



Young People are our future, but do you know their views on what that future should look like?



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On Saturday 19 October JEDI held a consultation event for young people. It aimed to gather their thoughts on the government publication, A Shared Future.

- Thirty-eight young people aged between 16 and 24 participated in the event, with representation drawn from Londonderry/Derry to Newry, Carrickfergus to Cookstown.

Existing facts about religious and social division here in Northern Ireland were used in an innovative and light-hearted way to introduce the theme of the day. However, it was soon evident that these facts were far from 'new' to the participants. Rather, they reflected a reality of growing-up in Northern Ireland that was only too familiar.

Discussion was young person led with different opinions, personal stories and complex issues shared freely and in a supportive manner that adults can find difficult. The enthusiasm, honesty and clarity of vision expressed by the young people was remarkable.

During the plenary session the young people fed-back on their vision for Northern Ireland, the barriers to creating this vision and the action necessary to make it a reality. Here's what they had to say:

Our Vision for Northern Ireland

Socially it will be a place where:

- Violence has been brought to an end.
- People are accepted despite their religion or race.
- Young people are empowered, not ignored.
- People can come together without being afraid.
- There will be mixed relationships.
- It will be a place where everyone is respected.
- People will have the right to live anywhere.
- The news will talk about the achievements of Northern Ireland, not the problems.



82% of us want a shared future.

73% of us feel it would be difficult to achieve and requires work to change people's attitudes and build relationships across different divisions.

Educationally it will have:

- Integrated schools from Primary 1.
- Individual choice of school.
- Better facilities in schools.
- More money for integrated schools.
- Every religion taught in schools or no religion in schools.
- Links between schools.
- More money for cross-community initiatives.

In terms of Criminal Justice:

- Justice will be fully implemented.
- There will be more security.
- Consistent offenders will be punished.

9% of us feel building a shared future would be easy and just needs work in problem or flash point areas.

68% of us feel something has to happen to make our vision reality.

All this said, one young person noted 'I don't think anything can make my vision a reality.'

Politically there will be:

- Younger Politicians.
- Honest Politicians.
- Politicians that listen.
- The vote for 16-year-olds with more information.
- Accessible/understandable Politicians.
- Support for young people from older Politicians.
- An easier link between youth workers and Politicians.
- No more direct rule.

In terms of youth provision there will be:

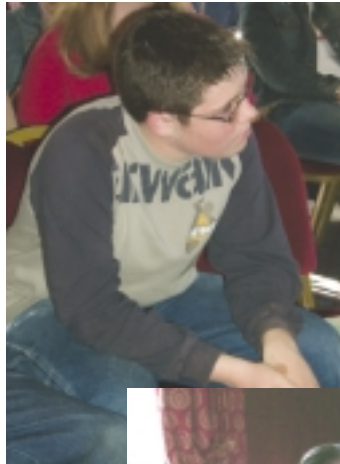
- Young people in charge.
- More awareness of the funding available for youth groups.
- More youth groups, particularly in rural areas.
- More money for exchange systems.



Barriers to Creating a Shared Future

What is needed to build a 'Shared Future'?

- Sectarianism and Racism needs to be challenged.
- Paramilitary Groups must be stopped.
- Police must be more involved with the community.
- There needs to be an Assembly in Northern Ireland.
- We need our politicians to work together.
- We need unbiased Politicians that listen.
- Work is needed to build relationships locally.
- Religion must be more accepting of difference.
- Cultures need to be able to mix together, at school and by living together.
- Arts and drama should be used to bring people together.
- We need more facilities for young people, with young people in charge.
- The media must use different approaches to reporting life in Northern Ireland.
- Rural facilities for the 18+ age range are required.
- There should be improved links with the UK and Europe for young people.
- Young people brought here to learn about Northern Ireland.



Please remember that fear of speaking out was one issue highlighted by the young people who participated in this event. We trust you will respect their views, and respond in a manner that is respectful of their rights.

Thank-you.



Social & Historical

- The troubles and the history of the conflict.
- We don't live around 'them' (people different from us).
- The Police.
- Religion can put up its own barriers.
- Divided Schools.
- Sport and what we do (or can) support.
- No opportunity to meet people different from ourselves.
- A lack of information.
- Politics.

Personal

- You can be scared to speak out.
- Language.
- A lack of information.
- The influence of peers.
- A lack of respect.
- How you were brought up or your personal history.
- Our personal views and beliefs, and ignorance of each other.
- Fashion and the clothes people wear.
- Stereotypes.
- Fear.
- Racist attitudes about people's colour.





Over to You

Background

The young people who participated in this event want to hear from you.

They want to know about the work you have been involved in which aims to build a Shared Future for Northern Ireland.

They want to know if you have future plans to ACTIVELY address any of the issues they have raised here?

As adults we each have a responsibility to listen to the voice of our young people, to hear their views and to RESPOND.

We look forward to hearing from you.

All responses should be sent to:

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Should you wish to make any comment on this publication and/or find out more about the work within, please do not hesitate to contact us.



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For those who are not familiar with JEDI (Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence) it is a partnership which brings together various key players in Northern Ireland.

It has the following twin aims:

- to develop a coherent strategy for community relations youth work and education for citizenship within the Northern Ireland youth sector; and
- to embed the inter-related principles of equity, diversity and interdependence into the ethos, policies and programmes of organisations which comprise the youth sector.

During the past five years key partners within the youth work sector have been engaged in this initiative. The work has involved research into community relations issues for youth work practitioners, and a joined up approach to developing policy, practice,

and training across the Service.

Whilst the legacy of sectarianism and segregation between the two main communities is its fundamental focus, JEDI is also concerned with redressing wider issues of prejudice and division to reflect the diversity of problems confronting young people in Northern Ireland. The pursuit of EDI has involved making space in busy workloads and taking time out to name and surface issues that often remain submerged.

The objective is 'to increase the ability and confidence of youth organisations and young people to be at ease with difference, acknowledge one another as equals and promote improved relations between all'. A central task of youth organisations to 'to pay attention to the individual young people who come to them, offer relationships in which they are given their place (equity), value their experiences, background and

abilities (diversity) and support them to learn from, rather than avoid or bury, any or all of their encounters with the world around them (interdependence)'.

JEDI is essentially about the principles and values that underpin youth work; and about a planned approach to improving relationships at every level. It is asking practitioners, young people and policy makers to visualise the role the Youth Service has to play in creating a better society and to consider the policy, training, practice, and research and evaluation implications of this vision. The work will inform changes to support and promote the realisation of the vision.

The EDI principles are fundamental elements of youth work in a society that is struggling to accept diversity in respect of beliefs, race and culture. They are totally in harmony with accepted core principles of Participation and Acceptance and Understanding of Others.