Now, everyone knew it was going to happen, the police included, because they deliver all these messages. Forty-five minutes it took them getting to the scene. It was like they wanted this to happen. And then when they got out, how they treated the residents, and how they treated the young people, no-one would talk. ... I'm sure if the cops had have looked around them, they could have pinpointed key members of organisations who stood there, but yet they

continued on asking people in front of everyone, "what did you see, did you see him?" and placing other people at risk. So, I don't know, I have a real, it frustrates me in terms of, it's almost like it's very quietly allowed to go on.'
(CRFG7)

These experiences maintain suspicion towards the police, including the belief that they effectively condone these methods of crime control in some communities. In light of the perceived ineffectiveness of the police, community representatives in this and another area felt that they had been left to put themselves at risk in order to protect young people. They noted that it was them, rather than the police who were taking on the role of protecting the community. Yet they compared their vulnerability, of sometimes living only doors away from these individuals, with the police who *'are armed to the teeth'* but who *'will not go in and deal with it'* (CRFG3). Explaining the risks that came with this, one participant explained:

I live in an area that has paramilitaries, splinter ones. How much can you raise your head? I've been targeted by dissident Loyalists in the past. So, I have to be careful in how much I raise my head as a woman. (CRFG3)

The belief that policing of these groups is ineffectual, and that *'there seem to be some people in some organisations that are untouchable'* (CRFG8) consolidates the view that there was no point reporting activity to the police.

8.8.3 Young People's Experiences of the Police

Young people, specifically young men, in five groups (representing three areas) spoke in detail about their personal engagements with the police, which had led to their dislike and mistrust of them. More generally they felt that negative encounters were as a consequence of their age, dress and location and that they were stereotyped and discriminated against on this basis. While they did not relate these discussions to legacy issues – historical relations and attitudes – they are nonetheless important to note here. Firstly, community representatives often put these types of experiences in the context of historical policing, the reputation of the community and the labelling and disproportionate policing of young people from the area. Secondly, as can be seen in one of the accounts below, negative encounters with the police can leave room for the legitimisation of alternatives.

Young men in these groups spoke of being stopped and searched (*'pulled over'*), often on multiple occasions, and in their view, with little justification. While some knew they had rights in relation to

this, one young man noted that his friends were '*afraid to speak up*' (CYPFG2). A young man in another group felt that the police treatment of him was so discriminatory that he made a complaint to the Police Ombudsman, but to no avail. Some used the language of being '*harassed*', '*picked out*' and '*tortured*' in explaining the degree to which they were stopped and searched, describing the police as '*bullies*' who could effectively do as they wanted.

Many explained their unfair treatment as based on stereotypes – their age, where they were from, who their families were, but mainly how they dressed. As one young man put it '*we're often stopped because of the fashion choices we make, not for what we've got in our pockets half the time*' (CYPFG14). Indeed their treatment by police was so negative that some were of the belief that the police simply did not like children: '*... they hate kids. They would do anything to get you*' (CYPFG13). On the basis of these experiences, resentment was high and could manifest in hatred and contempt for the police, so much so that one young man felt that there was more respect for paramilitaries as they were honest about their actions:

The police are bullies, they actually are. They think because ... they can get on some moral high horse and give the community a hard time. They're the villains of the community you know what I mean, they actually are. People have more respect for paramilitaries than they do police, do you know what I mean, and they're the people the police are saying are criminals yet they run about and do all this... (CYPFG14)

While the actions of some officers are not reflective of all, the types of interactions experienced by these young people in three different areas suggest they are not unique.

8.9 Conclusions and Rights Implications

... wishing it gone has not made it happen ... The task is a complex one that will require a sustained, long-term and holistic effort that combines a policing and justice response, side by side with a major and energetic tackling of the deep socio-economic issues facing the communities where the paramilitaries operate (Independent Review Commission, 2019: 5).

While this research demonstrates that many are still impacted by the *legacies* of violence, it also points to Conflict-related violence as a feature of many communities *today*. Some families are dealing with the pains of past violence (experienced during the Conflict) in combination with the fear, threat and/or experience of current violence. In this context, the concepts of 'Conflict legacy' and 'post conflict society' were felt to overshadow the reality that victims are still being created.

