



the **'WHY?'** project



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Introduction

The initial idea of The 'Why?' Project grew out of the frustration that results when much of the youth work we do is funder-led and we have to find young people 'to fit' certain programmes because funding dictates so. I wanted this project to be truly democratic in that we would provide young people with what was essentially a 'blank canvas' and from this we would just list 'why' questions, questions where they could then begin to seek the answers to.

We have done that but I had to compromise somewhat because in order to secure funding we had to link it to political democracy which seemed a little ironic in that if the project was to be truly democratic then it should be based merely on the conversations that emerged from our engagement with young people and that exploring political democracy should not be a pre-requisite to funding.

Anyway, compromise we did of course and the end result is now this report which narrates

the story of The 'Why?' Project from its humble beginnings as a mere idea at a training event in London a few years ago right through to the identifying of issues that young people care passionately about and now requires more work.

The journey that we have travelled – host organisations, young people, workers and other interested parties alike has been vast. We have engaged many young people from a vast array of backgrounds across many geographical locations including two different countries and it has proved nothing short of interesting, valuable, informative and dynamic.

A journey unlike many others it has been truly democratic and participative and whilst this has proved challenging it has also allowed us to genuinely work through many phases of work with young people resulting in clearly identified issues.

Fergal Barr

Youth Co-ordinator, Inside Out



Background to The 'Why?' Project

In June of 2009, representatives from a wide variety of organisations across the UK came together for a youth democracy training event in Charing Cross, London. During the course of the meeting various small working groups were organised in an effort to develop ideas around implementing youth democracy projects.

Representatives from Inside Out, Women In Politics, Northern Ireland Youth Forum, PAL, GOALS and Aculco formed one working group and The 'Why?' Project was 'born'. The group discussed the need for such a project and based their proposal on the assumption that not enough young people ask questions about issues that impact upon their lives (and all too often) as a result of not having enough opportunity to do so.


The 'Why?' Project, was designed to facilitate a process whereby young people could question 'things' that most of society take for granted or at least don't stop to question or critique, in effect just merely accepting as being or unable to change. Simple questions like, why does that happen, why is it this way, why is it that way, why can't we try this or why do we have to accept that and so on and so on.

By providing opportunities for young people to pose questions they begin to get answers to questions they've always wanted to ask.

Alternatively they develop the confidence to ask questions not to mention develop the skill of asking the 'right' kinds of questions and in doing so begin to embed in their own thinking - a culture of critiquing things that impact upon their lives.

It was agreed that the benefits of such a process for participants would be extensive - young people could learn the 'art' of raising relevant, pertinent and 'reasonable' questions, they could develop their ability to articulate ideas, thoughts and opinions in a constructive manner, enhance their capacity to critically reflect upon their own learning, increase their confidence and self-esteem, better understand how society 'works' and begin to take a more pro-active role in their communities (geographical or otherwise) whilst ultimately increasing a variety of skills including communication, motivation, tolerance and team-work.

The project would focus on young people under-represented in public life, e.g., Travellers, the Roma community, Muslim women, disabled and young voters or rather non-voters, etc. Ultimately, the project would endeavour to target young people that do not play a full role in society because of a 'lack of opportunity' irrespective of whether they were drawn from any of the groups described or not as the case may be.



Inside Out developed a working paper and circulated this among interested parties from the training. For a variety of reasons including uncertainty over funding and the time elapsed between the training and circulation of the working paper none of those present were able to commit or simply decided not to follow through with their initial interest.

As a result Inside Out approached Clubs for Young People in Belfast with a view to submitting an application for The 'Why?' Project whilst identifying and building a working partnership with its German partners, Jusev & Stadtverwaltung Fürstenwalde Fachgruppe – Familie, Soziales und Bildung, Fürstenwalde.

The application was submitted to the British Council for approval and although rejected at the first time of asking due to being 'light' on political engagement, i.e., in-depth contact with politicians, politics and the parliamentary process, it was approved second time around when the matter was addressed.

Context - the connection with the PoP (Paths of Participation) Project

The 'Why?' Project formed part of Inside Out's commitment to the then on-going PoP (Paths of Participation) Project (www.pop-project.eu) which was a initiative involving partners from

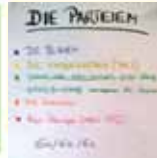
Germany, Austria, Finland, Poland and Slovenia (and had been in operation since 2008) exploring practice and policy around the theme of participation.

In August 2010 Inside Out, Derry City Council and Include Youth were represented at a planning meeting for The PoP Project in Vienna which mapped out a 16-month process including plans to organise job shadows, develop local action projects and host an International Youth Assembly. The 'Why?' Project Joint Plenary and the PoP International Youth Assembly would be run simultaneously in Derry~Londonderry in the autumn of 2011.

Relevance to Derry~Londonderry

The Youth Assembly was viewed as a potentially significant step in helping to embed a long-term participation mechanism for young people within the city and was significant at the time (particularly) in light of Derry having just secured 'UK City of Culture' status for 2013 and also as part of its then bid to land the 'European Youth Capital' title for the same year.

This city was viewed as being in a privileged position and the addition of a Youth Assembly & Joint Plenary with up to eighty young people from five different countries would be a welcome addition to the city's annual calendar of events.



The involvement of existing partner organisations from Northern Ireland, i.e., Inside Out and Include Youth alongside Clubs for Young People and Derry City Council was also viewed as potential opportunity to help 'work up' a model of participation for young people in the North West.

The 'Why?' Project (Youth Democracy) Planning Meeting

The 'Why?' Project formally commenced at the beginning of November 2010 when representatives attended the initial planning meeting in Fürstenwalde, Germany, just outside Berlin.

Fergal Barr, Youth Co-ordinator with Inside Out was joined by Teresa Bradley from Derry City Council whilst Dominik Ringler and Annika Zimmerman represented lead German partner, Jusev.

Derry City Council were represented at the meeting due to their previous involvement in the PoP Planning Meeting in Vienna but also with one eye on the Youth Assembly planned for Derry in 2011.

Day 1 (Wednesday 10th November)

The timing of the planning meeting was apt in that Jusev were in the process of completing a democracy project with local school children and during the first day of the visit both Fergal and Teresa were invited to see this in action – as a spectacle it was most impressive and provided an insight into the potential of both The 'Why?' Project and the proposed Youth Assembly - it really was youth democracy in action or rather children's democracy in action given the age and proved to be quite inspiring.

The event itself was the culmination of on-going work involving young people from local primary schools in Fürstenwalde. The project presented a 'perfect' opportunity to see at first hand the work accomplished by participants over the previous months and then to hear from them a brief synopsis (albeit in German, but translated for us by our partners) regarding the outcomes of their work.

Display boards dotted around the seminar room gave an overview of the process - participants would begin by taking part in an exercise called the 'Wailing Wall' where they could put all their issues.

Participants then completed a 'Wishing Tree' where all the change they want to see is collated.



They are then split into smaller groups where they give themselves names and are briefed about democratic structures.

They then work on the issues in their groups and develop a presentation to reflect their thoughts and ideas.

Participants then discuss their issues in more detail and agree who will present their findings.

This is then followed by presentations to elected members of local municipality.

This takes place amongst family and friends who have also been invited along and the level of support is quite notable and included brothers and sisters, parents, grandparents, teachers, interested adults, youth workers, other members of the local community and the Mayor.

Whilst it was not possible to understand what participants were saying, the confidence they exhibited in front of their peers not only in the morning session ('dress rehearsal') but both their peers and adult audience in the afternoon session was quite visible and deeply impressive.

