

From
prison
to
peace

Learning from the experience
of political ex-prisoners

A Resource for Local and Global
Citizenship at Key Stage Four



contents

Foreword	5
Foreword for Young People	7
Introduction and Acknowledgements	8
Resource Overview and Curriculum Links	9
Concept Map	10
Using the Resource in Local and Global Citizenship	11

Activities

Section 1: Becoming Involved in the Conflict **13**

Session 1 - What do we mean by 'political ex-prisoners'?	14
Session 2 - Why did people get involved?	19
Session 3 - Reflecting on the experience	25

Section 2: Understanding the Prison Experience **30**

Session 4 - Imagining the prison experience	31
Session 5 - The reality of the prison experience	34
Session 6 - The impact of the prison experience	42

Section 3: Contributing to Conflict Transformation and Community Development **47**

Session 7 - What positive roles have political ex-prisoners played?	48
Session 8 - Reflecting on the role of political ex-prisoners in our community	61
Session 9 - How can I play a positive role in my community?	63

Teacher's Notes **65**

Links **67**

Glossary **68**

“

Our society has come a long way in recent years and we look forward to a bright future – one which is marked by opportunity and hope and which is enriched by its diversity.

Our young people are a vital part of that future and represent perhaps our greatest resource in building a better society for everyone. ”



foreword

Our society has come a long way in recent years and we look forward to a bright future – one which is marked by opportunity and hope and which is enriched by its diversity. Our young people are a vital part of that future and represent perhaps our greatest resource when building a better society for everyone. The young people in today's classrooms will be tomorrow's leaders and we must invest our time and energy to ensure that they are equipped for that challenge.

It has been said that the lamp of experience is the best way to guide our feet for the future and that's exactly what this resource does. It focuses on the past experiences of many within our community but, in so doing, it also challenges us about what our response should be to the present and indeed the future.

What strikes me most about these materials is their reality. The real stories of the real lives of real people are reflected time and time again throughout the resource and I believe this is its key strength as an educational tool. In bridging the gap between yesterday, today and tomorrow, I believe this resource can only enrich the educational experiences of many young people throughout our society and encourage them to play a positive role in their community.

My hope is that young people across our society will, as a result of this resource, understand better our past, recognise the positive contribution of many individuals in our present and reflect on how they can play a role in shaping our future.

Bruce Robinson

Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service

“

Thanks to our Peace
Process, **all of this is now
in the past** and none of us
will ever want to go back to
those dark days.”



foreword

for young people

As young people growing up in a much more peaceful Northern Ireland, it is difficult for you to imagine what it was like to grow up in the very violent years of the not-so-distant past. This is why this resource is so important, not least in helping you to understand how young people like yourselves were affected by the conflict and how so many, on both sides of our sadly divided community, became involved in the conflict and in violence.

Thanks to our Peace Process, all of this is now in the past and none of us will ever want to go back to those dark days.

We are all learning that there has to be a better way to resolve our differences and secure a peaceful future for you and for your children. Nobody knows this better than the people who were very personally involved in the conflict. This is why it is so important for you to hear their stories - so that you may be spared what they went through and that together with you we will now build a happy, fair and safe community for us all to share.

Rev. Harold Good

Former Methodist President

introduction

and acknowledgements

This publication is an unique achievement. It is a very honest sharing of experience by a number of individual ex-combatants/political ex-prisoners from very different backgrounds. The views that these individuals bring to the important question of citizenship are not often heard in Northern Ireland despite its long history of conflict. All too often society only learns about its history from either political power-holders or professional historians – this publication represents something different, it offers the often painful learning from lives that were intertwined in all the contradictions of a bitterly contested society.

What motivated the participation of the political ex-prisoners in this project was a determination that their experiences should be shared with young people. There is no sense of glamour in their stories nor any sense of self-aggrandisement. They are an honest portrayal of how individuals can become caught up in violence; inflict and suffer pain; endure often long prison sentences and still hold a commitment to make society a more just and inclusive place. This is the essence of where we have come from; hopefully it can contribute to, and inform, a future sense of citizenship that can avoid these circumstances and work to create a more inclusive, welcoming and equal society.

The Prison to Peace Partnership has been supported by the EU PEACE III Programme, through the Special EU Programmes Body. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland would like to acknowledge the support of Brenda Hegarty and Howard Keery, from the Programmes Body. The Foundation also welcomes and recognises the interest of both Bruce Robinson and Linsey Farrell of the Northern Ireland Civil Service in the ongoing work. However this publication would never have seen the light of day without the major voluntary effort and commitment invested by Lesley McEvoy (School of Education – Queens University, Belfast) who worked tirelessly with the Community Foundation staff and the members of the Citizenship and Youth Working Group of the Prison to Peace Partnership, under the chairpersonship of Colin Halliday (Charter Regional). We also acknowledge the work of the organisations represented on the Working Group: Coiste na n-Iarchimí, Teach na Fáilte, Lisburn Prisoners' Support Project, An Eochair, and EPIC (North Ulster) and to the Nerve Centre who produced the DVD and Thunk Creative who provided the graphic design work. Finally, sincere thanks go to the fifteen individuals who were willing to share their stories so that their narratives could be used in this resource.

We hope that this publication will find its way on to the curriculum of many schools and youth clubs across Northern Ireland in order to create discussion, as well as to both inform and inspire young people, and demonstrate that there is always a different way to achieve change.

Avila Kilmurray

Director - Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

resource overview

and curriculum links

This resource provides an opportunity for young people to explore issues relating to the conflict in Northern Ireland/ the North of Ireland, its legacy and the transition to peace from the perspective of political ex-prisoners. The resource aims at increasing young people's **knowledge** of the reality of the experiences of political ex-prisoners and in particular to de-mythologize the prison experience. It also employs a range of active learning methodologies to enhance and develop young people's key **skills**. Furthermore, in accordance with the principles of citizenship education, the resource encourages critical reflection on these issues and provides opportunities for young people to consider how they can play a positive role and make a positive contribution to their communities. Finally, through the suggested activities young people should develop an awareness and appreciation of the **values** underpinning community development and peace building initiatives.

Through a range of activities in the resource young people are asked to:

- **develop an understanding of the term 'political ex-prisoner'**
- **consider the factors which influenced individuals' decisions to become involved in the conflict**
- **explore the reality of the prison experience and its impact on political ex-prisoners, their families and their communities**
- **become familiar with the post-conflict work of political ex-prisoners in conflict transformation and community development**
- **determine how young people could make a positive contribution in their own communities**

There are 9 sessions in the resource:

The first three sessions focus on the circumstances which influenced individuals in their decision to become involved in the conflict.

The next three sessions focus on the prison experience and its impact.

The final three sessions concentrate on encouraging young people to learn from the positive contribution made by political ex-prisoners to conflict transformation and community development.

The concept map below provides an overview of the resource and highlights key ideas explored in the sessions.

concept map

Key Concept	Development	Activity
Defining the term 'political ex-prisoner'		
	Facts and figures relating to political ex-prisoners Defining terminology	What do we mean by 'political ex-prisoners'? Session 1
Becoming involved in conflict		
	Factors and circumstances which influenced individuals' decisions Impact of involvement Comparing experiences	Why did people get involved? Reflecting on the experience Session 2 and 3
The prison experience		
	Challenging assumptions Exploring the reality Impact of prison Comparing experiences	Imagining the prison experience The reality of the prison experience The impact of the prison experience Session 4-6
The positive contribution of political ex-prisoners to our community		
	Role in conflict transformation Contribution to community development	What positive role have political ex-prisoners played? Reflecting on the role of political ex-prisoners in our community Sessions 7-8
Young people and community participation	Exploring opportunities for young people to play a positive role in the community	How can I play a positive role in my community? Session 9

using the resource

in local and global citizenship

Local and Global Citizenship in Northern Ireland is based on four themes:

Human Rights and Social Responsibility

Diversity and Inclusion

Equality and Social Justice

Democracy and Active Participation

The specific requirements of the Key Stage 3 curriculum are clearly articulated under these four themes. At Key Stage 4 the themes have informed the following statements of minimum requirement which outline the statutory curriculum for Local and Global Citizenship, which states that:

Students should be enabled to:

- respond to the specific challenges and opportunities which diversity and inclusion present in Northern Ireland and the wider world;
- identify and exercise their rights and social responsibilities in relation to local, national and global issues;
- develop their understanding of the role of society and government in safeguarding individual and collective rights in order to promote equality and to ensure that everyone is treated fairly;
- develop their understanding of how to participate in a range of democratic processes;
- develop awareness of key democratic institutions and their role in promoting inclusion, justice and democracy;
- develop awareness of the role of non-governmental organisations.

For more information regarding the Key Stage 4 curriculum including non-statutory guidance materials see www.nicurriculum.org.uk

This statutory curriculum has also been used as the basis for the Local and Global Citizenship component of the optional GCSE 'Learning for Life and Work'

For more information regarding the requirements of the GCSE see www.ccea.org.uk

This resource has been designed specifically to support the delivery of Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stage Four. It contributes to this area of the curriculum by providing opportunities for young people to explore:

- the nature of the **conflict** in Northern Ireland and its impact on individuals, families and communities
- how **non-governmental organisations**, such as political ex-prisoner organisations, are playing a positive role in society and contributing to conflict transformation and community development
- ways in which young people can **participate** and contribute positively to their communities
- young people's own **social responsibilities** in their community and wider society

Key features of the session outline plans

The lesson plans for each session to incorporate all aspects of best practice and are in line with the approach expected in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Each session includes the following sections

About this session	Provides a brief synopsis of and highlights the active methodologies used in the session
Learning Intentions	Clearly articulates what students should be able to do by the end of the session.
Opportunities for skills development	Links specific activities in the session to the skills framework at KS4: communication, using maths, using ICT, and using thinking skills and personal capabilities
Resources and Preparation	Outlines the resources needed for the session and preparation required prior to delivery
Time	Suggests the minimum time required to cover all the activities in the session
Introduction Progression Conclusion	Provides a step-by-step guide to delivering the session including prompt questions and classroom management suggestions
Catering for Differentiation	Explains how the session is designed to cater for mixed ability teaching and suggests additional strategies to assist with differentiating the session for a range of abilities

activities

Section 1:

Becoming involved in the conflict



Session 1

What do we mean by ‘political ex-prisoners’?

About This Session

This session provides young people with some basic information relating to political ex-prisoners. It explores the terminology used in relation to political ex-prisoners and explains the rationale for the use of this term in the resource.

The main methodologies used in this session are: a K-W-L grid, ‘Each One Teach One’, ‘Think, pair, share’

Learning Intentions

By the end of this activity young people should be able to:

- determine their own learning objectives for this series of activities
- recall some basic facts relating to those who experienced prison as a result of the conflict
- compare and contrast the term ‘political ex-prisoner’ with other associated terms

Assessment Opportunities

The K-W-L grid provides an opportunity for young people to assess their own learning throughout the module

Opportunity for Skills Development

Skill	Activity
Communication: <i>communicating viewpoints in a logical and coherent manner; participating in discussions</i>	Each One Teach One Think, pair, share
Problem solving: <i>thinking, and decision making</i>	Think, pair, share
Working with others	Each One Teach One Think, pair, share
Self-management	K-W-L

Resources

- Resource Sheet 1.1
- Resource Sheet 1.2
- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Post-it notes

K-W-L grid (Know, Would like to know, Learnt)
Each One Teach One

Preparation

- Photocopy Resource Sheet 1.1 for each young person
- Photocopy Resource Sheet 1.2 and cut into separate strips. Ensure that you have one strip for each young person (duplicate strips if necessary)

Time 30-40 mins

Introduction

Introduce the module by explaining its aims and reading out the foreword written for young people. Ask the young people to think about what they already know about political ex-prisoners, and what they would like to know and to record their thoughts on the K-W-L grid provided. Explain that they will be completing the third column as they progress through the activities, and that the next activity might answer some of their questions.