Knowledge of the existence and actions of so-called paramilitary-style groups was pervasive, and 'paramilitary talk' among young people within some communities was commonplace. The presence of paramilitaries meant the potential for violence was ever present. Recent events – the shooting of Lyra McKee, the implications of Brexit, the charging of Solider F - demonstrated to young people that violence could erupt at any time, and threats to perceived culture and identity were still used to politicise and recruit. The sense of insecurity and undercurrent of suspicion expressed by some young people was reminiscent of reflections of parents growing up in Conflict-affected communities 30- 40 years ago.

Since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, consistent concerns have been raised about continued paramilitary-style violence and its impacts on the child's right to freedom from all forms of violence (Art. 19, UNCRC) and protection from 'torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' (Art. 37a, UNCRC). In their Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016b) reported concern that:

In Northern Ireland, children face violence, including shootings, carried out by non-State actors involved in paramilitary-style attacks, and recruitment by such non-State actors (para. 48).

Five years on, and over twenty years after the ceasefires and peace agreements, this research demonstrates that the intimidation, abuse and exploitation of children by paramilitary-style groups remains a reality. Vivid accounts of abuses against children, young people, and their families were shared. The volume and scope of these demonstrates the myriad of ways in which children, young people, families and communities continue to experience coercive control. Reflective of the relative invisibility of the impacts of violence on women and girls during the Conflict, little is known today about how young women experience violence related to conflict legacy. Research by McAlister et al. (2021) confirms this, identifying the processes by which young women's experiences of paramilitary-style violence are 'silently silenced'.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recognise that 'securing children's rights to survival, dignity, well-being, health, development, participation and non-discrimination ... are threatened by violence' (UNCRC General Comment No. 13, para. 13), and that 'preventing violence in one generation reduces its likelihood in the next' (ibid., para. 14). Conflict-related violence has far-reaching effects on individuals, families and communities, and its impacts can be felt by future generations. Experiences within some of the communities involved in this research (and others not included), suggest that a new generation of victims is being created. Abuses on individuals, be

it children, parents or siblings, rarely have isolated effects, and this research demonstrates the need for whole-family and whole-community responses. While some young people alluded to the impact of paramilitary presence and violence on their mental health, more often this manifested in fear, insecurity, paranoia and coping mechanisms employed to preserve psychological and physical well-being (e.g. mental and physical avoidance). Parents, youth and community workers could identify more vividly the impacts – bed-wetting; anxiety; evidence of trauma; substance use as a coping mechanism; destructive behaviours.

Concern was also expressed that living in violent environments created a culture of violence. There was clear evidence from young people's accounts that violence was normalised, but not that it was an accepted cultural norm. Normalising enables coping, managing and surviving in the context of conflict (see Cairns, 1987). Violence continues because it serves a purpose. It maintains power for some and is reproductive in the context of limited opportunities. The pathways and drivers into these groups for young people attest to this – it is not the pull of violence but the search for identity, belonging, status or safety that is significant (see also McAlister et al., 2018). That these groups provide one of the only means through which some young people feel they can achieve this, is an indictment of the post-conflict narrative. Indeed it is in recognition of the link between paramilitarism and social deprivation that the Tackling Paramilitarism Action Plan (2015) emphasises the need to address systemic issues - material deprivation, social and economic stability, education and employment opportunities. Yet in the first review of implementation of the Action Plan, it was some of these systemic issues that were highlighted as requiring further action (IRC, 2018). The Independent Reporting Commission (2019: 9) have since reiterated the importance of tackling '...systemic, socio-economic issues facing the communities where the paramilitaries operate ...', and enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes for young people (Rec. D1), which in their view 'is one of the most critical elements of the entire Executive Action Plan aimed at ending paramilitarism' (ibid: 105).