The difference in confidence between these young people as compared with those back home was quite marked – very little

encouragement was required as children spoke clearly, confidently and seemingly without hindrance.

During the course of the day Fergal and Teresa also met with staff from Jusev and this was followed by a tour of Jusev's base before the agenda for formal discussions was finalised for Day 3 of the programme.

Day 2 (Thursday 11th November)

In the morning Fergal and Teresa were introduced to members of staff at a Heads of Department meeting for non-formal education and international work at Jusev and this was useful in providing not only an overview of The 'Why?' Project but also putting the project in context with regard to its history, rationale and purpose. Whilst some of the Department Heads could speak in English, Dominik Ringler from Jusev provided translation.

Following lunch Fergal and Teresa travelled to Jusev's Training Centre (Derry City Council's Teresa Bradley is pictured overleaf at the entrance to Jusev's Training Centre) in Hirschluch (about 15km from Fürstenwalde) to view the facilities they use for work with young people.

Some of the facilities which were used for their own youth democracy work would also be used by Jusev for The 'Why?' project activities. The training centre is located in the country, in very



picturesque surroundings and has quite a large array of meeting, accommodation, sporting and recreational facilities and is ideal for working with groups that require a mixture of space, isolation and comfort. It really is an impressive setting and offers the potential for intensive group work. Fergal and Teresa later returned to Berlin where they met with Jusev staff in the evening to chat more informally about their youth democracy work.

Day 3 (12th November)

The formal part of the meeting took place in the morning to go over the agenda and below is a summary of the discussions had and decisions made.

In the evening Fergal and Teresa were both given a tour of Berlin including sites such as The Berlin Wall, Brandenburg Gate, The Reichstag and the Holocaust Memorial. The following day they returned home to Derry.

Summary of Discussion/Decisions

Introduction of The 'Why?' Project

Information had been circulated in advance of travelling to Berlin but some time was set aside at the beginning of the meeting so as to re-connect with the rationale behind the project and raise any questions, concerns or issues.

Schedule/Timeline

See Youth Assembly below.

Funding & Co- Funding

See Youth Assembly below.

Youth Assembly

This was referenced as it has direct correlation to The PoP (Paths of Participation) Project. Young people involved in The 'Why?' Project will also attend the Youth Assembly.

The breakdown is as follows:

The 'Why?' Project: 20 young people from Northern Ireland (drawn from Inside Out and Clubs for Young People) and 20 from Germany + up to an additional 5 (from Germany paid for by Jusev) = 45 + 2 staff x 2 = 49;

The PoP Project: 8 young people x 5 countries = 40 (+ 2 staff x 4 other countries = 8)
Summary 95 official participants + 12 staff + additional participants/delegates from Clubs for Young People, NI Youth Forum, Include Youth and possibly other organisations including some nominated by Derry City Council.

Target group

13-17 years old

Preparation of target group

Nov & December

Type of activities

Both partner organisations to keep each other informed and exchange details regarding activities and methodologies during each session.

Planning meeting for youth assembly

21st (arrival day) - 25th May 2011: 22nd is orientation day, 23rd & 24th May is working days.

Purpose of the Project

The 'Why?' Project is designed to introduce young people to concepts of participation and democracy by providing them with the opportunity to ask challenging questions in order to identify issues that they can then respond to and address through a number of methods, e.g., Open Space, Local Action Projects and the Joint Plenary.

The project engages young people in investigating and learning about why society is the way it is and in doing so consider and raise issues that matter to them so as to begin to think about how they can create and influence change at local level.

The 'Why?' Project was designed to facilitate a process where young people could question 'things' that the rest of us take for granted, i.e.,

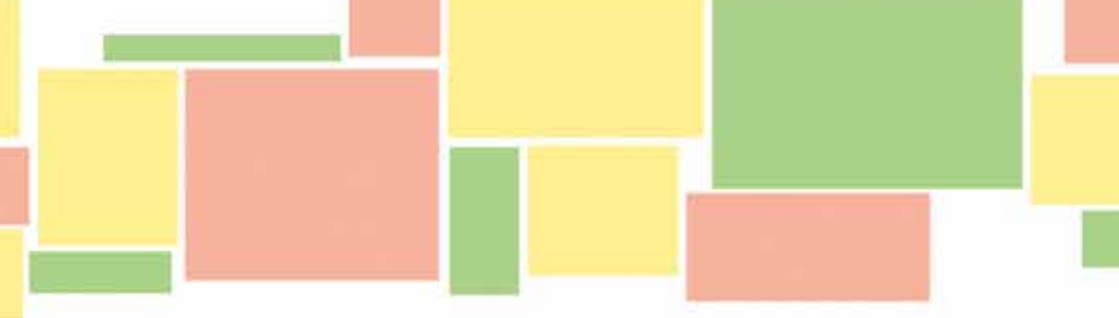
why does that happen, why is it this way, why can't I just....and so on and so on. By doing so young people get answers to questions they've always wanted to ask.

The Aims and Objectives of the project were as follows:

- To enable young people to ask questions they would not normally have the opportunity to ask
- To build confidence in young people to speak out so as to effect change
- To introduce young people to notions and concepts of democracy and participation

Objectives

- To set up an 16-month 'enquiry' made up of a variety of phases and approaches
- To use methodologies that will promote and encourage personal expression
- To organise projects in response to the 'enquiry'
- To engage with local democratic systems, processes and personnel



- To provide space and time to reflect on the responses emerging from the 'enquiry'

- To build on the project, explore follow-up actions to embed democratic values and processes

The 'Why?' Project was organised with 9 phases in mind (funding for phases 8 & 9 still had to be secured at the time of the planning meeting):

(i) Preparation of participants in Germany and Northern Ireland the focus of which was to build relationships between participants

(ii) Exploring Democracy where participants examined local democratic governance including visits to local and regional government including meetings with politicians

(iii) Open Space Event where participants self-managed a process that involved bringing, raising and profiling their issues at a meeting with other young people

(iv) Local Action Project(s) that allowed participants to address issues raised during the process that were important for them

(v) Joint Plenary – a three day residential programme for both groups to consider the journey they've 'travelled', issues raised and the learning they got from their experience.

(vi) Project Report would be launched simultaneously in Northern Ireland and Germany

(vii) Evaluation Meeting would allow project organisers to meet and assess the impact of the project

(viii) Next Steps – participants would meet at the beginning of 2012 to consider next steps

(ix) Large Scale Training Event for existing participants and 'new' young people from other EU countries (planned to be held in a country overseas).



The process for The 'Why?' Project was planned as follows although this differed a

little from the actual final timetable as some activities occurred later:

Phase	Action	Approx Duration	Time- scale
Preparation	Discussion Workshops with participants	2/3 hours per session	Nov & Dec 2011
Exploring Democracy	Explore concepts around democracy - individual research and group meeting	4 hours (2 & 2 hours)	Dec 2011
	Visits to local and central government.	3 hours (1 & 2 hours)	Jan 2012
	Development of questions for Q & A with politicians	2 hours	Jan
	Q & A session with local politicians	2 hours	Jan
	Dialogue and debate workshop	2 hours	Feb
	'Mock Government'	2 hours	Feb
Open Space Event	Open Space Meeting – Self organisation event involving participants and up to 30/40 peers from variety of different organisations	Day Long Event	15 Feb
Local Action Project	Involving peers and local communities – responding to issues raised during prep phase and explored further in Open Space.	6 months	Mar - Oct



Joint Plenary	Programme involving participants from partner organisations to share learning, engage in discussions and develop action planning for next steps in programme	3 days	24 - 27 Oct
	20 young people & 3 staff each from each country alongside 40 from PoP Youth Assembly.		
	Launch of Report to publicise and profile The 'Why?' Project as a Model of good practice	2 hours	Dec
The 'Why?' Project Evaluation and document learning Meeting	Evaluation Meeting of the project to discuss impact	3 days	Dec

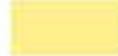
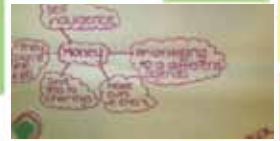
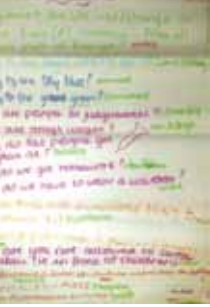
Process

When we applied for funding we did so with only one group in mind, i.e., a group of young people drawn from the immediate and wider Claudy area. For a variety of reasons we had to extend our geographical remit and we began working with three groups – one each from Claudy, Eglinton and Derry.