Progression

1. Give each young person one statement from Resource Sheet 1.2. Explain that each statement contains a piece of information about people who experienced prison as a result of the conflict here.
2. Ask each young person to read their statement carefully to themselves and to make sure that they understand what it says.
3. Explain to the young people that they are going to teach the information they have been given to as many people in the class as possible. They should try to think of ways of explaining their information clearly.
4. Ask young people to move around the room passing on the information to others. They may begin to make connections between their information and someone else's. Encourage this and any resulting discussion. They may even wish to move around in groups passing on their 'combined' information.
5. When you feel the young people have gathered an adequate amount of information from others ask them to return to their seats and use the following questions to help them recall what they heard.
 - What did you learn during the activity?
 - What surprised? What didn't surprise you?
6. Ask young people to consider why the activity used the term 'political ex-prisoner'. Display this term on a board or flip-chart and ask young people to take a minute to think about other words or phrases that could be used instead of this term. Ask young people to record these words or phrases on individual 'post-it' notes.
7. Ask them in pairs to discuss the words or phrases on their post-its and to select three of these to share with the rest of class by placing the post-its around the term displayed on the board or flipchart.
8. Ask the young people to briefly compare and contrast the other terms and explain the rationale for the term used in this resource (see Teacher's Notes below)

Conclusion

Return to the learning intentions to summarise the session. Return to the K-W-L grid and ask the young people to add in anything they have learnt in the third column.

Catering for Differentiation

The 'Each One Teach One' methodology is particularly well suited to mixed ability groups. Young people can be given a piece of information suited to their ability. The information on the strips is organised so that some strips contain information that is more straightforward than others.

Teacher's Notes

This lesson gives you the chance to explore the 'politics of naming'. The term used in this resource is 'political ex-prisoner'. This is used to differentiate between those convicted of what are sometimes referred to as 'ordinary' offences and those convicted of offences associated with the conflict i.e. those which are 'politically motivated'. The term 'politically motivated ex-prisoners' is sometimes used, as are 'politically motivated former prisoners' and 'people with conflict related convictions'. Also the terms Republican ex-prisoner and Loyalist ex-prisoner are used in the resource to indicate particular forms of political motivation. It's important where the 'ex' goes. Political ex-prisoners do not want to be characterised for example as 'ex-republican' or 'ex-loyalist'. The term 'paramilitary' is not used in this resource as political ex-prisoners see it as a term associated with gangs etc. That disregards their political motivation.

Learnt	
Would Like to Know	
Know	

Resource Sheet 1.2 **Each One Teach One**



It is estimated that 18000 republicans went through the prisons during the conflict

It is estimated that between 5000 to 10000 loyalists went through the prisons during the conflict

If you think about political ex-prisoners and their families, between 100,000 and 200,000 thousand people in our society are affected by the impact of this prison experience

During the conflict the percentage of prisoners being re-convicted after release was low. Between 1985 and 1990, 374 life sentence political prisoners were released. Only 1 was later convicted of a terrorist/ political offence

During the conflict political prisoners were held in Long Kesh / Maze prison, Crumlin Road, Magillan and Maghaberry prisons. Female political prisoners were held in Armagh and then in Maghaberry prisons.

For a short time prisoners were held on the Maidstone Prison Ship in Belfast Harbour. The prisoners held here were interned (that means they were imprisoned without having gone through any court trial)

From 1971 to 1976 prisoners convicted of 'terrorist offenses' had 'Special Category Status' which meant they were recognised as political prisoners.

From 1976 into the late 1980s political prisoners were treated as 'ordinary' (or non-political) prisoners. This led to prison protests such as the blanket protests, the no-wash protests and hunger strikes. By the end of the 1980s most of the prisoners' demands had been met and they were seen, more or less, as political prisoners.

Political prisoners were released as part of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in 1998. They were released on license which meant that if they re-offended in any way at all they would go back to prison without having to be re-convicted in the courts

194 loyalist prisoners were released as part of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement

241 republican prisoners were released as part of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement

12 prisoners who were not connected to any particular republican or loyalist group were released as part of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement

In the 12 years following the early release of political prisoners, as part of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, less than 10% of these political ex-prisoners have 're-offended'.

In Northern Ireland 48% of 'ordinary' prisoners (that is those who have not been convicted of a political offence) 're-offend' within 2 years of their release

There are a number of community based organisations which have been set up to support political ex-prisoners and their families.

Resource Sheet 1.2 **Each One Teach One** (continued)



Coiste na n-larchimí was formed in 1998. It is the umbrella organisation of the Republican ex-prisoner network throughout Ireland. It works to provide support to the many thousands of political ex-prisoners (former IRA) and their families who are living daily with the legacy of imprisonment.

Lisburn Prisoners Support Project was formed in 1996 and works with Loyalist ex-prisoners (former UDA and UFF), their families and other community organisations to provide services and facilities to support the needs of political ex-prisoners and their families in the process of re-integration into the community.

Teach na Fáilte is an INLA ex-prisoner support group. It was formed in 1997 providing a variety of services for individuals and families who have been directly bereaved, victimised or traumatised as a result of the conflict.

EPIC was established in 1995, and EPIC (North Ulster) in 2009, to address the problems surrounding the reintegration of political ex-prisoners into the community and in particular those prisoners from UVF and RHC backgrounds.

An Eochair was established in 1998 to identify and address the needs of Official Republican ex-prisoners and their families. It provides advice, guidance, training, education and support to former Official IRA prisoners, their families and the broader community.

Session 2

Why did people get involved?

About This Session

This session enables young people to explore the narratives and experiences of political ex-prisoners in order to develop an understanding of why people became involved in the conflict. The main methodology used in this activity is a card cluster and zone of relevance.

Learning Intentions

By the end of the session young people should be able to:

- recall some reasons why individuals choose to become involved in the conflict
- classify and categorize these reasons into broad themes or factors
- evaluate the significance of these factors

Opportunity for Skills Development

Skill	Activity
Communication: <i>communicating viewpoints in a logical and coherent manner; participating in discussions, making oral and written summaries</i>	Card cluster
Problem solving: <i>thinking, and decision making</i>	Zone of relevance
Working with others	Group work
Self-management	K-W-L

Resources

DVD

Resource Sheet 2.1

Resource Sheet 2.2

Resource Sheet 2.3

Flipchart pages

Glue or blutac

Markers

From Prison to Peace (section 1)

Thought Bubble

Becoming involved

Zone of relevance

Preparation

- Photocopy Resource Sheet 2.1 for each young person
- Photocopy Resource Sheet 2.2 for each group onto card and cut into separate cards
- Photocopy Resource Sheet 2.3 for each group

Time 30-40 mins

Introduction

Play section 1 of the 'From Prison to Peace' DVD. Ask young people to write down their first thoughts in the 'thought bubble' (Resource Sheet 2.1) and any questions they might have as a result of watching the DVD clip. Take brief feedback and indicate which of their questions will be answered during the following sessions. (Make a note of any questions which may not be answered and ask young people to record these in the 'Would like to know' section of their K-W-L grid to be returned at the end of the module). Explain the purpose of the lesson by (appropriately) sharing the learning intentions with the students

Progression

1. Place young people into small groups and provide them with the set of reasons that caused people to get involved in the conflict (Resource Sheet 2.2 as a set of cards). Explain to the young people that these cards give a range of reasons from differing perspectives.
2. Explain to the young people that they will be 'clustering' these cards into groups. Ask them to turn over one card from the top of the pack and place it in front of them. They should then turn over the second card and compare it with the first. If they think that there is a strong connection between these reasons then they should place the card beside the first card to form a 'cluster' (e.g. both examples indicate that the individual became involved in the conflict due to the death of a friend). If they do not think there is a strong connection between the reasons then they should place the card a distance away from the first.
3. They should continue this process turning over one card at a time, adding to their clusters or swapping cards around to form other clusters, or breaking clusters into sub-clusters etc. Reassure them that there is no right or wrong answer- the exercise is designed to develop their capacity to make their own connections between ideas.
4. When they have clustered all the cards ask them to stick their cards in their clusters onto the flipchart page.
5. Ask them to give each cluster a name (e.g. 'death of a friend') and to record these on their flipcharts.
6. Allow some time for the young people to move in groups around the room to examine how other groups have clustered the reasons.
7. Take feedback from each group on how they have clustered the reasons. Record these on the board/flipchart and use their ideas to draw out a number of common themes.
8. Distribute a 'zone of relevance' sheet to each group (Resource Sheet 2.3) Ask them to decide where each of the themes, identified in step 7 above, should be placed. Those themes which they think are most relevant to explaining why people became involved in the conflict should be placed close to the centre; those which are less relevant further away from the centre. Again there is no right or wrong answer. The purpose is to encourage students to evaluate the significance of the particular reasons.

Conclusion

Provide some time for the young people to reflect on what they have heard/read during this session. Ask them to consider if they would have made the same choices. If so, why? If not, why not? Take some feedback, ensuring a range of perspectives are heard. Explain that in the next session they will be exploring political ex-prisoners' reflections on their involvement in the conflict. Return to the learning intentions to summarise the session. Return to the K-W-L grid and ask the young people to add in anything they have learnt in the third column.

Catering for Differentiation

The resources for this activity have been designed to cater for a range of abilities. The cards for the clustering activity include simple as well as more complex statements. You may wish to select the most appropriate cards for your students for use in the clustering. However, through the clustering activity students should be able to make connections between the simple and complex statements and in doing so may come to an understanding of the more complex statements.

Teacher's Notes

The quotes from individuals in this activity have been referenced as either 'republican' or 'loyalist' in order to keep the information as straightforward as possible for the young people. However it is very important to note that there are different and distinct perspectives within republicanism and loyalism. You might wish to explore this with the young people (see glossary for further information).





No one reason and it's difficult to quantify. Most of my childhood friends didn't get involved so you can't really blame the environment.

Republican ex-prisoner

Big turning point for me was 'Bloody Sunday'. You were politicised at a young age. As a kid I was rioting and then when I was 14 or 15 joined. Everyone of my friends at that time joined the IRA or INLA. It was a reaction to seeing stuff on TV and on the streets.

Republican ex-prisoner

Family reasons. My father had been interned in the 1940s and two uncles had been in the war of independence. Cousins were involved. It was just like a family tradition. It was like a 'religious duty' to be honest.

Republican ex-prisoner

I don't come from a republican background. My parents were Catholic but were pro-British. I was watching TV in the 1970s and heard about a petrol bomber being shot. He shouldn't have been doing what he was doing but he didn't deserve to get shot.