Despite recent public awareness campaigns and evolving programmes of work to tackle paramilitarism (since 2017), the political silence post-Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, failure to define acts against children as child abuse, and invest in and support communities in the transition from conflict, has caused what Smyth (2017) refers to as a 'societal shrug'. Ignoring the issue, rationalising it or locating responsibility for dealing with it elsewhere. It is unsurprising, therefore, that within families and communities silence is deeply embedded. Paramilitary violence is silenced through fear and coercion, cultures that stigmatise 'touting', and lack of police legitimacy but also through normalisation, denial or avoidance (McAlister et al., 2021). Normalisation and avoidance appeared ways of coping with and managing a threat that while ever

present, would 'not come for you' if you kept your head down. It was employed by parents in the current context as well as young people, again implying learned behaviours. These techniques are similar to those identified as coping strategies among adults and children *during* the Conflict (Cairns, 1987). This would point to transgenerational patterns, and a learned cultural response among this generation, and within the 'new Northern Ireland'.

As demonstrated consistently, silence and avoidance have negative implications personally, and within families (e.g. McNally, 2014; Smyth et al., 2004). This extends to communities and wider society. Lack of reporting of paramilitary abuse within communities, the media, by political representatives, and downplaying or sidelining the effects on individuals, communities and society, can impact attitudes and responses. If the extent of the issue and its impact is unknown, the case for community resources and specialised services is weakened. One of the consequences, as identified in this research, is that the burden to respond falls on individuals and services within the very communities most affected. Meanwhile, it is not perceived as a societal issue, but one of certain individuals in certain areas – a problem of and for 'these communities'.

8.10 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, and consultations with our advisory groups, we make the following recommendations:

- The State must uphold their duty to action the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016b) and the UN Committee Against Torture (2019):
 - The Committee recommends that the State party: Take immediate and effective measures to protect children from violence by non-State actors involved in paramilitary-style attacks as well as from recruitment by such actors into violent activities, including through measures relating to transitional and criminal justice (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016b, para. 48c).
 - The State party should: (a) Strengthen its efforts to promptly and effectively investigate cases of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland, including against children, ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with appropriate sanctions, and ensure that victims have access to effective protection and can obtain redress; (b) Intensify its efforts to prevent the recruitment of children by paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland (UN Committee Against Torture, 2019, para 43).
- While there are positive moves to re-define paramilitarism as criminal activity, the historical and political disputes that feed into such activity should not be ignored. It is these that

destabilise peace and energise support for these groups at particular times. Addressing paramilitarism requires addressing legacy issues.

- Attending to the push and pull factors that combine to draw some young people into paramilitary-style groups will require targeted work with children in 'at risk' families, community programmes and supports, and addressing underinvestment and lack of opportunities in the communities most affected.
- There is a need for sustained efforts to inform public debate and discourse, and for those in positions of influence to use the language of child abuse and child exploitation when referring to the experiences of children.
- Greater resourcing, extension and sustainability of neighbourhood policing is required in communities most impacted by paramilitarism. Paramilitary threats and violence against children must be treated by the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) as child abuse.
- Young women should be more visible in the actions, implementation and analysis of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme.
- Family support initiatives should feature more prominently in the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme of work. Programmes directed towards young people alone will be limited in their potential.
- Paramilitarism is more visible in some areas than others. There is a particular need for supports in rural communities, and communities in the Border Region of Ireland. The Communities in Transitions project (Action B4) should extend beyond the eight geographic areas in which it is currently targeted.
- There should be increased focus on processes of grooming and exploitation (within this context), in schools and youth programmes. The value of 'real-life' examples was reiterated by young people.
- There is a need for specific research into how young women experience this type of violence.
- While some of the physical impacts of paramilitary violence are known, less is known about the psychological effects. Further research to examine the long-term psycho-social impacts of paramilitary abuse is required.
- There appears some connection between families victimised by paramilitary-style groups today, and those who experienced violence, disruption or trauma within their families during the Conflict. Further research is needed to examine the family backgrounds of young people targeted by paramilitary-style groups.