All three groups had come through our DfID (Department for International Development) funded 'Network Earth: Global Citizen for the 21st Century' programme or (as in the case of the Derry-based group) were in the process of finalising their 'Network Earth' programme when we were able to engage them in The 'Why?' Project.

The 'Why?' Project provided a natural follow-on in that all participants had completed a training element, local project and celebration event (as part of the Network Earth process) and this in many ways mirrored the same process as 'Why?', i.e., 'training' followed by action project followed by celebration event.

The process first began in December 2010 with a series of meetings with each one of the groups on an individual basis to establish their 'Why?' questions.



Preparation Phase: Developing the Why Questions

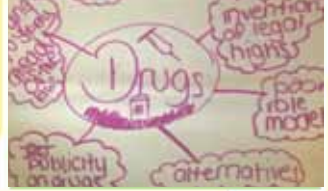
We literally started out with a 'blank canvas' (or in this case a blank flipchart page) and following a short explanation of the project began with the question, what are your why questions and/or asked participants to respond to the statement, 'things that get on my....' and asked participants to put these in question form.

This process 'turned up' a wide variety of questions ranging in depth, quality and diversity and covering a broad range of issues.

These are just a selection of the questions that resulted:

- Why doesn't the UK use/change to the Euro?
- Why is the sky blue?
- Why do we get homework?
- Why do we have a Queen when she has no power over the country?
- Why does 'flat' coke cure a sore tummy?
- Why do people think about sex?
- Why is the customer always right?
- Why are boys complicated?

- Why do girls always fall for 'bad boys'?
- Why do OAP's shrink? (sic)
- Why do they [mothers] always repeat themselves?
- Why do friends drift apart?
- Why do people beg?
- Why do people 'update' [Facebook] all the time?
- Why do employers not employ people with more personality?
- Why does it matter [religion]?
- Why do Catholics and Protestants fight?
- Why do we laugh?
- Why do they [teachers] pick their favourites?
- Why do they [teachers] become teachers if they don't like children?
- Why are they [siblings] so annoying?
- Why do they [police] take your name for nothing?



- Why can they [police] use force and you can't curse at them?

Identifying and Prioritising the Issues

Following this we asked each young person to identify the three most important issues not in any order but by merely putting a mark against the three issues they cared most about.

Between the three groups we were able to identify a clear number of issues: Money, Alcohol, Drugs, Males, Religion, Friends, Teachers and Wealth. This provided us with a foundation to work from and the next stage in the process was to begin to explore some of the answers.

Exploring the Answers

We did so using a variation on the 'why-why-why' exercise where the question posed is followed by another 'why' question followed by another 'why' question and so on and so on until you eventually begin to strip the question right down to its 'bear bones', e.g., a young person who ends up in court on charges of possession of stolen goods may have stolen to fuel a drugs habit which might have begun some years before in response to a crisis in his or her life.

This kind of process is not designed in any way to provide excuses for certain behaviours but rather to provide some explanation of the reasons why certain things happen so that young people have a better understanding and can develop some empathy towards this person or situation and begin to think about other questions they may need to ask of politicians in any future contact with them. It also helps them to be less judgemental allowing to become more accepting and tolerant of people.

In this instance we did not use the full 'why-why-why' methodology as we didn't want to focus on only one answer but rather identify a number of answers in response to the issue(s) young people identified.



Exploring Democracy Phase: Explore concepts around democracy

The second phase in the process was the 'Exploring Democracy' Phase and the first step was to explore a variety of concepts directly related to the project: democracy, decision making and participation. We wanted to explore what participants understood to be meant by these terms.

There exists a perception among many adults that young people have no 'real' interest in politics but evidently those we engaged with were more knowledgeable than might be expected.

Perhaps the perceived lack of interest among young people is more a testament to the apathy they feel towards politicians and the sense of powerlessness about what they can do to exercise influence or bring about change.

In our case many of the participants proved to be quite 'clued in' even if not wholly familiar with the intricacies of contemporary political systems within Britain and Ireland.

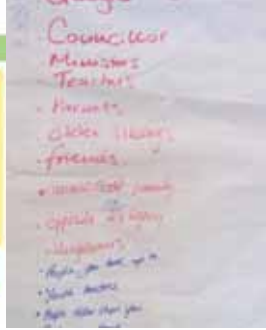
We asked them the following: (i) what do you think of when you hear/see the word democracy, (ii) what decisions do you make on a daily basis and (iii) what does participation mean to you? These are a selection of responses:

Democracy

- Names of politicians, parties, institutions and positions: EU, MP's, Gerry Adams, Barak Obama, Nick Clegg, Brenda Stevenson, The Green Party, SDLP, Peter Robinson and Margaret Ritchie
- Polls and elections
- Historical figures in Irish politics like Charles Stewart Parnell, Michael Collins, Daniel O'Connell, Eamon DeValera and Ian Paisley
- Influential figures like Ghandi, Nelson Mandela and Mary Mc Aleese
- Influential places like Dubai where there is a lot of wealth
- Contemporary situations like the (then) riots in Egypt
- Paramilitaries including 'The Provos' and RIRA

Decision Making

- Clothes to wear
- Things you have to say



- Internet and 'Texting'

- Behaviour

- What to eat

- When to get up

- What bus to get & where to get it

- What to spend money on

- Who to vote for

- What trip to go on?

- What to do at the weekend

- What to 'keep on' for your GSE's?

- What time to go home at night and what time to go to bed?

Participation

- Elections

- Schools – but undemocratic

- Extra-curricular activities

- Co-operation

- Sports

- Projects

- Voting

- Political Parties

- Community Activities

How would you go about dealing with the issue?

The second step in the 'Exploring Democracy' Phase was to explore participants understanding of these concepts by encouraging them to draw links between their understanding and how they might address the issues they identified previously. So for example, if relationships with males is an issue for some then what decisions might they take to deal with this, what steps can they take to claim ownership of the process and thus increase their levels of participation in the process and finally, how might they ensure that this process is 'democratic', e.g., they have an issue but they engage in discussion rather than depriving someone of opportunities to have their say, make decisions, etc.

It was very interesting the responses that participants identified. So for example the 'What if?' group from Derry identified a wide range of



responses to dealing with their three issues, i.e., Males, Friends and Religion, which included in the case of Males asking them, using the internet, chatting with parents/siblings/teachers/friends, and TV.

For Friends it was the same but additionally magazines, facebook, yourself and the public. Finally for Religion it included some of those mentioned but also talking to a priest, reading books, working with cross-community and equality groups, reading the bible, chatting with other religions and using pictures.

Another group mentioned many of the same things but also referenced neighbours, 'people you look up to', youth leaders, 'your boyfriend' and your doctor.