Republican ex-prisoner

We were very aware of what was going on when the conflict started and how the adults were concerned for our safety. That was the environment I was growing up in. Difficult to say how much of it was because you were being analytical about the situation and how much were the events surrounding you. I suppose it was a bit of both.

Republican ex-prisoner

I came from a socialist background. You always have that kind of politics in your background. Although I had friends from the Unionist community you knew there was something different about you. I remember seeing them changing their attitudes, becoming more suspicious.

Republican ex-prisoner

You'd hear the armoured cars coming into the street and the screaming and you'd think: 'What's that, that's my neighbour, that's my community'. It was that and the personal abuse by the army.

Republican ex-prisoner

I first became involved when I was 14. I didn't live in a republican area. We lived in a protestant area. My family weren't republican but we were nationalist. When I was growing up all my friends outside school were protestants. But with the onset of the conflict there was a gradual growing apart from myself and my friends. A large percentage of them moved apart from me.

Republican ex-prisoner

I was disgusted with Bloody Friday. I thought 'This isn't what politics is, this isn't what the war was about'. But there were no political alternatives around at the time.

Republican ex-prisoner

It's to do with passion. You're probably more passionate about things than your friends. Passionate about politics and history.

Republican ex-prisoner



People I knew had been victims of the conflict and in one case actually killed in the conflict. And images of things like the Oxford Street Bomb. Bodies on the street.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

There was a feeling at that time also of sort of members of the first world war, 'sons of Ulster' and all that .. and... 'Why are you not involved in this?' There was a bit of pressure from that.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

The whole conversation was about how the UDR and the Police couldn't cope- so there was no point joining them

Loyalist ex-prisoner

The 1970s to me in this country was purely sectarian and when I was asked to get involved I said 'yes'

Republican ex-prisoner

I grew up in an area where the major flashpoints were when the conflict started. There was massive rioting in that area - on both sides. There were no-warning bombs going off at that time.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

Politics wasn't a big thing in my life at that time. As a teenager I couldn't understand why Nationalists and Catholics were talking about discrimination. We all were in the same position- working class families. We all had very little. But in the early 1970s the violence got so bad. And friends I went to school with had gone into the security forces and were killed by republicans. Nobody seemed to be able to get a handle on it. I did think about joining the security forces but I joined the UVF.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

It was the natural thing to do. It was a defensive organisation. Most of my friends and family were in the organisation. To me it was just a natural thing.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

I'd no political bone in my body at the time. But it was a natural progression from throwing stones, to carrying weapons to eventually using weapons. There was a pride thing with it. Like a badge of honour to be asked to join in the area I came from.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

None of my family or friends were involved. My family were in the security forces so I joined the security forces. The point I got involved was through seeing so many friends and comrades being murdered. And witnessing people being murdered. I got to the point where enough was enough. It became very frustrating not being able to do anything and seeing people on the streets that you knew had murdered your comrades. So I left the security forces and joined the UDA.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

Session 3

Reflecting on the Experience

About This Session

This lesson enables young people to reflect on how political ex-prisoners see the consequences of being involved in the conflict and the impact it had on their lives and the lives of others.

The main methodology used in this activity is a role-play conducted as a carousel discussion.

Learning Intentions

By the end of the session young people should be able to:

- describe some of the consequences of being involved in conflict
- categorise these consequences into broad themes
- compare and contrast the experience of political ex-prisoners

Assessment Opportunities

Individual summaries of the carousel discussion and whole class discussion will provide opportunities to ascertain student understanding during the lesson. The K-W-L-H grid provides an opportunity for students to assess their own learning throughout the module.

Opportunity for Skills Development

Skill	Activity
Communication: <i>communicating viewpoints in a logical and coherent manner; participating in discussions</i>	Carousel discussion (in role)
Being Creative: <i>learn from and value other people's ideas</i>	Carousel discussion (in role)
Working with others	Small group work
Self-management	K-W-L grid

Resources

Resource Sheet 3.1
Resource Sheet 3.2

Role-cards
Comparison Alley

Preparation

- Photocopy Resource Sheet 3.1 onto card and cut into separate cards, one for each young person (you may need to duplicate some cards for larger classes)
- Photocopy Resource Sheet 3.2 for each young person

Time 30-40 mins

Introduction

Briefly review previous session by asking a few young people to recall the reasons that prompted individuals to become involved in the conflict and their own reflections from the end of the previous session. Explain the purpose of the session by (appropriately) sharing the learning intentions with the young people.

Progression

1. Give each student a role-card (Resource Sheet 3.1) and ask them to take some time to read the information on it and to think about how they might present this information/perspective to someone else: Who are they? What were the consequences of their involvement? What impact did it have? How might they feel about this?
2. Split class into two groups. Ask one group to form an inner circle and the other group to form an outer circle. Each person in the inner circle should be facing someone in the outer circle
3. Ask each pair in role to briefly introduce themselves to each other and to share the information/perspective on their role-card.
4. Now ask the young people in the outer circle to rotate one place clockwise (people in inner circle do not move) and to introduce themselves to their new partner.
5. Continue with this carousel discussion until everyone has had an opportunity to 'meet' a wide range of characters. After the first few encounters their confidence in portraying their character should increase so you may want to increase the time they have with their new partners. It is also helpful after a few rotations to ask students to make connections with other 'characters' they have met and to extend the conversations they are having beyond simple introductions. You could use the following prompts to assist fuller discussion:
 - 'This time, as well as introducing yourself tell your new partner about some of the other people you have met'
 - 'This time, after you've introduced yourselves and chatted about other people you've met, maybe you could spend a bit of time talking (in role) about similarities between the experiences of the people you've met'
 - 'This time, after you've introduced yourselves and chatted about other people you've met, maybe you could spend a bit of time talking (in role) about differences between the experiences of the people you've met'
6. When the students have 'met' a range of characters stop the discussion and ask them to get into small groups (of 3 or 4) to discuss the following questions:
 - Did anything surprise you during the activity? If so, what?
 - What were the main consequences of being involved in the conflict?
 - What are the similarities and differences between the information/perspectives you heard?

Conclusion

Ask the young people to reflect back on the last two sessions, but this time to think about the similarities and differences between loyalist and republican perspectives and experiences. Ask them to suggest ideas and record these on the 'Comparison Alley' (Resource Sheet 3.2).

Return to the learning intentions to summarise the lesson. Time permitting return to the K-W-L grid and ask young people to fill in anything new they have learnt during the session.

Catering for Differentiation

The resources for this activity have been designed to cater for a range of abilities. The role cards for the carousel discussion include characters presenting very straightforward information and those with more complex contributions to make. Select and allocate the role cards which are most appropriate for your class and for individual young people.



Mentally it was heavy. You were afraid and nervous doing the things you were doing. You were afraid this could happen to you also. You were uncomfortable in other loyalist areas even. Our family life became totally different. Tensions developed with my father. He had been where his son was. He was totally against me being involved. I remember one night he said 'There's only two ways this will end for you, son: death or prison'.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

I don't see a call for joining up anymore now. When I grew up the street tensions and inter-community violence was escalating back then. I think today there is nothing like that. I don't see the sense in any young person getting involved. At the time there was a glamour involved in it. If they just knew what it's actually like in being involved in killing someone. It's not like the movies. If they see the result they leave on the family left behind and the result on their own family and their own mind. I did it a few times and it felt worse each time. It was something you felt had to be done but you didn't like doing it.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

In the protestant working class there's a real law and order emphasis. All my life I had never been in trouble of any description. With hindsight I find it unreal at times. On one side I was involved in the UVF and on the other side my life was perfection. I wouldn't have dreamt of driving my car without tax or insurance. It was a strange experience.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

What kept me going was that you knew what you were doing was right and it was the right path to take at that time. Terrible things were happening but these were the sacrifices you had to make. When comrades were shot it just made you more determined.

Republican ex-prisoner

I speak to all my comrades and their sons are 17 and they don't want them going out on a Saturday night... never mind wanting them to get involved. And we were all involved at that age. We were a generation in ghetto. We had no jobs. But we don't want to see young people getting involved now. We don't want to see them in prison. We were idealists in our day. Kids today aren't.

Republican ex-prisoner

I have no regrets about all that happened. A lot of my friends also died in the conflict. I don't feel the need to apologise for what I've done but I will take responsibility for what I've done. But everything has changed now. The Good Friday Agreement has changed things. The use of force depends on the level of oppression and what other ways there are to end the conflict. It may be slow and frustrating but it's better than the alternative.

Republican ex-prisoner



We don't want any more young people or families going through all that we went through. And that's genuine. It was crazy, it was necessary at the time but it was crazy. Our families came through far far more than we went through.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

Organisations should not be recruiting 14 or 15 year olds now. There are large numbers of people who want to be involved. And they're running wild because they've nothing to do. We need to be working with young people but not to teach them about guns and all that. We need to show them right from wrong.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

The clear message we want to be sending young people is we've been there and done all of that. Nobody needs to go through all that. There's other ways now. We need to educate them and teach them about communication, negotiation and compromise. If they can be helped to be confident and proud of their own history and culture they don't need to be afraid of anyone else's.

Loyalist ex-prisoner

I knew when I got involved I was going to end up dead or in prison. The only motivation I had was to commit as much violence as possible as quickly as possible. I believed violence was a way of bringing the state down. The killing of people was easily justifiable. The act itself. But how heavily it sat on your shoulders was another thing. There's a lot of things you look back on and realise how callous you were playing God with someone's life, to being about to be killed and thinking 'so what - no big deal' to the jubilation of not being killed.

Republican ex-prisoner

Who wants to go through all that again? My kids are grown up and they didn't go through the worst of it. Who in their right mind would want to go through all that again?

Republican ex-prisoner

You can see it in the wee ones today - reacting against authority and getting involved in anti-social behaviour. When I was young there was nothing that could be done to stop me from getting involved. My advice to young ones today is don't go down that road. All there is is heart ache and misery.

Republican ex-prisoner

You could argue there was never justification for violence. But certainly now there's the political structures in place so that anyone has a way of furthering their aspirations by purely political means. If there ever was a case for violence there certainly isn't now and I would question the motivation of anyone wanting to get involved in violence now

Loyalist ex-prisoner

What I would say to young people in the future, who do feel the only way is by taking up weapons, is not to go down that route. That tactic won't succeed. Armed struggle divided protestants and Catholics. We need to develop different tactics. We need to build up relationships with loyalists for example. We are doing that now. 10 years ago we were killing each other. But we have a lot more in common with each other. We all came from deprived areas, we're working class people.

Republican ex-prisoner

A diagram titled "Comparison Alley" used for comparing two perspectives. It features a large rectangle divided by two parallel diagonal lines running from the top-left to the bottom-right. The space is divided into three sections: a top-left section, a middle section, and a bottom-right section. The top-left section is labeled "Record what is similar here" in a light blue box. The middle section is labeled "Perspectives from Loyalist ex-prisoners" in a light purple box. The bottom-right section is labeled "Record what is different in each section" in a light blue box. The bottom-right section also contains two arrows: a horizontal arrow pointing left and a vertical arrow pointing up.

Record what is similar here

Perspectives from Loyalist ex-prisoners

Perspectives from Republican ex-prisoners

Record what is different in each section

activities

Section 2:

Understanding the prison experience



Session 4

Imagining the Prison Experience

About This Session

This session asks young people to imagine what the prison experience might be like. The primary purpose of this activity is to ascertain the pre-conceived ideas young people may have and to use this as juxtaposition against the reality of prison as experienced by political ex-prisoners. The main methodologies used in this activity are a circular brainstorm and a 'P-M-I' grid.