9 Giving Voice to Future Hopes: Listening to Children and Young People

“You see what I write, can you actually give it to a politician? (CYPFG3)”

“Listen to the voices of the future (CYPFG14)”

9.1 Introduction

This research was embedded in a child's rights approach, giving priority to the voice of children and young people and was guided by Lundy's (2007) model of participation and its four elements of *space, voice, audience, influence*. Central to this approach is a commitment to Article 12 of the UNCRC which states that children have the right to an opinion and to have that opinion heard. Whilst the central aim of the research was to investigate the continuing transgenerational impact of the Troubles/Conflict on the lives of children and young people and parents, it is also necessary to provide space for children and young people to voice their hopes and fears for the future. This chapter therefore gives voice to the current generation of young people who participated in the research, drawing out some of the key issues they raised when asked about future hopes and fears. In doing so the chapter also encapsulates the key messages young people wish to send to government, politicians and decision makers more broadly.

9.2 Voice, Participation and Influence: Valuing the Voice of Children and Young People

Many of the young people raised the importance of being heard and having their voice listened to by key decision makers. It was clear that participants understood the value of their voice, suggesting that decision makers need to '*Listen more to young people. Being younger we will be the people of the future*' (CYPFG2). However some felt that they were not given the appropriate

space to have their views taken into account. One young person asked, *'Can you really speak your mind, or do you have to be grown up about it?'* (CYPFG3).

A number of young people expressed a level of scepticism in regards to having their voice heard and holding influence with decision makers. Reflecting on sharing the findings of this research, one young person stated *'you said bring back reports to the decision makers - who will not open them'* (CYPFG3). Another noted, *'I don't think young people are being taken seriously enough'* (CYPFG8), while one other felt, *'They're not going to listen...'* (CYPFG6).

Notwithstanding the reservations of actually 'being heard', it was evident from young people across the research sites that voicing their view, being listened to and having influence was a central message to decision makers. Participants emphasized the importance of decision makers not only understanding their lived experiences and being guided by the concerns they raise but also delivering on the promises they make. Speaking on how decision makers should engage with young people, one focus group suggested *'If you promise us something, deliver on that promise. Most importantly listen to youth as we are the future'* (CYPFG16). Another group noted that politicians should *'Listen to young people and make decisions adopting what we say'* (CYPFG2). Despite this there was a broad consensus across the groups that decision makers remain disengaged from young people.

Furthermore, when expressing opinions on how they view politicians/decision makers and their roles, young people conveyed a negative outlook, considering them to be distrustful and failing in their responsibilities to society more generally. Terms used when referencing politicians/decision makers included, *'Useless; Tos*ers'* (CYPFG3) and *'Ar*eholes'* (CYPFG5), suggesting that they need to *'Sort out the Gov please!!!'* (CYPFG2); *'Do your job!'* (CYPFG5) *'Get your act together!!'* (CYPFG5); *'Get off your AR*E'* (CYPFG5). One young person suggested *'They're all just liars'* (CYPFG12). That said, it was evident that young people understood the importance of politics, the role of politicians and the impact political decisions can have on them and their communities. One young person noted, *'It's good to know what's going on in your community and what's being done about it'* (CYPFG13). Although others noted that key decisions impacting their lives are not always explained well and they are, therefore, left wanting/needing further explanations about the potential repercussions of significant political decisions. For example, participants noted confusion around key issues including the withdrawal from the European Union/Brexit and one noted, *'They don't explain things enough, the likes of Brexit'* (CYPFG5).

9.2.1 Key Messages to Government

It is evident that many young people understand that their voice should be heard and that decision makers need to take their viewpoints and experiences into account. Notwithstanding the few

participants who noted a level of cynicism on how seriously their voice is considered, many young people expressed the hope that their voice is heard. For this to be achieved young people need to be given the opportunity to engage in a meaningful way with decision makers. It is central for decision makers /politicians to explain the purpose, aim and potential outcomes of policy decisions, particularly those which will impact on the lives of young people. As noted by one group, decision makers need to,

Consider young people when making decisions or improving facilities. We are the future and we need facilities to grow and develop to ensure our country is stable for the future. (CYPFG10).

9.3 Embedding Support: Building Appropriate Services and Resources

Young people across the research sites highlighted the challenges linked to the lack of relevant youth focused services. In particular, many spoke to the need for future investment in health and youth based services. It is apparent that many felt that support at both an individual and community level, was limited, if not totally absent.