The Eglinton group in their approach to Teachers and 'Wealthy People who are tight' did suggest violence and robbery respectively as options (although not necessarily advocating these) but were also quite constructive when suggesting conversation, expressing your opinion, talk to your parents, approach the principal and board of governors with regard to teachers and charity, sponsors, sales and fame as ways of persuading those they perceived as wealthy to share their wealth.

In essence participants had a fairly clear understanding of the concepts of democracy, decision making and participation and not only how they could apply this understanding to dealing with issues but were able to identify numerous ways and/or resources for doing so.

What would be the rules to address an issue?

We took the 'dealing with an issue' question a step further by asking participants about rules that governed this. So for example, if a young person is having problems with a teacher what rules should govern how the issue is addressed.

We wanted participants to think about what values and/or principles should underpin any approach to dealing with an issue. Participants demonstrated a strong sense of 'right' and 'wrong' when responding so for example, one group offered the following answers

- sensitive to others
- sensitive answers and thoughts
- fairness
- age appropriate
- no favouritism



- clarity and rules
- safer environment
- limits
- appropriate ideas

Summary

This process had so far challenged participants to come up with why questions as a means of encouraging them to start thinking about issues that were important to them. We considered some of the reasons or answers so that they could begin to rationalise or at least understand why things happen as they do.

We then started to explore concepts of democracy, decision-making and participation and then linked these to the issues they identified so as to consider how issues can be addressed in a democratic manner and the rules that govern behaviour when addressing issues.

Visits to Local Government

The next step in the 'Exploring Democracy' phase was to 'introduce' participants to formal democracy by arranging a visit to local

government, Derry City Council in this case - all three groups came together for the first time for a joint-visit to Derry City Council.

Participants were received at the Guildhall by Councillor Brenda Stevenson and were given a short introduction and tour of the Guildhall before being afforded the opportunity to 'take their seat' in the Council Chamber.

The group were fortunate in that they had a chance to see the Guildhall shortly before it closed for renovation.

Some participants had visited the Council Chamber previously and whilst a short visit like this can be somewhat limited in its overall impact regarding an introduction to political democracy it does serve as a very useful tool for giving young people a sense of local politics, where it is housed, how decisions are taken, the various kinds of decisions that are taken and how they might affect participants on a daily basis.

Participants also had the opportunity to visualise a Council meeting not to mention get a sense of being a politician if only for a moment by asking questions from their seats in the Council Chamber, all of which helps to inform the process of understanding local political democracy.



Developing questions for politicians

The next step in the process was to use participants experience thus far to develop a range of questions for a proposed Question and Answer session with politicians. This was done over two sessions with the Derry and Claudy group in one session and the Eglinton group in another (this was due to the availability of young people from each group).

The experience of developing why questions, identifying issues and being hosted by an elected member from Derry City Council provided a platform from which to approach the session - it also provided participants with confidence in that it would be questions they determined, it would be held in a non-political venue (The Playhouse) and that politicians would have to come into their 'territory'. Participants could therefore approach matters from a position of strength.

The following is a list of questions that participants identified – those in bold are the questions that participants prioritised for politicians:

- What are you doing to combat crime/violence in communities?

- Why are you taking away EMA [Educational Maintenance Allowance]?

- Why have you increased 'Uni' fees?

- **Why do politicians make false promises?**

- What benefits are being cut and why?

- **What parties are represented in the council and how many seats do they have?**

- What are your future plans locally with regards to young people and the city of culture?

- **How do you engage young people?**

- **Why do politicians go on as if they don't like each other (in public) and then sit in the same room and discuss situations?**

- Why are council meetings on at school times and therefore young people can't attend?

- Why don't you advertise your meetings more publically so people in the community can attend?

- What's your full-time job when you're not a councillor?



• **Are you only in pictures for publicity?**

• **What do you think the name of the city [Derry~Londonderry] should be?**

• Is your job hard/do you like your job [as a councillor]? Do you find your job rewarding?

• How many days a week do you work [as a councillor]?

• Is there much money in your job [as a councillor]?

• What is it like to be a politician?

• **Do you have any hobbies in your spare time?**

• **Do you take sugar in your tea?**

• Have you ever met the Prime Minister?

• What district do you represent?

Question & Answer Session with local politicians


The next step in the 'Exploring Democracy' phase was the hosting of a 'Q & A' Session with local politicians. Gary Middleton (DUP), Michael Cooper (Sinn Fein), Willie Lamrock (UUP) and Gerard Diver (SDLP) represented their

political parties at The 'Why?' Project Question & Answer Session in Playhouse Theatre, Derry on 8th February 2011. Colm Eastwood (SDLP) was also in attendance in his capacity as Mayor to 'mark' the occasion but was happy to take questions from group participants.

The format for the session was quite simple – participants had their questions and would decide on which to ask as the night progressed. The night started interestingly enough when Michael Cooper informed us that he had invited a few young people from his political party – this appeared to be 2 or 3 at the outset but by the time the session had started it had grown to 12.

This was quite unexpected and represented a challenge because the session was only supposed to involve group participants and it was 'their time' and at no point had we anticipated anyone other than the politicians being involved.

We didn't want to create a side-issue by asking those not invited to leave as it might then detract from the purpose of our being there so in this case we allowed them to stay in an observatory capacity and once our young people had got through their questions and if there was time we would allow them to pose questions.



In fairness to our young people they were happy with this arrangement and it was a sign of their maturity and in particular their confidence that they were willing to still proceed. None of the other politicians present had any objections either and the session proceeded and quite close to the end we did create space for questions to be put to the panellists but only after our own young people felt they had asked the questions they had wanted to ask. Ironically none of those that were in attendance had any other questions and the session ended.

The session had proved useful in that The 'Why?' Project participants had the opportunity to ask a wide range of questions, were sitting close to and literally on the same level as politicians which created a feeling of equality and also in many respects 'humanised' the politicians that were there. Participants grew in stature as they not only posed their questions but had to do so in front of a larger than anticipated audience.

At this point in the process participants had moved through a number of important phases, from identifying questions, prioritising issues and visiting a local democratic institution to preparing questions for politicians and engaging with them face-to-face.

'Dialogue and Debate' Workshop

The penultimate step in this phase was to 'test' participants own values and beliefs to see if they could engage effectively in discussion and debate with their peers. We brought all three groups together at The Diamond Centre in Claudy on 15th February to participate in a well known exercise which is sometimes known as 'Agree Disagree', 'Four Corners' or 'Debate Continuum'.

In this case we used 'Debate Continuum' where we asked participants to position themselves on an imaginary line between two points, i.e., Agree at one end and Disagree at the other – before a number of statements would be read out and they would have to position themselves along the continuum.

This was a short workshop but allowed participants to articulate their ideas and opinion around a number of issues whilst exploring their own values and beliefs related to the topic and to continue to develop their knowledge, skills and attitude around engaging in democracy.

There was plenty of lively debate and for some they were somewhat surprised by the views that their friends or others held on some of the issues even though they had known them for quite some time. This of course adds to the dynamic because in that moment where they



are 'surprised' they are effectively challenged by their friend's opinion which of course impacts upon their perception of that person and causes them to reflect on what they have learned and thus aids the learning process.