Learning Intentions

By the end of the session young people should be able to:

- present their own ideas regarding the prison experience
- sort these ideas into 'plus', 'minus' and 'interesting' categories
- begin to compare and contrast these ideas with the reality of the prison experience.

Opportunity for Skills Development

Skill	Activity
Communication: <i>communicating viewpoints in a logical and coherent manner; participating in discussions</i>	Group work Class discussion Presentation
Problem solving: <i>thinking and decision making</i>	Circular brainstorm
Working with others	Group work
Self-management	K-W-L grid

Resources

DVD
Resource Sheet 4.1
Flipchart paper
Markers

From Prison to Peace (section 2)
P-M-I grid

Preparation

- Photocopy Resource Sheet 4.1 for each young person

Time 30-40 mins

Introduction

Remind students of the conclusion to the previous lesson and explain that the next few sessions are going to focus on political ex-prisoners' experience of prison. Briefly (appropriately) share learning intentions. Ask young people to take a few minutes to think about what it would be like to be in prison (you may wish to locate and display some images of 'prison' as a stimulus for this: real, cartoon, stereotypical images etc). Take some feedback from a few young people and explain that in this session they are going to work together to produce a whole class perspective on what prison might be like.

Progression

1. Place young people into groups of five or six.
2. Distribute a large sheet of paper to each group and ask them to start to record what they think prison life would be like. Ask them to record their ideas any way they wish e.g. writing, drawing etc.
3. Ask each group to pass its sheet of paper to the next group. They should then ✓ the things they agree with on this new sheet, ✗ the things they disagree with and amend others if they wish to. Ask them to add in their own ideas onto this sheet too.
4. Again ask each group to pass this sheet of paper to the next group. They should then ✓ the things they agree with, ✗ the things they disagree with and amend others if they wish to. Again they should add in new ideas.
5. Continue with this rotation of sheets until you feel the young people have contributed as much as they can. During these rotations use questions to prompt them:
 - What would recreational facilities be like?
 - Food?
 - How often would you be able to communicate with friends and family?
 - How often would you be able to have visitors?
 - What about education? Would you get a chance to learn more? Get qualifications?
 - What would your living conditions be like? Etc.
6. Each sheet should be returned to the original group. Give young people some time to absorb all the other groups' comments.
7. Ask each group to select a maximum of four points to feed back to the rest of the class. Collate these ideas on a mind-map on a board or flipchart.
8. Distribute Resource Sheet 4.1 and ask each group to complete this to indicate
 - PLUS: did they identify anything positive about the prison experience? If so, what?
 - MINUS: did they identify anything negative about the prison experience? If so, what?
 - INTERESTING: what do think would be 'interesting' to find out more about? What do they think would be 'interesting to see if....?' etc.
9. Take brief feedback from each group.
10. Show section 2 of the 'Prison to Peace' DVD and ask young people for initial thoughts
 - How does this compare with how they imagined the prison experience might be?

Conclusion

Return to the learning intentions to summarise the lesson. Explain to the young people that the next session will give them more information/perspectives on the political ex-prisoners experience of prison.

Interesting	
Minus	
Plus	

Session 5

The Reality of the Prison Experience

About This Session

This session provides young people with an opportunity to reflect on the reality of prison as experienced by political ex-prisoners. The primary purpose of this activity is to ascertain the pre-conceived ideas young people may have and to use this as juxtaposition against the reality of prison as experienced by political ex-prisoners. The main methodology used in this activity is a 'silent conversation'.

Learning Intentions

By the end of this activity young people should be able to:

- describe the reality of the prison experience
- compare and contrast the reality of the prison experience with their ideas from the previous session
- reflect on how the prison experience would have affected them

Assessment Opportunities

The K-W-L grid provides an opportunity for young people to assess their own learning throughout the module

Opportunity for Skills Development

Skill	Activity
Communication: <i>communicating viewpoints in a logical and coherent manner; participating in discussions</i>	Silent Conversation
Working with others	Group work
Self-management	K-W-L grid

Resources

- Resource Sheet 5.1 **Perspectives on Prison**
- Flipchart paper
- Markers (one per young person)

Preparation

- Photocopy Resource Sheet 5.1 and stick each stimulus card onto the middle of a flipchart page.

Time 30-40 mins

Introduction

Remind students of the conclusion to the previous lesson and explain that this session focuses on the reality of prison. Briefly (appropriately) share learning intentions.

Progression

1. Explain that this next activity is to be completed in complete silence. All communication must be done through writing or drawing. Make sure you give all instructions in advance of the activity so that the silence will not be broken. (You may wish to display these instructions so young people can refer to them during the activity):
 - In twos or threes, read the stimulus material in the middle of the your flipchart carefully
 - Write down your thoughts or any questions you might want to ask the rest of your group
 - Your group can only answer by writing down their responses.
 - Everyone can write at the same time
 - You can use lines to link up answers to comments; or comment on comments etc.
 - When instructed, you can leave your group and move around the other sheets, recording your comments, questions and answers to the new stimulus material.
2. Place young people into groups of two or three and begin the 'silent conversation'.
3. After no more than 10 mins instruct the groups to break up and move around other pages
4. After no more than 15 mins instruct the young people to return to their original groups and to read their original sheet
5. Ask each group to feed back the main points that struck them about political ex-prisoners' experience of prison.
 - What surprised them?
 - What didn't surprise them?
 - What do they think was the most difficult aspect of prison life?
 - Are there any similarities and differences between loyalist and republican experiences?
If so, what?

Conclusion

Ask the young people to spend some time imagining they were in prison and to reflect on how this experience might affect them. Take some ideas from a few young people and then ask each young person to record their own ideas. They could do this as a diary entry, a letter home, a poem, a song etc. Return to the learning intentions to summarise the lesson.

Stimulus 1

“

In Loyalist circles people run about with 'Loyalist Prisoner of War' tattooed on their arm. They talk about prison as if it was this great place. In strong loyalist communities there's actually a pride with having served in prison. I view it slightly different, from going into the Crumlin Road it was a conflict from we went in; it was as if the war had continued on the inside. There was nothing good about the Crumlin Road.

I was in the Crumlin for over two years on remand. In all of those days it was conflict from day one. There was no mixing. There was a campaign from both sides for segregation. Attacks were daily on each other. Prison staff were attacked daily. I remember hearing about shots being fired at a prison visitors bus in Armagh. Republican families were being collected to go and see their husbands in prison and the bus was shot at by loyalists. I thought things had been taken to a new level on the outside. We were fearful what might happen to our families.

That led to the bomb being planted in the canteen in the Crumlin Road. One man was killed outright. Another man had very severe neck injuries- he died a few days later. There were numerous people injured. The prison staff didn't know what to do- they weren't prepared and just locked the room. Some of us were able to give first aid and reassurance and help the prison staff when they got their act together. A lot of people were traumatised.

When the news of the bomb came on the radio later that evening and it was reported that a loyalist was dead, we could hear them cheering and banging the pipes.

No one was able to contact their families. We couldn't talk to our families to reassure them that we were OK.

”

Stimulus 2

“

In simple terms, my experience of prison isn't good. It was a conflict from the beginning in the Crumlin Road. There was a massive difference when I went to the Maze. It was like getting released. It was a whole other atmosphere. But after a month you realised you will still be locked up. And there was still conflict - but it was conflict with prison staff and protests to improve conditions. But it was brutal at times. It seemed like every request we made was ignored until it went to violence. After the violent act we were granted what we wanted. It shouldn't have had to go to violence.

Yes, I made some good friends that are still friends. But the reality of it is it wasn't a good place to be. There wasn't that many good times. You made the most of a very bad and hard and difficult situation. Even when conditions improved, you were still locked up.

”

Stimulus 3

“ Being in prison did give us more time to think and debate about the conflict. We did have good debates it. It was an opportunity to get a lot of education if you wanted it. ”

“ A lot of people got involved in education. Probably the figures would show that more republicans took up with education but to say loyalists didn't isn't true. Loyalists took up with education as well as republicans. When you were locked up at night that was your chance to do education work. I did O level Irish. A small number of loyalist prisoners did it. I got a D. To me it was great but the Republicans were getting better grades. And I've spoken to republicans about this, when I looked over every one of the republicans had their notebooks with them for the exam! When I spoke to the tutor about it he said 'Well are you going to tell them?!' and I said 'No'. ”

“ I did engross myself in political books and Irish history. Politicising the conflict made it more understandable to me why you should use violence to overthrow the state. ”

“ During my time in the 'cages' that was probably my best time. Cages were like them old prison of war camps with big huts. You'd freedom really to do what you wanted. We got lectures on weapons, how to make bombs etc. But we got political education too, which I really enjoyed and really got into and helped my politicisation. ”

“ I hadn't done Irish history in school. I thought Northern Ireland had existed from biblical times. When I did some history in prison I was really surprised to find out Northern Ireland had only existed since 1920! ”

Stimulus 4



The cell door closing behind you for the first time and realising 'This is it'. But I kept saying to myself 'Listen, people you know have done it'. It was just a bare cell with two beds in it. Sitting saying to yourself 'How do I do this?' But that was just where I was for three days, before I went up onto the wings.

Then I was in cell with a guy who had newspaper, tobacco, a radio, magazines, books...all of a sudden you're near enough in freedom. You've something to occupy your mind. There was stuff you could do. There was something like 180 republican prisoners in Crumlin Road when I was there and it was a bit of craic. I'm not going to say I look back with fond memories but they weren't bad memories.

Best memories of prison are probably out in the yard with other prisoners, playing football. Sadder memories would be the isolation. Did nearly a year and a half in lock-up and solitary.



Stimulus 5

“

I was in the IRA and convicted in 1979. The blanket protest was in full swing. So it never occurred to me not to go on the blanket. There was brutality in the prisons. It was systematic and carried out on a daily basis. As far as we were concerned the prison staff had been given the go ahead to use whatever means they wished to break our protest. And this all feeds into how you see the state and the injustices in it.

Come 1980 during the period of the first hunger strike I put my name forward and was on it for the last 5 days of that. I volunteered for the second hunger strike too. I told my parents I'd my name down and they were devastated as you'd imagine. To go on hunger strike you need to be absolutely focused. It's not a decision you take lightly. We saw it as a major confrontation with the enemy. If we showed any weakness there was no point doing it. We were told if you're not 100% sure don't go through with it. When Kieran Doherty died I replaced him on hunger strike on 10th August 1981 and was on it up until it ended on 3rd October. I was seriously ill then but survived. There's this myth that after a few days on hunger strike the hunger goes away but I can assure you that's not the case. Your sense of smell becomes very acute. You can smell toast from miles away.