9.3.1 Health Services

Young people overwhelming highlighted the need for better health services and in particular mental health support. This includes both service provisions as well as raising awareness of how mental ill-health is experienced by the current youth generation. As noted in earlier chapters, young people highlighted how poor services accounted for the high rates of poor mental health which in turn has led to the exacerbation of problems over time. Young people understood how the current gaps in child and adolescent mental health services has led to a myriad of challenges and difficulties, including the medication of mental health difficulties and the contribution to the high levels of (youth) suicide.

Speaking to their hopes (and fears) for the future, a significant number of young people noted the importance of acknowledging mental ill-health, suicide and in particular the gaps in services, calling for, '*Better mental health services*' (CYPFG8); '*Additional and effective support for mental health*' (CYPFG2); '*more mental health services*' (CYPFG1); '*Better mental health care*' (CYPFG8). One focus group summarised their hopes for '*more mental health awareness; dealing with it; help if you need it*' (CYPFG10). Encapsulating the views of many participants across the research sites, one young person noted,

... we need to have better mental health services as there is not enough services for people with mental health problems such as depression. (CYPFG8).

As noted in earlier discussions (see Chapter 6) many young people raised various areas of concern including, but not limited to: relationship difficulties; family pressures; school and exams; pressures relating to appearance; peer pressure; bullying; poverty; financial difficulties, and lack of opportunities. Many also discussed drug misuse, as well as high rates of youth suicide in their communities. As stated, although they did not tend to relate these to the residual impacts of the Conflict, many of the points young people raised were similarly discussed by adult participants in the context of youth mental health and conflict legacy.

There was hope across a number of groups that young people will begin to have confidence in support provisions, which will enable them to seek help and *'For people to feel confident enough to speak up about how they feel'* (CYPFG1). One group noted the need for, *'More people to speak up about mental health before it is too late'* (CYPFG3). Although a number of young people hoped for future investment and development in child and adolescent mental health services, there was also concerns and fears that change is not happening quick enough. One young woman noted her fears of the lack of services for those young people in need of support now, suggesting there should be,

More help for people that struggled with mental health because loads of people, it's like loads of people, are getting turned away. I seen this fella the other day and he's like seventeen sixteen or something, and he's really struggling, and he went to the hospital and the mental health team said they couldn't help him until he was 18. So, God knows how he's feeling. He's probably wanting to commit suicide, but yet he should get help there and then, or in the next couple of days, but he has to wait until he's 18. (CYPFG11)

Summing up the hopes for better mental health services one young man expressed, *'I just hope it gets better like, you know what I mean'*. (CYPFG12)

9.3.2 Key Messages to Government

Many of the young people expressed the need to instil confidence in their generation so they are able to speak up if they are confronted with mental ill-health and associated challenges. When asked what should decision makers prioritise, participants stressed the importance of immediate investment in mental health provisions. One group suggested, *'Put out more help for people feeling suicidal or struggling with bad mental health problems. Put the money into better things'* (CYPFG11). Another group recommended the Government should,

Give the NHS more money. They currently don't have enough for more resources for mental health and that is incredibly stupid. The NHS are incredibly stressed with their money and are struggling to give the attention that is needed to mental health. (CYPFG17)

Overall, the key message from young people to decision makers is to invest in a more holistic approach to the development of child and adolescent mental health services. This includes building awareness of the reach of mental ill-health, its causes and impact, as well as creating visible and well-supported provisions. Reflecting the hopes of many young people, one group asked for government to, *'Find a way to help more people with their mental health. It is one of the most important things, so get your sh*t together'* (CYPFG17).