Some of the statements included:

- There is nothing wrong with avoiding a fare on public transport if you can get away with it
- It's ok for me to continue to watch pornography as women know what they're getting into
- More people suffer from alcohol and smoking than from ecstasy so taking 'E' is ok
- Using violence for political gain is ok
- There's nothing wrong in buying something you know was stolen
- Parents should be taken to court if their child/ren play truant from school on a regular basis
- Wearing real fur is ok

Visit to Government, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

A visit to Parliament Buildings at Stormont was the final step in the Exploring Democracy phase and this took place on 8th March. This was to build upon all the experience gained so far in the project and in particular was designed to demonstrate the difference (in function and operation) between local and national government/politics. It was also to help prepare them for the next stage in the process which was to host their own Mock Parliament.

Part of the visit included a 'stop off' at the Northern Ireland Youth Forum which is the 'representative voice' of young people in Northern Ireland.

Staff gave an overview on the organisation, the activities they were currently engaged in, a short video on some of their previous work and information on how members of the The 'Why?' Project could become involved in local youth councils in their own area.

The group was also provided with information on O2's 'Think Big' funding programme - members of the 'What if?' group went on to secure funding for one of their own projects.



The visit to Stormont was sponsored by Pol O'Callaghan, MLA and after some initial confusion as to who we were and the purpose of our visit (somehow our name wasn't on the list of expected groups and this involved some last minute re-organisation among staff at Stormont) we eventually toured the building, sat in the public gallery watching a live debate before meeting and chatting with MLA's, Pol O' Callaghan and John Dallat.

Whilst the confusion over our visit was inconvenient it provided an opportunity for the group to take in the surroundings as we waited in front of the main staircase and watched the range of activity going on around us - MLA's going to and from meetings, news reporters milling about, other groups visiting Stormont and staff going about their duties.

'Mock Government'

The final step in the 'Exploring Democracy' phase was the organisation of a 'Mock Government' at the Playhouse Theatre, Derry on 15th March.

Participants were given a scenario and assumed roles in an three-way debate on immigration which included Lebanese and Syrian members of the British Council's Active Citizen Programme who just happen to be on

week-long visit to the city at the same time and apart from being delighted to take part brought a real dynamic to the proceedings.

The involvement of British Council's Active Citizens made it much more challenging for 'Why?' participants because some of the roles being enacted by Active Citizens were from countries where mobility, displacement and asylum has of course been and is likely to be an issue in the future. Local members of the Active Citizen programme were also in the 'audience' which again added an extra dimension in that participants were much more conscious of having an audience.

Members of the 'Why?' group fulfilled the roles of those opposed to the Asylum Bill, those in favour and those undecided. One member of the group agreed to take on the role of Chair.

For those opposed to the bill we supported their involvement by providing them with some questions (as part of their role) to consider:

- Why are you supporting the 'Asylum Bill'?
- Why do you want to settle here in Northern Ireland?
- What rights do you think you should be entitled to?



- What is preventing you going back home?
- Why is it important for your family to be able to move here?
- Whom are you planning to bring over?
- What contribution can you make to society here?
- What jobs have you done and how will you ensure you're not a drain on the economy?

The exercise proved useful in demonstrating how debate is chaired, the various rules that govern decision-making in a public context and the 'protocols' in place such as 'going through the chair' if you want to speak. The involvement of those from Syria and Lebanon proved beneficial in that they argued passionately to support the bill. At the end a vote was taken and was passed 12 to 2 with no abstentions.

Scenario

The year is 2025 and Northern Ireland has had a sustained and successful period of devolved government for many years. Much of the 'Tribal Politics', i.e., Nationalist and Unionist division that dominated Stormont in its formative years

have been largely put to one side as politicians have worked hard to ensure a better future for its people.


You are an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), i.e., an elected member of the Northern Ireland Parliament at Stormont.

Much of the success of the economy has been attributed to the trade links you have helped to develop with countries in North Africa and the Middle East between 2015 and 2018. This includes Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Morocco in North Africa and Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel in the Middle East.

This led to a boom in Tourism and Hospitality and the Northern Ireland economy had a sustained period of growth with unemployment at an all-time low right up until 2024.

The contribution of workers from overseas (mainly Syria and Algeria) to the Northern Ireland economy has been significant. Many were encouraged to come to Northern Ireland to live and work in order to meet the demands of the Tourism and Hospitality industry at a time when Northern Ireland lacked many of the necessary skills to support it.

In 2022 the Government proposed (what was commonly referred to as the 'Asylum Bill' to provide overseas workers already living in



Northern Ireland (for at least 4 years) with the same rights as those born in Northern Ireland as well as offering security for their immediate family for a minimum of two years under any circumstance.

However, the passing of the bill into law has been slowed down with politicians now debating the 'rights' and 'wrongs' of the bill. This is due to two major events: (i) the economy in Northern Ireland has been hit by recession and (ii) conflict in North Africa and the Middle East.

The recession has had a major impact on the economy with unemployment doubling in the last year and the percentage of tourists coming to Northern Ireland dropping by 1/3 in the previous 18 months. Growing civil and political unrest in Syria and Algeria in particular has led to many families fleeing to Northern Ireland to avoid persecution and violence.

The general public is concerned that an influx of families has and will continue to lead to a massive strain on public finances and so politicians are now faced with the decision as to whether or not to back the 'Asylum Bill.'

Government has set up an 'Asylum Bill' committee which meets weekly and has done so for 3 months to hear evidence for and against the 'Asylum Bill'. You are a member of that

Committee and today you are hearing evidence from locally-based organisation, SEEDS, with Syrian and Lebanese representatives making arguments as to why the Northern Ireland Parliament should back the 'Asylum Bill.' There will also be an opportunity for members of the public (time-permitting) to support the arguments for the Asylum Bill.

At the end of each committee meeting members are asked to consider the evidence and vote on it. It's your role to decide if evidence (heard) can be included in the final Draft Bill which, comes before Parliament in two weeks time. You can vote either 'Yes', 'No' or abstain – not vote at all.

You have been specially selected for this committee because you are viewed as fair and that you will base your decision to vote (or not vote) only on the evidence heard.

Process

You will have the opportunity to listen to evidence from SEEDS representatives, then ask questions (all of which must go through the chair of the committee), hear input from the public, make closing arguments before voting on whether or not evidence can be permitted.



Timetable

8.15pm 'Current Opinion' of Committee on approach to the 'Asylum Bill'

8.20pm Input by Syrian and Algerian Delegation to 'Asylum Bill' Committee

8.30pm Clarification Questions from Committee

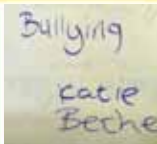
8.35pm Invite to 'Members of the public' to make representation in support of the 'Asylum Bill'

8.40pm Closing arguments from committee for and against including evidence in final Draft Bill.

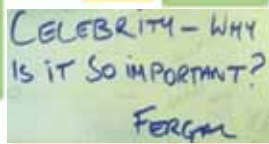
8.50pm Members then vote on whether evidence is included in Draft Bill.

9.00pm Group Debrief

Close



Bullying
Catie Beche



CELEBRITY - WHY
IS IT SO IMPORTANT?
FERGAL

Open Space Event

Phase 3 in The 'Why?' Project was an 'Open Space' Event for group participants and other young people from across Northern Ireland. Open Space is a large group method that supports group processes and ideas development and is frequently used in self-organised projects, where participants work to create or find solutions or answers to problems, challenges, difficulties, etc.

It thrives in situations where there is conflict and confusion and a strong point of Open Space is its ability to unite groups of enormous diversity in their education, ethnicity, economics, politics, culture, social position, or all of the above. It is also a simple, powerful way to get people, information and whole organisations moving.

In this case Open Space was chosen so as to enable group participants to identify issues and organise meetings with their peers to discuss responses to those issues. Participants do this by bringing their 'issue' to the Open Space and introducing it to the group before identifying where and when the meeting will take place using the resources at their disposal. The Open Space meeting was opened up to young people from across the country and would allow Why participants to build upon the experience they had built up which in turn could be used to help lead workshops. Overleaf is the flyer that was created to promote the event.