”

Stimulus 6

“ I could handle prison no problem really but I was lucky in a way I went in at a very young age and I didn't really have much experience of life on the outside. Maybe I was institutionalised to a degree. I was a single man. I had no sort of ties or worries. But I can understand looking back now that I'm a married man with a couple of kids how hard and tough it must have been for them. We were just young kids in prison and we'd be saying 'What's he crying about there?' We didn't understand their position really. ”

“ I was only six months married when I went into prison. That broke up - we decided it was for the best. The worst experience was sitting down and not really understanding why you made the choice. Asking questions like, 'What was it all about? What is the difference between us anyway? What are we? Where do we belong on this Island? How can we achieve respect for our own beliefs without having to use violence?' ”

“ Next to the direct victims of the conflict and their relatives the next, sort of most deprived group were the prisoners in terms of suffering during the conflict. When you've lost your freedom your family is denied your presence and your role in the family, you obviously say you wouldn't want this to be visited upon the next generation. It focuses your mind on looking at ways of coming out of conflict. ”

Session 6

The Impact of the Prison Experience

About This Session

This session provides young people with an opportunity to consider the short term and longer term impact of the prison experience. The main methodologies used in this activity are 'snowballing' and 'consequence wheel'.

Learning Intentions

By the end of this activity young people should be able to:

- give examples of the impact of prison on those who experienced prison, their families and communities
- describe the short term and longer term impact of the prison experience
- reflect on how the prison experience would have affected them

Opportunity for Skills Development

Skill	Activity
Communication: <i>participating in discussions and debates, communicating viewpoints in a logical and coherent manner, making written summaries</i>	Group work
Problem solving: <i>justify opinions, learn from and value other people's ideas</i>	Snowballing Consequence Wheel
Working with others	Group work
Self-management	K-W-L grid

Resources

- Resource Sheet 6.1 **Impact of Prison**
- Resource Sheet 6.2 **Consequence Wheel**

Preparation

- Photocopy Resource Sheet 6.1 (enough copies so each young person can have their own 'narrative')
- Photocopy Resource Sheet 6.2 (one for each young person)

Time 30-40 mins

Introduction

Remind students of the conclusion to the previous lesson and explain that this session focuses on the impact of the prison experience. Briefly (appropriately) share learning intentions.

Progression

1. Give each young person a copy of a 'narrative' of a political ex-prisoner (Resource Sheet 6.1). Ask them to read it carefully and to consider what impact the prison experience had on them.
2. Ask them to record this impact on the 'Consequence Wheel' (Resource Sheet 6.2). Short term impacts should be recorded in the inner circle; longer term impacts on the outer circle.
3. Ask each young person to 'pair up' with another and to share what they have recorded on their consequence wheel with each other. They should identify any similarities and differences. They should also add in new ideas onto their own consequence wheel.
4. This pair should then join up with another pair (as a group of four) and repeat the process.
5. Continue this 'snowballing' process one more time
6. By now the young people should have identified a number of impacts of the prison experience. Take feedback and summarise this (drawing out broad themes) on a large consequence wheel drawn on the board or flipchart.
7. Use the following questions to sum up the activity
 - What surprised them?
 - What didn't surprise them?
 - Are there any similarities or differences between republican and loyalist experiences? (You could record these on the 'comparison alley' from session 3)
 - What do they think are the main consequences (short and long term) of having been in prison?

Conclusion

As in the previous session ask the young people to spend some time imagining they had been in prison and reflecting on how this experience might impact on their lives. Take some ideas from a few young people and then ask each young person to record their own ideas. Again they could do this as a diary entry, a letter home, a poem, a song etc. Return to the learning intentions to summarise the lesson.



When I got out of prison I'd spent over half my life there. When I got out my head was still in prison. It took me three years to feel settled back in. Everything was strange. I didn't know how to answer a phone. I didn't know how to make a phone call. Money didn't understand the change. Felt strange in crowds. I could only really be with ex-prisoners for a while. Even knowing how to interact with women!

My family were devastated by the whole thing. I was from a protestant, unionist family. My brother was in the RUC. It ended up with us being estranged from each other. We never reconciled. When I was released I didn't think at the time how difficult it was. I was so pleased to be released. But looking back it was very hard to adjust. I'd been in prison a long time. I've never met any of my victims. I have a difficulty with that whole area. Out of respect for them I don't think it's right to travel around the country as if you're some kind of celebrity.

It's the effect that it continually has. You still think there's places you can't go because you feel uncomfortable. It affects your wife who probably had nothing to do with it whatsoever. The effects are continually in your life. You're always an 'ex-' something, you can never be just 'something'. I met the brother of one of my victims once. I didn't know at the time. I don't know what I would have said, could have said. I don't think it would be a nice thing for me to be anywhere near his family. That's on a personal level. On a more wider victim-survivor I don't think I'd have a problem speaking about those general things. But the personal thing I find difficult. But that was a result of what I did, not what other people did.

My da told me to 'Get out of the house or get out of the organisation'. As I was leaving he said 'If they kill you I'll bury you but if you go to prison I'll not come up to see you'. And he didn't. He was adamant about it. He did eventually come up after 2 years. My ma tricked us into it. My da said 'Ireland's not worth it- don't be kidding yourself'. He wanted me to just go and enjoy my life. He couldn't get his head around. My ma didn't support me but she didn't disown me.



I was married six months when I went into prison. The marriage broke up. My family had to live with the fact their son went to prison too. They supported me. They didn't agree with what I did. They were there for me. Victimhood isn't just the victim of an activity. It's also the victims of the prisoner's family. My mother would have said she served every minute I did. I served a long sentence. It was a massive shock coming out. When I came out we went out for a meal and a drink. I kept getting these coins in my change and I didn't know what they were. It was 11 coins. The speed of the traffic even was different. Trying to get employment. Always thinking people knew who you were. If anything happened to me tomorrow I would never be remembered for the community work I've done for the last 18 years. It'd probably be the 'He was that UNF man. He was a bad person'.

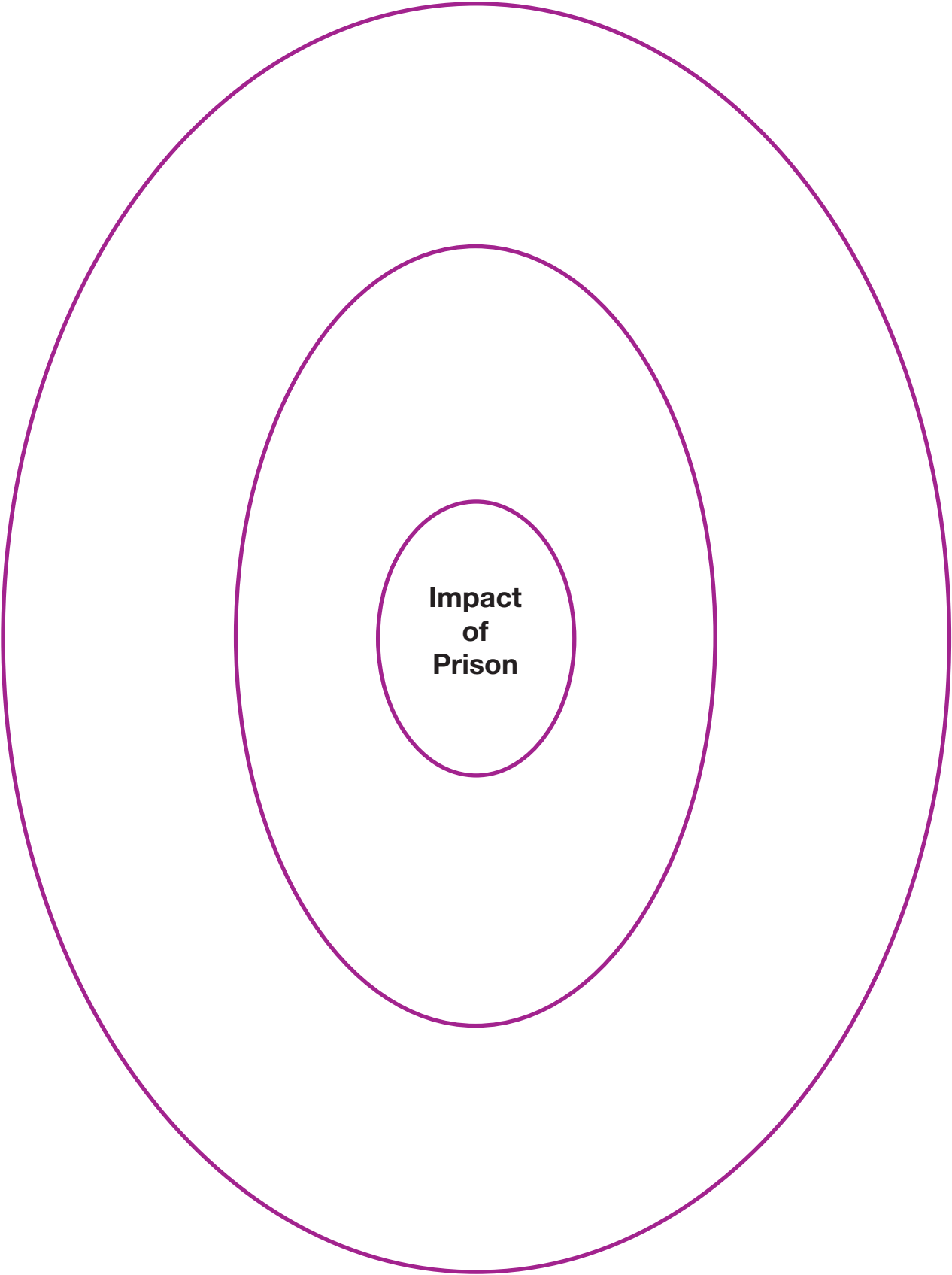
My marriage broke up. My wife was a staff nurse. Her role in life was to save people and there I was serving prison for going out to murder people. My brother would still say to me now that when you went on a visit I'd have on my best clothes and the best trainers, I'd have a tan and he was struggling to put shoes on his two daughters. Looking back it was selfish. You never gave consideration to what was going on on the outside.

One of the wives I know was devastated. She was from a church family. They had quite a good life style. Her husband was lifted and she immediately lost her job. She had no money. When he got out they had two wee children but the marriage eventually broke up. She came through a lot.

My family was totally destroyed by it all. And I really mean that. My mother ended up ill with cancer while I was in prison and she died two or three months after I got out. For my family it was hard. A number of them were in the prison service. They were moved to a different prison when I was put in. So it upset their whole lives. Their career was in that prison and they were moved. For my mother and father who had never been in any sort of trouble or had any trouble brought to their door it was shock beyond belief. They couldn't believe I was even involved never mind the level of involvement. For my wife, she was devastated. I was lucky that after the initial shock they stuck by me. My two children were very young but they came to see me when they could. My wife stood by but there were many other wives and families who couldn't go through that search system to come on visits. Many marriages and partnerships broke up.

When I came out I was fit and healthy. My wife had got into trouble buying clothes she couldn't pay for out of club books. My son wouldn't go to school. She went through all that on her own. No support from me. Even though she was telling you these things you were selfish, you sheltered yourselves. The reality is the families were suffering far far more than the prisoners.

Even now it still has an effect on your life. I found my wee boy googling my name the other day. He doesn't know about my past, why I was in prison.



Section 3:

Contributing to Conflict Transformation and Community Development



Session 7

What Positive Roles Have Political Ex-Prisoners Played in Our Community

About This Session

This session provides young people with an opportunity to learn about how political ex-prisoners contribute to conflict transformation and community development. In particular they can explore the work of certain non-governmental organisations which support political ex-prisoners and their families. The main methodologies used in this activity are 'jigsawing' and group work. The session could be extended into a longer research project.