9.3.3.Youth Services

A further area of change young people advocated for was the need for significant development of youth provisions and youth activities. The lack of youth services including youth and community centres was a major issue across the research sites. Young people understood the importance of providing access to a range of facilities and activities for their generation. Certainly in rural research sites, youth provisions were of particular importance, with young people noting the need for, *'More services for young people outside towns'* (CYPFG8); *'Youth activities other than the GAA in rural areas and towns'* (CYPFG10); and *'More youth centres for people that live in the countryside'* (CYPFG8). Across the research sites many young people felt that there was just *'nothing to do'* and, therefore, more resources and structured activities would provide young people with social spaces to *'hang with friends'* and give them *'Something to do'*. One female participant suggested there should be, *'... more youth clubs at the weekend instead of walking the streets, more to do, we're sick walking around'* (CYPFG4). Other groups advocated for *'Youth clubs on every day of the week for longer hours'* (CYPFG4) or *'A youth club open 24 hours a day for teenagers who don't feel comfortable going home'* (CYPFG4). The importance of having a social space was fundamental to young people. Many reflected the need to have somewhere to go, to feel safe, to socialize, and to have *'Different places where youths can go and be themselves'* (CYPFG17). The lack of resources and youth provisions has led to many young people feeling isolated and limiting their ability for personal and social development. One young person expressed this feeling of isolation,

There's nothing for us to do. We go and sit in a big group in a park or something or we go sit somewhere in a big group and we're getting pestered by the police just because of the way we dress and the way we talk and the way we get on. (CYPFG17)

One group felt that a better understanding of what young people need is important. By communicating and listening to young people appropriate and relevant services can be developed:

F: You just want somewhere to go and hang with your friends. Because your parents don't want a whole bunch of people over at the house. Do you know what I mean?

Somewhere to go.

F: Find out what it is that they [young people] want to do.

...

F: They're at school all week, and they're sitting and they're being told, "do this, do that", and when it's their time, they want to do whatever it is they want, to an extent like so long as no-one is at harm, or they're breaking the law. Do let them do what they want. If they want to have a movie night in the youth centre, let them do that. (CYPFG8)

A number of participants noted potential negative consequences for young people without social support and peer activities. Some suggested that youth centres/ youth resources can function as a means to keep young people 'out of trouble'. One group suggested that youth groups would provide, 'More places for young people to go instead of turning to doing illegal things' (CYPFG10). Another young person stated, 'I want them [decision makers] to introduce more facilities that will keep youths out of trouble or off the streets'. (CYPFG16)

9.3.4 Key Messages to Government

Young people expressed significant concerns about the lack of investment in youth provisions and youth centres/youth groups. This ongoing concern was raised across most research sites as an important message to decision makers, with many noting that 'there's not enough things for youths' (CYPFG17). Young people are aware of the positive impact such facilities and resources have on individuals and the wider community. Such clubs, groups and centres not only provide space for young people to meet and socialize but can provide additional support for young people in their personal and emotional development.

9.4 Barriers to Economic and Social Opportunities

Young people raised concerns on issues affecting their socio-economic opportunities and set out challenges they face when considering employment opportunities, securing accommodation, the impact of transport infrastructure, climate change and the consequences of Brexit. Many hope for future investment and access to better transport links (including sources of transport and related transport costings). Whilst some raised difficulties in accessing a range of transport options, many noted the significant challenges with the cost of transport asking for 'cheaper transport' (CYPFG8). Moreover, a number of young people highlighted the difficulties in accessing housing/accommodation, with some participants referencing an ongoing 'housing crisis' (CYPFG16). Their hopes include more opportunities in accessing appropriate

accommodation/housing, but some fear that the high level of housing prices inevitably prevents any prospect of entry into the housing market. One young person articulated the challenges as follows, *'the houses here, the pricing of it, it's absolutely ridiculous. It's impossible. I don't know how people keep a house at all'* (CYPFG8).

Some young people expressed that their community lacked investment when compared to other communities. A number of participants noted the need for a more positive representation of their community, particularly within/and across the various media outlets. One young person hoped for *'a change in the way our community is presented on tv and newspapers and for places to go for us'* (CYPFG4) and another added, *'To change the way our media outlets present our community'* (CYPFG4). They generally hoped for better/stronger community level support/investment, one young man simply requested, *'Do more for a community'* (CYPFG11).