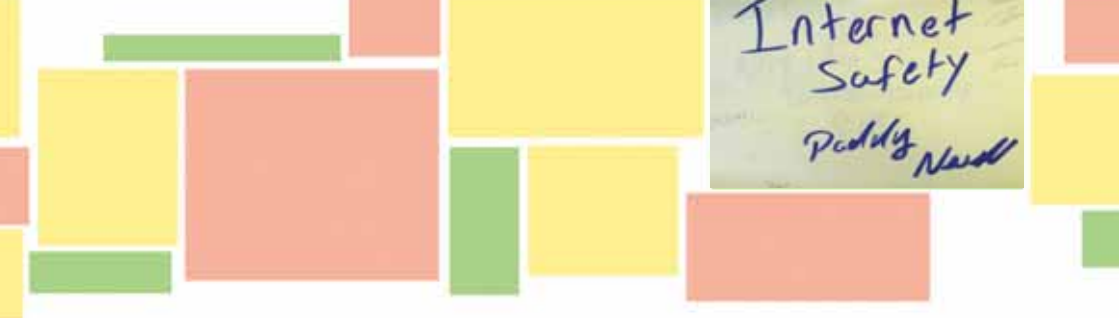
The 'Getting from Why to How: Participation and Youth Democracy in Action' Open Space Event was held in Derry on 29th March.

Members of The 'Why?' Project were joined by young people from Dungannon and Dublin and staff from Clubs for Young People NI and together they identified a series of themes and arranged corresponding workshops.

The event was facilitated by two practitioners from Berlin - Yarri Pannwitz and Domink Ringler. Dominik Ringler was the lead worker with the German 'Why?' group and alongside Yarri Pannwitz is an experienced Open Space Facilitator.

In assessing the impact of the event it should also be acknowledged that Open Space is a fairly new concept across Britain and Ireland and is much more commonly used across Europe and the United States.

Adults often struggle with adapting to Open Space because of its focus on self-organisation rather than that which we are used to, i.e., being directed, led or facilitated by 'experts', leaders, facilitators, and consultants. Using this methodology in a context where children and young people are and have often been discouraged from expressing their opinion and in a culture where the main learning institution,



Internet
Safety
Paddy Nard

Inside Out & Clubs for Young People NI

Getting from Why to How...Participation and Youth Democracy in Action

A special invitation to young people & local youth projects - WELCOME!

Inside Out in partnership with **Clubs for Young People** would like to extend an invitation to young people and youth groups in the North & South West Area to participate in a special young person's 'Open Space' event to be held from 11am to 4pm, **Tuesday 29th March 2011** at The Playhouse, Artillery Street, Derry Londonderry.

'Getting from Why to How – Participation and Youth Democracy in Action' forms part of a joint CYP and Inside Out Youth Democracy project. If you have a passion for a particular issue and you are concerned or have wondered 'why it's like that' but want to know 'how to change it' then this event is for you! You'll have the answers already so please bring them along!

This 'Open Space' event will facilitate young people taking ownership of issues relevant to them and their local communities. It's a challenging and meaningful way to enjoy a special youth event whilst engaging with other young people in expressing thoughts, ideas and opinions on a range of important issues and helping to develop action points so as to do something about it.

Young people from a number of groups including Inside Out, the 'What IF? Project, Eglinton Community Limited's Network Earth Group and CYP's Youth Participation Project will be in attendance. We are now extending that invite to a **further 30 young people from across Northern Ireland to take part in this special event**. It is open to any young person aged between 15yrs and 17yrs (exceptions can be made but please talk to us in advance about this).


The aim of the day is to provide young people with a genuine opportunity to discuss issues whilst owning the process and developing an agreed action plan to respond to the issues – in effect moving from the 'Why' to 'How'.

Two practitioners from Berlin - with considerable experience of organising Open Space events - will facilitate delivery of the programme on the day, thereby providing a genuinely unique experience for many young people involved in local youth projects. Using Open Space Technology, the project proposes to engage young people in focussed dialogue on a range of relevant issues.

Through this progressive 'Open Space' engagement, young people will identify key follow-up work. Follow-up work will include acting on recommendations and proposals agreed at the Open Space Event that both local and national politicians alongside other public representatives can consider in anticipation of an International Youth Assembly scheduled to take place in Derry Londonderry in October 2011 involving other young people from Slovenia, Germany, Poland, Finland and Austria.

For further information and joining instructions contact Fergal Barr at post@cypni.net – ask your youth worker to assist!

This event is funded by **The British Council** under Action 1.3 of the **EU's Youth in Action Programme**.



i.e., school, is far from democratic then Open Space with young people was always going to be experimental in nature and risky in application.

Given the voluntary nature of Open Space there were participants who did struggle with both the concept and its application. We were attempting to implement a methodology that goes against the grain in what people are used to or have been 'conditioned to' and therefore participants were a little surprised to find that it was they who had to not only identify the issue or issues but also organise and facilitate the discussion as well as prepare reports. That said, none of this took away from the efforts of those who were able to apply themselves to the Open Space methodology and at the outset a vast array of themes were identified.

Issues Identified:

- Cyber-Bullying

- Natural disasters

- Talk about stress

- Do protests work?

- Why are we not all rich and famous?

- Why are there no young people with disabilities in youth clubs? Where are they?

- Why are we not famous?

- Why don't politicians come to rural communities?

- Internet Safety

- Why I don't like school because if it's only for girls (sic)

- We should pick our own teachers

- Celebrity – why is it so important?

- Why are we in a recession?

- Why are people so self-conscious?

- Why do you have to wear a helmet driving a bicycle?

- Rural Transport

Not all issues identified were eventually facilitated in terms of discussions but some important workshops took place and the following is a synopsis of discussions based on the reports written by those hosting discussions.



The feedback does not necessarily reflect the total discussion but is a snapshot as those preparing reports were asked to record only key points and to be succinct in their writing style.

Cyber-Bullying People writing cruel things about each other on the internet, people gang up on each other, people get depressed and feel suicidal when it happens to them, people can feel embarrassed about what is said about them as all their friends can see it. Different forms – emotional, cyber, psychological, physical, mental, social exclusion, name calling, girls are worse – boys tend to be more physical.

Celebrity Why is it important? Critiqued celebrities – overpaid, complaining, young people based on image of celebrity, plastic surgery, fake, selfish, only human, show-offs (attention seeking), wealthy – big issues, betrayed and portrayed by the media, footballers are ballerinas; How do people become celebrities? Looks, style, people of influence, family background, higher than life – invincible; What you need to become a celebrity? Talent, good looks, lucky, agent, know someone famous, access to internet, webcam/youtube/twitter/facebook, know-how, a certain level of intelligence, reality-tv, personality/confidence/temperament;

conversation also about various celebrities – good, bad and indifferent and different levels of importance – some also highlighted some 'heroes', 'role models'.


Why don't politicians come to rural communities? Nobody has contacted them to come out – more facilities would attract more politicians and get publicity.

Internet Safety One login lock, post less into it (status), watch on webcam without knowing, no age range (13), advertising houses

Stress We talked how and why you got stress, then we talked about how to control it – boyfriends, studying, moving house, exams, school, family problems, people, make up, life, exercise, yoga, health, acting, marriage, ma, da, all friends, talking to someone, disease, stress, jobs, bills, money, studying: suggestions – acting, music, yoga, talking to someone, exercise, stress ball, smoking.