Learning Intentions

By the end of the session young people should be able to:

- describe the work of organisations that support political ex-prisoners and their families
- present their own ideas on the positive role played by political ex-prisoners in the community
- give examples of the contribution political ex-prisoners make to reducing sectarian violence, conflict transformation and community development.

Opportunity for Skills Development

Skill	Activity
Communication: <i>participating in discussions and debates, communicating viewpoints in a logical and coherent manner, making written summaries</i>	Group work
Problem solving: <i>justify opinions, learn from and value other people's ideas</i>	Snowballing Consequence Wheel
Working with others	Group work
Self-management	K-W-L grid

Resources

DVD
Resource Pack

From Prison to Peace (section 3)
Sheets 1-11

Preparation

- Photocopy Resource Pack (at least one full copy for each group)

Time 30-40 mins initially (although this could be easily extended into a fuller research project)

Introduction

Show the final section of the DVD and explain that the final three sessions of this module will focus on how political ex-prisoners are making a positive contribution to their communities and allow young people to explore how they too could positively participate in community development and peace building. Briefly (appropriately) share learning intentions for this session.

Progression

1. Place young people into groups of 4 (tell them this is their home group for this session). Ask them to number themselves from 1 to 4 and to remember this number!
2. Explain to them that their task is to develop a short presentation on the title: 'The positive roles played by political ex-prisoners in our community'
3. Explain that in order to do that they will first be asked to become experts on a particular aspect of this work.
4. Ask young people to form new groups with people who have the same number as themselves. (i.e. all the 1s group together, 2s etc) Tell them this is their expert group for this session. (If this group is quite large, then form two expert groups for each number).
5. When expert groups are formed distribute the Resource Pack. Ask the young people to distribute the information from the resource pack around the group, read it carefully, highlighting anything of importance in relation to the theme they are exploring:
 - **Group 1:** The difficulties faced by political ex-prisoners and their families and how they are supported.
 - **Group 2:** The contribution made by political ex-prisoners to their communities.
 - **Group 3:** The contribution made by political ex-prisoners to the peace process and conflict transformation.
 - **Group 4:** The contribution made by political ex-prisoners to reducing sectarianism and violence.(If you are intending to use this as a research project, at this point you may wish to give the young people access to ICT facilities to explore these issues further).
6. Ask each young person to share what they have found out with other members of their expert group.
7. Ask each person to make sure they have recorded any important points from their discussion and to then return back to their home group.
8. Ask each young person to share the information from their expert groups with the rest of their home group.
9. Give each home group enough time to collate all the information onto a poster, PowerPoint presentation or other medium of their choice.
10. Take feedback from each group on what they have learnt. (Or if you are using this as an extended research project provide time for each group to present its findings to the rest of the class. This would be a suitable activity for peer assessment).

Conclusion

Ask each young person to take some time to reflect on what they have learnt during this session. Use the following questions to de-brief:

- What, if anything, surprised them?
- Are there aspects of this work which have challenged them?

Review learning intentions and explain that the next session will provide them with opportunities to reflect on the role of political ex-prisoners in our community.

Problems facing political ex-prisoners

People with conflict-related convictions find it difficult to get jobs because of their convictions. The jobs that are available are often not the types of employment that they would want and as a result their employment choices are restricted. Setting up a business can also be problematic due to the difficulties in accessing appropriate insurance cover.

Many insurance companies place an absolute restriction on people with former political convictions and as a result, many individuals are uninsured.

As a result of their convictions, political ex-prisoners have lower/no pension entitlements, which can lead to a higher risk of poverty amongst the older political ex-prisoner community.

People with conflict-related convictions can be denied travel to the United States of America, Canada and Australia. This can mean that they can't holiday or visit friends and family in these countries

Lack of access to appropriate counselling or health care can add to feelings of isolation and exclusion from society.

As a result of barriers to employment, many people with conflict-related convictions experience poverty. This can mean poor housing, poor health and feelings of isolation.

Positive Contribution of Political Ex-Prisoners

Political ex-prisoners are actively involved in conflict transformation activities:

- Tackling important social issues within their own communities;
- Youth work;
- Alleviating tensions at interface areas;
- Encouraging dialogue between communities;
- Developing social economy initiatives.

**Information made available by OFMDFM
(Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister)**



Recently I listened to a radio programme about the hunger strike. One of the studio panel was a republican ex-prisoner who is now an MLA. He told the story of a security door man in Stormont, a former prison officer who said to him "I used to lock you up and now I'm opening doors for you".

In my view this wry comment sums up so well the significant contribution of politically motivated ex-prisoners, both republican and loyalist, to the peace process in Northern Ireland.

How did this happen? In my job in the probation service and as Chief Probation Officer between 1986 and 2000 I had a unique opportunity to observe the transformation that took place in the minds and hearts of those people imprisoned as a result of the conflict here. While in prison, firstly republicans and then loyalists decided to educate themselves in areas such as history, political and social sciences. Most of them came out of prison having undergone the change in outlook that education can create, determined to work for peace, and to do everything in their power to prevent further bloodshed and killing. Some went into politics. Many who I know and continue to meet dedicated themselves to rebuilding their fractured communities and to reaching across to establish common cause with those people that previously they considered to be enemies. Why? Because they had learnt from their studies that poor Protestants and poor Catholics have much more in common than they have in difference and that the way forward was to work to improve both opportunity and aspiration in their separate but similar areas. Now some of the most imaginative dedicated work with, for example, young excluded people is being led by political ex prisoners. Political ex prisoners from all sides are also leading in mediation and negotiation and in understanding and accepting difference. Political ex prisoner politicians are sharply aware of the need to target resources to pull their communities out of poverty. In fact they have opened many doors.



Breidge Gadd
Former Chief Probation Officer



As a former Prison Governor who worked for many years in Long Kesh (also known as the Maze prison) I feel I can speak with authority regarding the contribution of political ex-prisoners to the peace building process not just following the conflict but also during the conflict. For example I can recall setting up the necessary arrangements in Long Kesh for Mo Mowlam (the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland) to meet with each of the representatives of the different prisoner groupings. She wanted to find out their views and suggestions on how to move towards peaceful dialogue as opposed to the bomb and the bullet.

Peace in our troubled island could not have been achieved without the agreement and involvement of the prisoners and I believe that it is also fair to say that the day to day involvement of political ex-prisoners continues to be central to the building blocks of our shared future. I believe that our current assembly has fourteen political ex-prisoners now serving as MLAs.

I recently was a guest speaker at a political ex-prisoner conference in Letterkenny where I witnessed people who not that long ago would have been attempting to kill each other but were now sitting side by side involved in positive dialogue about a shared future using words like 'respect and understanding.' The phrases however that stood out for me was when they talked about 'our children' and 'a future free from the bigotry that has existed for so long in this place'.

Surely this is the shining example to set to our children when the former men of violence can not necessarily forgive or indeed forget but can instead understand and work together for a new future that steers future generations clear of the paths that led us down the road of conflict which resulted in the loss of over 3500 lives with many more lives also destroyed as a result of the troubles.

Political ex-prisoners deserve recognition from the public for their continuing positive contributions to our society. However not all individuals have had the opportunity to know of their great work. We must all ensure that these individuals get the notice they deserve and perhaps more importantly the support of their respective communities to encourage them to continue with this important work: focusing young minds away from violence and thereby ensuring that their mothers and fathers will not suffer the pain that was suffered by mothers and fathers during the past 40 years of conflict.



William McKee
Former Prison Governor



The image of Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness agreeing to share power in 2007 has rightly been praised as an excellent example of successful conflict transformation. Both men had previously served prison sentences for offences related to the conflict and both have shown real leadership skills in bringing their own communities to this point in our peace process. The importance of the prison histories of many other senior Sinn Féin politicians, and indeed Loyalist leaders such as the sadly deceased David Ervine are also well known. What is less well publicised is the contribution of thousands of other Republican and Loyalist former prisoners in the often unglamorous work of the peace process in communities most affected by violence.

Political ex-prisoners and ex-combatants have shown clear leadership in trying to remove cultures of violence in such communities. Some of these men and women have been at the forefront of taking forward the most difficult issues of the peace process including: working on interface violence at flashpoint areas; negotiations around contentious parades; the decommissioning of weapons; engagement with the victims of political violence and with other former combatants; tackling racism and sectarianism; and promoting and encouraging the debate on truth recovery and dealing with the past. Political ex-prisoners and former combatants have both inflicted and been on the receiving end of violence and for many such individuals who have experienced it so directly, violence has no appeal. Their past histories give them real credibility in their conflict transformation efforts.

Communities in Northern Ireland and the Republic have really benefitted from the work carried out by political ex-prisoners and former combatants who have done much to ensure that future generations never go through what they experienced.



Prof. Kieran McEvoy
School of Law
Queens University Belfast



It may be strange to think of political ex-prisoners as people who build peace in Northern Ireland. Many former prisoners are very important in making sure that the peace process is kept alive by using their influence to prevent sectarianism and tension between Catholic and Protestant communities. This is important to them as they do not want another generation of young people to engage in violence and thus undermine peace and stability.

In order to stop a return to violence they do several things that are very positive and which help to re-direct young people away from violence.

First, many former prisoners give up their time to 'police' the spaces between Catholic and Protestant areas. They do this in unison with each other so that loyalists can stop young Protestants attacking Catholic areas and Republicans work to stop young people attacking Protestant neighbourhoods. In working together and patrolling their districts they discourage young people from hanging around the interface and coming into conflict with each other. This work is also undertaken with the PSNI and is supported by them.

Secondly, in trying to divert young people away from sectarian attitudes former prisoners organise events in which young Protestants and Catholics meet each other in order to discuss their lives and it is hoped that this will encourage respect between these young people for themselves, each other and for the communities they live in.

Political ex-prisoner groups also take young people to places and institutions that they would never visit. Republicans have taken young Catholics to meet the Apprentice Boys of Derry and loyalists have taken Protestant kids to places like Croke Park. Finally, former prisoners also do interactive work with young people during which they encourage them to take an active and positive role in their communities as good citizens.

In sum, former prisoners are trying to do as much as they can to stop a return to violence and to train and assist young people to think more positively about the other community. All of this work is based upon respect and mutual tolerance.



Dr Peter Shirlow
School of Law
Queen's University Belfast



I have been surprised lately to learn of the range of work carried out by political ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland that has been going on for some considerable time. This work should be pulled together so that others can learn in the same way that I did from the excellent projects undertaken by ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland. I believe this work will go from strength to strength and encourage everyone who knows of this work to raise awareness of the contribution these groups are making to the peace process.

The honesty, integrity and commitment of political ex-prisoners is inspiring, as is the way the different ex-prisoner groups interact with each other, by listening and showing respect for the other person's point of view. This should set an example for others in positions of leadership.

If a peace process is about anything, it surely starts with that kind of dialogue. The work that has originated from the these political ex-prisoner groups is one of the success stories of our own process.