Several young people noted their hopes for their own personal ambitions and aspirations. Some expressed a desire to access higher education and to, *'Go to university'* (CYPFG6), including outside Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland. For many others a key hope for the future was access to employment opportunities. It was evident that for some young people, there was a feeling that future employment opportunities were lacking. Many groups noted the need for *'More job opportunities'* (CYPFG5); *'More jobs'* (CYPFG14) and *'More opportunities'* (CYPFG8). Other groups expressed a concern about the potential impact of leaving the European Union and the effect it may have on employment and economic opportunities hoping, *'For Brexit not to have a huge impact'* (CYPFG10); *'Hope Brexit won't affect jobs and business'* (CYPFG10).

9.4.1 Key Messages to Government

Young people set out an array of challenges and obstacles they face when considering their socio-economic opportunities and future aspirations. It was important to many that they feel valued, that their community is invested in and is represented fairly. There were concerns raised across a number of the research sites in regards to employment prospects, with many young people feeling that opportunities are lacking. It is important to many of the young people that decision makers understand the difficulties they face when considering entry into both the employment and housing market, as well as the impact of wider policy decisions on young people's future prospects.

9.5 Moving Away from the Past: Building Good Relations in a Safer Society

A significant and strongly articulated hope for many young people was a desire for communities to come together and *'live in peace'*. Many expressed a desire for *'Catholic and Protestants to unite'*

(CYPFG6), while others wished that all communities would, *'live in coexistence with one another'* (CYPFG4). One young person hoped for *'Cross community families'* (CYPFG7) and another simply wished for, *'Both sides to make friends'* (CYPFG9).

Across the research sites young people noted the important role integration has in securing a more cohesive and less divided society. Many called for the development and introduction of integration across a range of areas including education, family and local communities. A number voiced a desire for more opportunities to allow all children to be educated together, referencing the need for more investment in *'integrated/mixed' schools*, particularly from early years. One group suggested the need, *'To mixed schools, join Catholics and Protestants'* (CYPFG7). Another group hoped for, *'More opportunities to mix with other communities at a younger age (below 16/primary/secondary age)'* (CYPFG2). Young people understood the role integrated education can play in bringing together both communities and moving away from segregation. One young person advocated the necessity to, *'Make more different religion mixed schools, make friends with the opposite religion so there is no violence or divide'* (CYPFG7).

At community level, many young people hoped for more cross-community opportunities, with the prospect of more meaningful integration and relationship building. One group suggested the need for, *'... More mixed community events'* (CYPFG4), while another young person hoped for,

More cross community youth clubs for younger people to get to know other young people [from] different backgrounds and what their story is and what their community is like and differences between [them] ... and make different friends (CYPFG7).

As noted in earlier chapters (see Chapter 5), young people who had experiences of cross-community opportunities tended to view them positively and valued learning about the importance of culture in both communities. Such integrative opportunities, as well as learning about each other's culture and understanding each other's viewpoints, can facilitate and encourage tolerance and peace more broadly. One young person noted the necessity for *'Different places where different religions with tensions can go and make some degree of peace'* (CYPFG17). One group hoped that society would progress so that there would be no further requirement for cross-community initiatives:

F: I hope we get to the point where we no longer need T:BUC [Together Building a United Community programme]. We no longer need it.

M: I want it to be like you see in England, they don't even know the meaning of Protestant or Catholic (CYPFG18).

Young people across the research sites emphasized a future desire to live in a society without violence or the threat of violence. A significant number raised their concerns of the residual impact of violence and the continual occurrence of violence in their communities, with many asking for, *'No more bombs and conflict'* (CYPFG6); *'No more conflict between Protestants and Catholics'* (CYPFG6); *'Hope for conflict to stop'* (CYPFG9); *'no conflict'* (CYPFG1), for paramilitary organizations to *'be gone'* (CYPFG3) and to *'... make it a peaceful place and stop paramilitaries'* (CYPFG7).

When asked what they hoped for in the future, a significant number hoped to simply 'feel safe'. The issue of safety was a key concern across many of the research sites. Young people hoped to live in a *'safe environment'* and their *'community to just feel safe or safer.'* One group asked for, *'Just a safer and positive place'* (CYPFG11). Another young person emphasized the need, *'To make the young people feel safer in their area. Try to cut down on sectarian violence. Make people safer'* (CYPFG7). Another young man stated, *'I want my kids to walk down the street knowing they're in a safe area, knowing that they're not going to get shot or bullied or into drugs or all that stuff'* (CYPFG18). The hopes for a safer, non-violent and more integrated society were also met with the fear that things will never change, as a 'culture of violence' and segregation is too engrained across sections of society. One group of young people articulated their fears;

F: It's simple. It's simple to know what I would want, but it's probably never happening. The likes of religions and stuff, or bomb scares and all this crap, should just be forgot about, but I think it's going to take a very, like if that ever is going to happen it will take a good lot more generations, I think, because obviously it's been drummed into a lot of people's heads.