Summary

The Open Space had mixed success on a variety of fronts: some participants struggled with the idea of organising their own workshop on a theme that may have been important to them but that they weren't necessarily ready to facilitate or felt skilled enough to engage



with their peers. For others it proved to be the opposite and they were quite comfortable in that position and facilitated a variety of meaningful discussion.

The voluntary nature of Open Space doesn't lend itself to those who are used to operating under direction and thus for some the opportunity to take the lead and engage with their peers was missed and was probably too early in terms of their age and maturity.

A number of clear issues were identified during the course of the day and the Open Space provided the right environment for more in-depth exploration. The event in itself proved an invaluable 'test' in the use of Open Space as a means of engaging young people not least of all in relation to their 'readiness' to engage with such a methodology. Whilst it had mixed results it did succeed in identifying important issues which further contributed to 'enquiry that The 'Why?' Project was.



Local Action Project

The penultimate phase in the process was the Local Action Project. This came in the form of an overnight residential at Gartan Outdoor Education Centre in Churchill, Co. Donegal on 7th October. Due to a variety of work, domestic and study commitments only nine of the original 19 'Why?' group participants were able to attend but five young people from another Youth Democracy project, 'Little People Big Ideas', co-ordinated by one of Inside Out's partners in Slovenia, Zavod ANI, came together for the residential.

Whilst the absence of a substantial number of 'Why?' participants was regrettable, the 'merge' with Zavod ANI's 'Little People Big Ideas' project proved valuable in that they too were on a similar journey and thus proved helpful in comparing and contrasting experiences and complimenting the work of each project.

The residential provided a space for participants to engage in discussion around a set of already identified issues using a variety of established methods including art, drama and video.

The two key issues emerging from the residential were Drugs and Employment. A role play, 'video-short', art work and the penning of letters to the Minister for Department of Employment and Learning contributed to a successful meeting.

The role play and video-short were useful in helping the group articulate their ideas and thoughts around both issues whilst the art work and letters were visible outcomes. Participants kept their art work whilst letters to the Employment and Learning Minister were later typed up and posted to the minister.

Questions to the Minister for the Department of Employment and Learning

The letters addressed the concerns that some of the group had around youth employment and were a clear expression of their worries regarding their future careers prospects, public expenditure and other related matters. Five participants from the group addressed the following questions in their letters to the Minister:

- Why are you not providing money to business for young people to get jobs?
- Why are you wasting money on stuff when there are people looking for jobs?
- Why do employees not even acknowledge the qualifications of people who give in applications forms and don't even get an acknowledgement letter back?



- Why do you have to have so many qualifications to get any jobs?
- Why are you wasting money on things that we don't need when you should be putting money into companies to provide more employment?
- Why do employers look for too many qualifications for menial jobs?
- What are you looking for experience in jobs when you are not providing the experience?
- How do you expect us to get the experience without the opportunities?
- Why do some employers not even acknowledge job applicants?
- Why is there still inequality in employment opportunities?
- Why do you people waste money on statues, murals and monuments when you could be putting money into local business' to supply jobs to young people in the local or surrounding communities?
- Why are you wasting money on trips for you to go to foreign assemblies and stay in 5 star hotels?
- Why are employers looking for too many qualifications and then when young people do have qualifications employers reject them almost immediately?
- Can you tell me how young people get experience when employers won't give young people jobs?
- Why are you not providing more employment for young people?
- Why are employers looking for too many qualifications and why do jobs need experience when you don't provide experience opportunities?
- As a public representative what do you intend to do about the current economic disaster?
- Do you feel that the current budget is serving us sufficiently to combat the recession and encourage public spending, which in turn result in higher levels of employment?
- As a result of the vast amount of people applying for jobs employers now feel that it is appropriate to not even acknowledge the fact that a person has taken the time to apply for the job. I would just like to know if you've ever done this. Have you ever lost count of what and how many jobs you've applied for? Have you spent most of your free time in the job



The 'Why?' Project Joint Plenary

centre, on their website, filling out forms for jobs you could do blindfold but know you'll probably not get it?

- In just under a year I'll be going to university getting into an unthinkable amount of debt just to become qualified for a job that doesn't exist and that thousands of others will be fighting for. Did you worry about this when doing your A'Levels? Were student loans and fees an issue for you? Or was your third level education free?

It should be noted that the response to these questions came not from the Minister but Jim Russel, Assistant Director from the Employment Service Division. Whilst all five young people received a response the letter was a generic response and therefore the feeling from young people we worked with was that their questions still were not answered and that the response was typical of government.

The 'Why?' Project Joint Plenary was held at the White Horse Hotel, Derry and ran between 23rd and 27th October 2011. It involved 15 young people from in and around the North West, (8 of which had come through the entire process) and 21 young people from Germany.

The programme was designed to meet 2 of the 5 general objectives of the Youth in Action Programme, i.e., promotes young people's active citizenship in general and their European citizenship in particular and foster mutual understanding between young people in different countries.

The Joint Plenary was also run simultaneously with The PoP (Paths of Participation) International Youth Assembly involving young people from Austria, Finland and Slovenia as well as Northern Ireland and Germany.

The meeting was structured in three phases:

- (i) Day 1 was 'Team Building/Orientation' Day where participants would take part in a series of interactive activities so as to promote contact between participants so that they could get to know one another

Our 3 issues:
Immigrants are obvious
in our daily life.
Too much poverty in
such a rich country.
Declining standards
and values (disc, respect,
tolerance)



- (ii) Day 2 was 'Discussion Day' where participants would have the opportunity to reflect upon and chat about the journey they had travelled during 'Why?' and the issues raised as a result
- (iii) Day 3 – 'Action Day' where participants would travel to the City Centre and make a 'noisy' and visually impressive circuit of the city's famous walls in order to signal a 'street protest' about important issues.

'Team Building/Orientation' Day

Participants travelled to The Diamond Centre in Claudy where they took in structured simultaneous workshops that ran throughout the morning before everyone participated in a large team game called the 'City Game'. Workshops covered a variety of themes – sports, arts, crafts, music and board games among them.

'Discussion Day'

Discussions 'kicked off' in the morning beginning with 'My Issue is....' where each working group would identify 3 issues and then prepare and present these to the large group. The issues that arose were:

- Meaning of Family in different cultures
- Free Time
- Study
- Opportunities
- Immigration
- Poverty
- Declining Standards
- Exams
- Friendship
- Family
- Suicide

'World Cafe' followed allowing greater exploration of those issues and to work towards identifying two key issues that participants could concentrate on as the key messages for their action day. In the afternoon participants took part in a 'Public Relations' workshop which focused on how to raise the profile of issues to local audiences in their communities.



'Action Planning' was next and this allowed participants to use their creative side designing placards, writing songs and taking part in a drumming workshop – all of which would be used the following day to create a visible and noisy spectacle as participants would engage in a street protest on the issues they had identified.

'Action Day'

Participants travelled to the City Centre (beginning at the Guildhall in the centre of Derry) and made a 'noisy' and visually impressive circuit of the city's famous walls. The group was led by a group from the drumming workshop (made up of approximately 20-25 participants – both of which were drawn from The 'Why?' Project and PoP Youth Assembly) whilst the rest carried placards, played guitar and made noise so as to create a lasting and visible spectacle. All participants were dressed in their PoP colour-coded t-shirts.

This had the desired effect as many people from the city stopped to watch the parade as it made it's way from Guildhall Square around the City Walls back to the Guildhall where they were then received by the Mayor in the City's Council

Chamber. They engaged in conversation with the Mayor and even sang one of their 'protest' songs to him.