Monica McWilliams
Chief Commissioner
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission



Coiste na n-larchimí

Coiste na n-larchimí was formed in 1998. It is the umbrella organisation of the Republican ex-prisoner network throughout Ireland. It works to provide support to the many thousands of political ex-prisoners (former IRA) and their families who are living daily with the legacy of imprisonment. It has an **advocacy** role. This means it plays a key role in highlighting, and lobbying against, the social, economic, legal and societal barriers faced by former political prisoners and their families. Coiste carries out its advocacy work in the following key areas: challenging discrimination against political ex-prisoners in employment; lobbying to lift travel restrictions placed on political ex-prisoners; enlisting the help of major home insurance companies who do not discriminate against political ex-prisoners.

Political Tours: The Coiste Irish Political Tours project provides visitors from all over the world with an in-depth insight into the most recent phase of the Anglo/Irish conflict. The tours are hosted by political ex-prisoners and take place in Belfast, Derry, South Armagh and Dublin. The project is also useful for schools, colleges and universities and can provide a way for people to meet with, and learn from, political ex-prisoners and community activists.

Youth Work: Coiste works with the children of political ex-prisoners to address issues of trauma, loss, grief etc. It engages with young people in a programme of training courses, residencies, seminars, outdoor events, tours and much more.

Support Services: Coiste provides a wide range of support services to political ex-prisoners and their families, including: counselling and emotional support; providing access to funding for education, training and re-skilling programmes; and helping political ex-prisoners access courses; and advice on benefits and welfare.

Legacy: This part of Coiste's work focuses on supporting political ex-prisoners in dealing with the legacy of the conflict and imprisonment on their lives. It also focuses on outreach work with society. This involves engaging with, and opening up conversations with victims groups, trade unions, the business sector, protestant churches, unionists etc.

Coiste also works with other political ex-prisoner groups. For example, it works with the Lisburn Prisoner Support Project to bring together young loyalists and young republicans in an innovative youth programme that allows the young people to explore each other's perspectives and learn from each other's experiences.

Case Study



Lisburn Prisoners Support Project

Lisburn Prisoners Support Project was formed in 1996 and works with Loyalist ex-prisoners (former UDA and UFF), their families and community organisations to provide services and facilities to support the needs of political ex-prisoners and their families in the process of re-integration into the community. It offers help and support in the following areas:

- **Culture and diversity**
- **Welfare rights and advice**
- **Education and training**
- **Family support**
- **Community, social and economic development**
- **Social economy**
- **Youth and young people**
- **Community relations**

In May 2001, Lisburn PSP established the 'New Horizons Credit Union'. This is a non-profit making financial co-operative owned and controlled by its members. It aims among other things to encourage its members to save each week, to help them borrow money at low interest rates, and to train and educate its members in business methods.

Lisburn PSP are also very active in social economy activities. These are activities designed to make money which is then put back into the community again. For example, Lisburn PSP runs self-build housing programmes and sells or rents these houses to raise money for community initiatives etc. Other examples of this work include a community bar and taxi company. As well as generating income for the community, these activities provide employment and help develop skills.

Lisburn PSP was also instrumental in setting up The Welcome House Ethnic Minority Project in the Old Warren estate in Lisburn, in response to a racist attack on a family in the area. Among other things, this initiative provides support and advice to people from minority ethnic groups who are new to the area.

Youth work is a key priority for Lisburn PSP. Its youth workers run a number of programmes and events for young people in the area.

Lisburn PSP also works closely with the other political ex-prisoner groups. For example it works with An Eochair on contentious issues like flags and parades, and other conflict transformation initiatives such as shared history programmes where each group seeks to understand the other's perspectives on past events.

Case Study



Teach na Fáilte

Teach na Fáilte is an INLA ex-prisoner support group. It was formed in 1997 providing a variety of services for individuals and families who have been directly bereaved, victimised or traumatised as a result of the conflict.

Teach na Fáilte provides a wide range of services to not only ex-INLA former prisoners but also the wider community. Examples include:

- **Counselling services to support political ex-prisoners in dealing with trauma caused by their involvement in the conflict or in dealing with issues resulting from the impact of this on their lives, for example relationship breakdowns, addiction etc.**
- **Providing advice on welfare rights, for example in relation to employment and housing**
- **Assisting political ex-prisoners and others access appropriate courses and training to enhance their employment opportunities**

Teach na Fáilte works with a wide range of community groups, young people, church groups etc. providing opportunities for members of the wider society to understand the experience of political ex-prisoners and to 'humanise' those who were involved in the conflict. The project is also actively engaged with young people in their local communities and involved in school visits and talks. It works on the ground, alongside other political ex-prisoner groups to reduce sectarian violence at interface areas, for example the CRISP project (see Sheet 11)

Teach na Fáilte works alongside other political ex-prisoner groups on a wide range of projects. For example, Teach na Fáilte arranged a youth exchange programme which involved An Eochair, Lisburn PSP and Charter (ex-UDA prisoner organisation) and brought together 30 young people from Strabane, Derry and Belfast for exchange visits to sites of historical interest, for example, Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin, the Bogside Historical Museum in Derry and the Boyne battle site in Co. Meath. The programme also took the young people into Republican and Loyalist heartlands where local community leaders debated the origins of the peace process with the young people. The young people also found out about mural projects in both the Shankill and Bogside.

Case Study



EPIC

EPIC (which stands for Ex-Prisoner Interpretive Centre) was established in 1995, and EPIC (North Ulster) in 2009, to address the problems surrounding the reintegration of political ex-prisoners into the community and in particular those prisoners from Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Red Hand Commando (RHC) backgrounds.

EPIC is involved in a number of activities including:

- **Youth Work: using the experience of political ex-prisoners and former combatants to influence young people and encourage them to channel their energies towards non- violent methods of resolving conflict**
- **Assisting former UVF / RHC activists to contribute positively and non-violently to their communities.**
- **International study visits to other regions in post conflict mode and building relationships with academic institutions in the field of conflict resolution.**
- **Provision of Welfare Rights Advice service to both political ex-prisoners and the wider community.**

EPIC North Ulster works closely with a wide range of community groups, statutory bodies, business sector, churches, schools and ethnic minority groups.

EPIC also work closely with other political ex-prisoner groups. For example it works with others to create opportunities for ex-combatants and others to engage in dialogue with former enemies. This work aims to 'humanise' the 'other' and challenge stereotypes. EPIC also works with others to reduce interface violence. It discourages young people from 'hanging around' interface areas to prevent them coming into conflict. This work has involved setting up lines of communication with Republican activists on opposite sides of the interface through an established mobile phone network.



An Eochair

An Eochair was established in 1998 to identify and address the needs of Official Republican ex-prisoners and their families. It provides advice, guidance, training, education and support to former Official IRA prisoners, their families and the broader community.

An Eochair has been able to re-establish contacts and dialogue with Loyalists that had initially began in Crumlin Road Jail and the compounds of Long Kesh prison in the early 1970s. Over this past number of years discussions have taken place on a regular basis on issues of common concern and interest. Along with other political ex-prisoner groups An Eochair has been involved in cross-community, cross-border projects on themes of common history, mediation skills and conflict transformation. An example is the “Ex-Combatants Programme” which was initiated by the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation in County Wicklow. This was a 2-year programme where Loyalist and Republican participants in the conflict met and engaged with former and serving members of the security forces from Britain and Ireland.

Through developing links with these and other groups and organisations, and by sharing experiences An Eochair believes that former enemies can gradually learn to trust and respect each other. It has been involved in ‘shared history’ projects, for example, the Messines project, created around the historical event of the Nationalist 16th Irish, and the Unionist 36th Ulster, Divisions fighting side by side at the battle of Messines Ridge in June 1917. The joint study of this event and other shared histories, An Eochair believes, has been a powerful tool for creating an environment of tolerance leading to understanding of, and the acceptance of, differences.

An Eochair also works in projects developed to engage young people on the issue of interface violence. Along with Prisoners in Partnership (ex-UDA prisoner group) and Teach na Fáilte, it has completed a two-year ‘Conflict Resolution on the Interface Project’ (CRISP). This project has involved a series of sessions where members of these political ex-prisoners groups outlined their experiences of the conflict to young people in workshops. These experiences were recorded and printed into a booklet which was then used in the second part of the initiative to engage young adults directly in the interface areas. This culminated in a visit to Crumlin Road Gaol and each young person spent several hours locked in a prison cell, to emphasise the misery of prison life and de-mystify the prison experience.

Session 8

Reflecting on the Role of Political Ex-Prisoners in Our Community

About This Session

This session provides young people with an opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt about political ex-prisoners and their contribution to the community. The main methodology used in this activity is a walking debate.

Learning Intentions

By the end of this activity young people should be able to:

- reflect on their own perspective and the perspective of others on the role of political ex-prisoners in our community

Opportunity for Skills Development

Skill	Activity
Communication: <i>participating in discussions and debates, communicating viewpoints in a logical and coherent manner, making written summaries</i>	Walking debate Limiting and balancing Rights worksheet
Problem solving: <i>justify opinions. Learn from and value other people's ideas</i>	Walking debate
Self-management	K-W-L grid

Resources

- 'Strongly Agree' label for one end of the room
- 'Strongly Disagree' label for the other end of the room

Preparation

- Label either end of the room with the statements above

Time 30 mins

Introduction

Use the K-W-L grid which the young people have been filling in to reflect on what they have learnt so far in this module. Ask them to share with the rest of the class one thing that has particularly struck them during the sessions.

Progression

1. Explain to the young people that they are going to participate in a walking debate. You will read out a statement and ask them to position themselves at one end of the room if they strongly agree with that statement, at the other end of the room if they strongly disagree with the statement, or anywhere in between according to their perspective on the statement.
2. Read out the following simple statement 'Political ex-prisoners are no different to any other ex-prisoner'
3. Ask the young people to respond to the statement by standing at one of the two signs (or anywhere along the spectrum in between) to demonstrate their opinion.
4. Ask a number of them to explain their viewpoint. Use these views or your own prompts to help them explore the complexity of this general statement. Encourage them to justify their viewpoint and listen to the viewpoint of others as the questions are discussed. Allow them to change position during the discussion if their views are changed.
5. When you feel this statement has been adequately explored, continue with other statements such as:
 - The government should support political ex-prisoners in the community work they do
 - Political ex-prisoners have a positive influence in society
 - You can develop your own questions for this debate and take suggestions from the young people about the issues they would like to discuss
6. When you feel the issues have been adequately explored ask students, either individually or in groups, to summarise the range of views expressed in this session.

Conclusion

Ask each young person to take some time to reflect on what they have learnt during this session. Use the following questions to de-brief:

- What, if any, issues was the class divided on?
- What, if any, issues did the class agree on?
- Do they think these views are representative of the community as a whole?
- What role do they think political ex-prisoners can play in our society?

Review learning intentions and explain to the young people that the next session will provide them with opportunities to reflect on the role each of them can play in their community.

Session 9

How Can I Play a Positive Role in My Community?

About This Session

This session provides young people with an opportunity to discuss the issues affecting them in their community and how they might play a positive role in community development and peace building. The main methodology used in this activity is a 'community audit' and 'issues ranking'.

Learning Intentions

By the end of this activity young people should be able to:

- identify issues in their community which affect them
- suggest positive actions which they could take to improve their community
- evaluate these

Opportunity for Skills Development

Skill	Activity
Communication: <i>participating in discussions and debates, communicating viewpoints in a logical and coherent manner, making written summaries</i>	Community Audit
Problem solving: <i>justify opinions. Learn from and value other people's ideas</i>	Issues Ranking

Resources

- Post-its
- Local newspapers, community bulletins etc

Preparation

- Collate some examples of local newspapers etc

Time 30 – 40 mins (again this could be extended into a longer project)

Introduction

Introduce the session by reviewing examples of the positive contribution political ex-prisoners are making in their communities. Share learning intentions and explain to the young people that they are going to 'audit' their community to identify problems and suggest possible solutions.