M: I don't think it will ever change.

M: I don't think so either too.

I: You don't think it will ever change?

F: You're probably right, because at the end of the day, look how many people have lost their lives. If that wouldn't make people change their minds nothing will. How many lives need to be lost before people open their eyes? Obviously, there's loads of people who already have lost their lives and it's still not good enough. It's just sad (CYPFG9).

Although such reservations were expressed, it was evident that many young people remained focused on the hope that conflict legacy issues will be addressed, that communities will come together and they will live in a 'safe environment'. As one young man put it, *'the main thing for the future, we just want our areas to be safer than what they are now'* (CYPFG18).

9.5.1 Key Messages to Government

Many young people across the research sites voiced a hope to leave the past behind, for a safer non-violent society, with communities living together in peace. Many understood the value of integration and learning about all cultures and identity histories. They articulated a clear message to decision makers to meet their obligations, including building a more cohesive society and to protect children and young people from the violent legacy of the Conflict.

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Appendix A

KEY TO LABELLING OF INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP DATA

Children and Young People's Focus Groups	Location
CYPFG1	Co. Armagh
CYPFG2	Co. Armagh
CYPFG3	Co. Derry/Londonderry
CYPFG4	Co. Derry/Londonderry
CYPFG5	Co. Derry/Londonderry
CYPFG6	Co. Donegal
CYPFG7	Co. Armagh
CYPFG8	Co. Monaghan
CYPFG9	Co. Tyrone
CYPFG10	Co. Monaghan
CYPFG11	Co. Antrim
CYPFG12	Co. Antrim
CYPFG13	Co. Antrim
CYPFG14	Co. Antrim
CYPFG15	Co. Derry/Londonderry
CYPFG16	Co. Louth
CYPFG17	Co. Antrim
CYPFG18	Co. Antrim

Parent Interviews	Location
PI1	Co. Armagh
PI2	Co. Derry/Londonderry
PI3	Co. Derry/Londonderry
PI4	Co. Monaghan
PI5	Co. Armagh
Parent Focus Groups	Location
PFG1	Co. Derry/Londonderry
PFG2	Co. Antrim
Community Representative Focus Groups	Location
CRFG1	Co. Derry/Londonderry + Co. Donegal
CRFG2	Co. Derry/Londonderry
CRFG3	Co. Armagh
CRFG4	Co. Armagh
CRFG5	Co. Louth
CRFG6	Co. Monaghan
CRFG7	Co. Antrim
CRFG8	Co. Antrim
CRFG9	Co. Louth

Community Representative Interviews	Location
CRI1	Co. Derry/Londonderry
CRI2	Co. Derry/Londonderry
CRI3	Co. Derry/Londonderry
CRI4	Co. Antrim
CRI5	Co. Antrim

* A number of community representatives from Co. Derry/Londonderry were cross-border workers

Key Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups	Sector
KSI1	Victims and survivors
KSI2	Legal
KSI3	Victims and survivors
KSI4	Children and Young People
KSI5	Health
KSFG6	Youth work; peace and reconciliation; faith
KSI7	Health
KSI8	Children, young people and families
KSI9	Health
KSI10	Victims and survivors
VP1-VP16	Victims and survivors (Consultation response: - Victims' Practitioners Group)

* Some interviews had multiple participants from the same organisation

Departmental Representative Interviews and Focus Groups	Departments Represented
DRFG1	TEO
DRFG2	DOJ
	DOH
	DFC
	TEO
	DE
	DfE

Parent-Child Dyad Interviews	Relationship
D1P	Mother
D1YP	Son
D2P	Father
D2YP	Daughter

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