Following this they then took part in an interactive city tour where they worked in small teams to answer questions about the city so as to increase their knowledge before breaking for lunch.

After this they resumed at a local Community Youth Centre where they worked on preparing presentations in small groups for the Mayor (which they then presented) about their learning from The Joint Plenary. After this they had some free time followed by a farewell evening.

Overview of Joint Plenary

By bringing young people together who differed along lines of gender, religion, politics, ability, social status, ethnicity and nationality and engage them in a process of exploring democracy and participation and the values that underpin both we were able to explore a wide range of issues that helped to inform their opinion and thinking around critical issues that impact upon their lives. In doing so we saw an increase in levels of confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness among participants not to mention an increase their tolerance towards and an acceptance of others.



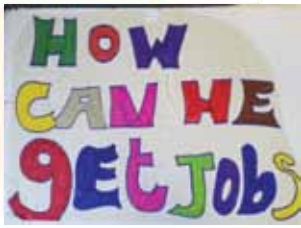
Summary of The 'Why?' Project

By also providing space and time for participants to discuss, identify and then address common issues through 'street protest' they were addressing a concern that has significance right across Europe at this moment where many young people feel that the failure of governments to create opportunities for work and study is discriminatory in nature and therefore by engaging in 'street protest' are 'doing their bit' to address prejudice and discrimination through their actions.

The 'Why?' Project formally drew to a close with the completion of the Joint Plenary in October. It had been planned to host an evaluation meeting in Berlin in late December following the launch of project report in early December. For a variety of reasons including availability of staff (due to other on-going work commitments) it wasn't possible to organise this and perhaps on reflection the timescale was a little ambitious considering that it came fairly soon after the Joint Plenary.

The 'Why?' Project essentially ran two simultaneous processes in Northern Ireland and Germany – preparation followed by exploring democracy, open space, local action projects and of course, joint plenary.

Within this process participants were effectively engaged in their own twin-track approach – one where they engaged in learning about local democratic processes (which included all the activities mentioned above) and also one at a very personal level where they moved from essentially being a 'passive participant' (politically speaking) at the exploring democracy phase to one of 'active citizen' as they embarked on a 'street protest' during the Joint Plenary.



They succeeded in doing this by identifying issues which helped to set the agenda during the 'Preparation' phase. During the 'Exploring Democracy' phase they then explored what democracy is and how it manifests itself and in doing so grew in familiarity with the formal democratic process. This helped to enhance their own knowledge and understanding which in turn increased their confidence and enhanced their skills.

The Open Space and Local Action Project elements helped to inform and refine their understanding of those issues during the process – it helped to 'bolster' their arguments and further demonstrated their capacity to try and influence change and take ownership of the democratic process. One example of this was letters to the Minister for Department of Employment and Learning. They then carried this learning into a collaborative environment when working with their counterparts from Germany (and also those from Finland, Slovenia and Austria who were in attendance at the PoP International Youth Assembly) and identified action points that they could campaign on.


Although participants from both countries were working separately from one another they were in fact contributing to their knowledge of European issues without realising it. This became clear when issues discussed at local

level were raised during the Joint Plenary and this formed part of the 'street protest' around the city walls where the focus was on youth employment.

Of course each young person was their 'own person' in many respects with their own ideas and opinion but for many if not all of them this was the first time they had moved from merely having an opinion to one of taking responsibility for an issue and doing something about it in a way we normally associate with political parties, trade unions, labour movements, etc.

They moved from merely having an opinion to 'protesting' and then making representation to the Mayor of Derry~Londonderry. This mirrors much of the political process where groups identify an issue, protest and then engage with politicians.

The project was also truly participative in that whilst there was a structure in place (which provided a framework for delivery) participants literally began with a blank sheet, established their 'why' questions, identified issues and then essentially facilitated the Open Space, Mock Parliament, Local Project and Joint Plenary activities.



Another strength of the project was the diversity of young people on it, so for example, there was young people spread across three local areas made up of mixed gender, religion and urban/ rural dimension. In Germany participants were drawn from the same organisation which works specifically with those exhibiting challenging behaviours or coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

By engaging this group of young people over a sustained period of time we have had the opportunity to observe a gradual but steady increase in their confidence, self-esteem and awareness alongside their new-found knowledge of democratic and participative structures and processes.

The 'Why?' Project has been successful in fulfilling its aims which were as follows:

- To enable young people to ask questions they would not normally have the opportunity to ask
- To build confidence in young people to speak out so as to effect change
- To introduce young people to notions and concepts of democracy and participation

This has been made possible by achieving all but one of its objectives which were as follows:

- To set up an 16-month 'enquiry' made up of a variety of phases and approaches
- To use methodologies that will promote and encourage personal expression
- To organise projects in response to the 'enquiry'
- To engage with local democratic systems, processes and personnel
- To provide space and time to reflect on the responses emerging from the 'enquiry'
- To build on the project, explore follow-up actions to embed democratic values and processes

The only objective that remains outstanding is the organisation of projects in response to the 'enquiry'. The 'enquiry' we refer to was that of the entire 'Why?' project process - a process which would introduce young people to democracy by making it both accessible and meaningful and would enable participants to ask important questions and from this identify a range of issues that could then be worked on post-project.



Issues raised during the process

The 'enquiry' in that respect has been completed and below is a brief synopsis of the issues identified and thus provides a basis from which to organise projects in response to these issues.

Friends: Young people place more and more importance on friendship and the need to have a healthy relationship with their friends and this places a heavy responsibility on the need to have the skill and attitude to maintain this

'Otherness': Young people are faced with a growing range of diversity in society and find this challenging

Rights/Boundaries: Young people feel restricted by boundaries and would like to change the various rules that govern their life

Wealth: Young people are frustrated with not having enough income and the pressures and challenges that the consumer society projects onto them

Bullying: Very much a 'live' issue and even more so now in terms of the digital age we now live in

Rural: Young people are frustrated by the lack of engagement from politicians in rural life

Internet Safety: Young people are more conscious of the need for protection and require more training to anticipate and deal with potential dangers

Stress: Young People face stress at all levels and need more info and advice on how to deal with it. This falls within the context of growing awareness around issues of mental health and emotional well-being

Health: Young people have genuine concerns regarding drink and drugs and this requires more engagement with young people on this subject

Relationships: Young People recognise difficulties they face in everyday relationships with their peers but in particular with certain groups they view as different or vice versa

Celebrity: Young people value fame but also recognise the challenges that come with it although they look to celebrity as 'heroes' and 'role models'



Next Steps

Education: Young people acknowledge that education is becoming more inaccessible due to increasing costs and cutbacks in education budgets and feel this is making it more and more difficult for young people to pursue their chosen career paths

Employment: Young People feel there is now a distinct lack of opportunity to get into employment – there is a growing sense of disillusionment about future career prospects

These issues are the result of a process that began in November 2011 and drew to a close in December 2012. They offer a foundation from which to continue the conversations with not only those involved in The ‘Why?’ Project.

The reach of the project should be extended to ensure that other young people who have not yet had an opportunity to offer their thoughts and ideas can be engaged.

The focus should however take the form of actions to bring about positive change in the lives of young people in and around the North West. The ‘Why?’ Project has proved its worth in providing the space and time necessary for young people to put their why questions ‘out there’ and now as we move forward it’s time to start to act upon these questions.

Work towards securing funding to enable a second ‘Why?’ project should be sought so that the issues raised can act as some kind of initial ‘manifesto’ that young people promote and in doing so engage with those in positions of power and influence to bring about positive change that will have lasting benefits for young people in the long-term.