Progression

1. Place the young people into groups of four or five and ask them to think about their community.
2. Ask them to identify what is good about their community and what they consider to be bad about their community and to record these ideas on a flip chart. During this activity provide with local newspapers, community bulletins etc to help generate ideas.
3. Take feedback from each group. Record and note the positive features of their community but explain that the focus of this session will be on the problems they have identified.
4. Ask each group to record the problems they have identified on separate post-its and to rank these post-its in terms of which issues they see as most in need of being addressed.
5. Take feedback from each group and agree as a class on the top three issues.
6. Ask each group to select one of these three issues, to write it in the middle of a flipchart page and to discuss how they would go about changing the situation.
7. Encourage them to brainstorm as many solutions or actions as possible and to record all these ideas around the issues in the centre of the page.
8. Now ask each group to reflect on all of these suggestions by thinking about the following questions:
 - Which solutions or actions will have the most positive impact?
 - Which solutions or actions are the most practical?
 - Who else would need to be involved to take these solutions or actions forward?
9. Ask each group to select one solution or action and to feed it back to the rest of the class explaining why they think this is the most effective way forward on their identified issue. As each group feeds back its ideas ask the rest of the class to suggest practical steps which would need to be taken to see this action or solution through to completion. (At this point you could develop this activity into a full action project).

Conclusion

Ask each young person to take some time to reflect on what they have been doing in this session and to reflect individually on the following questions:

- What are the issues I care about in my community?
- How can I positively take action in my community?
- In what ways can I positively contribute to my community?
- What skills do I have that I could use positively in my community?

teacher's notes

The issues covered in this resource may be seen as contentious or controversial. The following section provides some practical advice on handling controversy in the classroom.

Teaching Controversial Issues

Teacher 'stance'

The resources in this pack encourage a balanced presentation of opposing views. At times teachers may find it appropriate to state their own views or to challenge consensus with strong opinions. Such techniques are appropriate if intended to further discussion, but inappropriate if they are attempts to influence student opinion. There are four main 'stances' a teacher can take when discussing controversial issues, which when used judiciously, perhaps in combination, can all help to encourage in-depth discussion and avoid biased teaching:

- 1) Neutral facilitator – expressing no personal view at all
- 2) Stated commitment – making the facilitator's own views known during the discussion
- 3) Balanced approach – presenting a range of views, including ones with which the facilitator may personally disagree
- 4) Challenging consensus ('devil's advocate') – opposing the position widely expressed in the group to challenge consensus and provoke response.

Framing the issue in a 'safer' manner

There are many ways a teacher can frame a particular issue or even a question when handling controversial issues in the classroom. Careful consideration should be given to this in advance of any potentially 'controversial lesson'.

Framing issues from a structural/public sphere perspective rather than an individual/private sphere perspective provides distance from the issue, making it safer for both the teacher and the young person to engage. In its simplest terms this means asking questions differently. For example an individual/private sphere focus places attention on a student's individual attitudes and beliefs in an attempt to challenge prejudice by asking questions like: 'How do you feel about?' or 'What would you do if....?' etc. A more structural approach frames the question from a public policy perspective, for example: 'What should the government be doing to?' or 'How can society respond to.....?' While re-framing questions does not remove the controversy it does allow space for 'safer' discussion of the issue. You can still explore how individuals respond to issues but in this context it is 'safer' to frame questions in terms of 'individuals' in general rather than pointedly asking students how they personally feel or what they personally would do in response to particular issues.

Choosing suitable classroom methodologies

Many of the methodologies used in this resource have been selected not only because they promote active learning but also because they are suited to the teaching of controversial issues. Whilst not all of the methodologies are used in the context of a controversial topic in this resource the table below describes how they could be suitable in general for teaching controversial issues and indicates where in the resource you can find an outline of each procedure. In general the best methodologies for teaching controversial issues encourage critical thinking and provide opportunities for students to express views without leaving them feeling exposed or vulnerable (which is why it is best to avoid whole class discussions!)

Methodology	Rationale for use with controversial issues	Session
Carousel discussion	It is useful to discuss controversial issues in pairs or small groups rather than as a whole class. This technique allows young people to discuss an issue with another in a pair, then another in a pair etc. It allows the whole class to have a discussion without having a whole class discussion! It can also be used as a form of role play where young people are allocated roles upon which to base their discussion	3
Case studies	Provided they are well constructed, case studies based on real life situations can build empathy and understanding. They can expose students to other perspectives.	7, 8
Circular brainstorm	This technique allows students to discuss an issue with a small group of their peers and to comment anonymously on other groups' views. It allows students to arrive at a class conclusion without having a whole class discussion.	4
Comparison alley	This thinking tool can be used to assist students in comparing different perspectives on an issue	3, 6
Consequence wheel	This thinking tool can be used to assist students in exploring the repercussions of various decisions or events.	6
Each One Teach One	This is a useful methodology for presenting facts and figures associated with controversial topics. Students are allocated small pieces of information to teach each other and can be encouraged to make connections between each other's facts or even different perspectives on these 'facts'	1
Silent Conversation	This discussion strategy uses writing and silence to help young people explore issues in-depth. A written conversation slows down the thinking process and gives them an opportunity to focus on the views of others	5
Snowballing	This technique allows students to discuss an issue with another student in a pair, then another in a four, and then in a group of eight etc. It allows the whole class to have a discussion without having a whole class discussion!	6
Think-pair-share	This technique allows students to discuss an issue with another student in a pair, then another in a four. It can assist students in forming and articulating a viewpoint before offering it to the rest of the class	1
Zone of relevance	This thinking tool encourages students to prioritise information developing and could be used to develop their capacity to evaluate facts, figures of perspectives.	2

Creating a conducive climate

Discussion of controversial issues will inevitably arouse strong views and differences of opinion. Setting ground rules at the start of a discussion can be a useful way of ensuring that discussion of controversial issues remains manageable. The principles of human rights can be used as a framework for the ground rules. Young people and teachers should recognise the right to freedom of expression of all members of the class, but also acknowledge that all participants have a right to be free from discrimination and disrespect. Human rights values can therefore be employed as a 'filter' in class and small group discussions.

The political ex-prisoner groups involved in the development of this resource are happy to work with schools and youth groups to explore these issues further: through providing more detailed information about their work; through visiting schools and youth groups to talk about their shared experiences. Contacts details are provided below:

An Eochair Ex-Prisoner Support Group

426 Falls Road,
Belfast
BT12 6EN
Tel: 028 9043 909



Coiste na n-Iarchimí

10 Beechmount Avenue
Belfast BT12 7NA
Tel: 028 9020 0770
Email: info@coiste.com
Website: www.coiste.com



EPIC

33A Woodvale Road
Belfast
BT13 3BN
Tel: 028 9074 8922
Email: epicadmin@btconnect.com
Website: www.epic.org

EPIC (North Ulster)
10b Bonds Street
Londonderry
BT47 6ED
Tel: 028 7134 4812



Lisburn Prisoners' Support Project

126 Grand Street
Lisburn
BT27 4UE,
Tel: 028 9266 7744
Email: lisburnpsp@fsmail.net



Teach na Fáilte

392-A Falls Road
Belfast
BT12 6DH
Tel: 028 9032 1024

41a Fountain Street
Strabane,
BT82 9JQ
Tel: 028 7188 4616

Unit 8 Lenamore Link Road
Glengalliagh Road
Derry
BT48 8NA
Tel: 028 71 353090



Website: www.teachnafailte.netfirms.com

Further reading: 'Beyond the Wire: Former Prisoners and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland' by Dr. Pete Shirlow and Prof. Kieran McEvoy (Pluto Press)

glossary

Bloody Sunday was an incident on 30 January 1972 in the Bogside area of Derry. Twenty-seven civil rights protesters were shot by the British Army Parachute Regiment during a Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association march. Fourteen men in total died. Seven were teenagers.

Bloody Friday is the name given to the bombings by the (Provisional) IRA's Belfast Brigade in Belfast on 21 July 1972. Twenty-two bombs exploded, killing nine people (including two soldiers) and injuring 130. One of these was a car bomb in **Oxford Street** outside the Ulsterbus depot.

Community development is a long-term process which involves people who are marginalised or living in poverty working together to identify their needs, create change, exert more influence on the decisions which affect their lives and work to improve the quality of their lives, the communities in which they live, and the society of which they are part.

Conflict transformation is the process of transforming conflict into peaceful outcomes. It involves transforming the relationships that support violence.

Good Friday/Belfast Agreement was a major political development in the Northern Ireland peace process. It was signed in Belfast on 10 April 1998 (Good Friday) by the British and Irish governments and supported by most Northern Ireland political parties. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) was the only large party that opposed the Agreement. Among many other things, it set up the 'power-sharing' Northern Ireland Assembly and recognized the right of people in Northern Ireland/ the North of Ireland to British or Irish citizenship or both. The Agreement came into force on 2 December 1999.

Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) is an Irish republican socialist organisation formed in 1974. It declared a ceasefire in 1998 and vowed to pursue its goals through peaceful, political means in 2009.

Irish Republican Army (IRA) The original IRA was an Irish republican revolutionary military organisation that emerged from the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), Irish Volunteers, the Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan (League of Women) all of whom took part in the Easter Rising in 1916.

The 'Provisional' **IRA** is an Irish republican organisation which emerged in 1969 following a split in the IRA over differences in ideology and in how to respond to violence against the catholic/nationalist community in the North of Ireland. It ended its armed campaign in 2005.

The 'Official' **IRA** is an Irish republican organisation which emerged in 1969 following a split in the IRA over differences in ideology and in how to respond to violence against the catholic/nationalist community in the North of Ireland. It declared a ceasefire in 1972.

Red Hand Commando (RHC) is a loyalist organisation closely aligned to the UVF, formed in 1972.

Ulster Defence Association (UDA) is a loyalist organisation, formed in 1971. The **Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF)** are associated with the UDA. The organisation declared a ceasefire in 1994 and officially ended its armed campaign in 2007.

Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) was a regiment of the British Army set up in 1970 to assist the regular Armed Forces. In 1992 the Regiment was amalgamated with the Royal Irish Rangers to form the Royal Irish Regiment.

Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) is a loyalist organisation, formed in 1966. It declared a ceasefire in 1994 and ended its armed campaign in 2007.

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We are all learning that there has to be a better way to resolve our differences and secure a peaceful future for you and for your children. Nobody knows this better than the people who were very personally involved in the conflict. This is why it is so important for you to hear their stories - so that you may be spared what they went through and that

**together with you we will
now build a happy, fair
and safe community for
us all to share.**

Rev. Harold Good
Former Methodist President

”

From **prison** to **peace**

Learning from the experience
of political ex-prisoners

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The
Community Foundation
for Northern Ireland

Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Community House, Citylink Business Park, Albert Street. Belfast BT12 4HQ.

T. +44 (0) 28 90245927

F. +44 (0) 28 90329839

E. info@communityfoundationni.org

W. www.communityfoundationni.org



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